

The French Social Model from a Lifecycle Perspective

Léa Lima, Chantal Nicole-Drancourt

LISE (CNAM, CNRS)

The main challenges

- Increasing individualisation and new social behaviour with regard to institutions and traditions
- Explosion of new social risks : fragility of married life, single parent families, mobility throughout the life cycle, development of new forms of unemployment or alternatives to work...

The issues from a lifecycle perspective

- The linearity and classic coherence of people 's personal biographies are undermined by the transformation of the economic and social system
- Do we witness a de-institutionalisation and a destandardisation of the lifecycle ? Is it possible to continue distributing rights, obligations and protections in relation to the age category?

The social model in the fordist age

- Strong institutionalisation of the « ternary scenario »: Education / Work / Retirement
- High degree of chronologisation: each stage of the lifecycle is well defined by biological age limits
- Strong functional specialisation of each lifecycle stage
- « Age oriented » social citizenship
- Standardisation of the carrers

The conception of risks in the traditional life course model

- The principal stages in life go hand in hand with age stratification and the welfare state organises and protects the lives of individuals during each of them
- At each stage the risks and certainties remain constant
- What links various forms of exposure to social risks is having the same age, being equal in age

The new life cycle approach

- A dynamic life course perspective
- Based on the degree of vulnerability : a state of high exposure to certain risks, combined with a reduced ability to protect or defend oneself against those risks and cope with the negative consequences
- We can define vulnerability classes regardless to their age category
- Individuals enter in a new life cycle when the set of risks that characterise the degree of a particular cycle 's vulnerability changes

A traditional strong age management in France

- During 30 years employment and social policies developed along age management lines
- Based on the management of the competition within the work force and more especially the handling of generational competition: education policies and retirement policies
- A single generation at work: Concentration of the working force on the 25-49

The institutionalisation of the school-to-work transition

- School-to-work transition schemes between 18 and 25 years old: specialised on the acquisition of a professional qualification outside the educational system and the development of social utility jobs
- Specific social citizenship: no social benefits for young unemployed people under 25, incitatives to strong family solidarity
- Organisation of a specific transition system and existence of young adults employment counsellors

Transitional schemes for seniors

- Retirement schemes initiated in the name of the « right to rest »
- Job seeking dispensation
- The over-50s have been channelled into low-key areas of employment without training support
- The employment rate for the 55-59 is 54 % and 13 % for the 60-64 (2003)

The consequences on the intergenerational contract

- The generation caught in the middle of the increasing demand of both the former and the following generations
- The gender contract is also at stake: incitatives to family solidarity concern mainly women

A move towards a lifecycle approach?

- 2003: Pension reform
- 2004 : Reform of the training system and the instauration of the individual right to training
- 2005: the senior citizens « back to work » plan:
 - withdrawal of the job-seeking dispensation
 - possibility of professionalisation contract or employment initiative contract
 - fixed term contracts for senior citizens
 - improved options to combine work with retirement
 - introduction of gradual early retirement for employees over 55 (half time working)

Some transitional experiments

- Idea of securing individual career paths
- The professional transition contract: employees victim of economic redundancy in SME become trainee and can receive 80 % of their previous pay during 8 months
- The employer 's group provides its member with employees on a shared-time basis who work full time for the employers ' group

Conclusion

- European policies create a strong incentive to change the lifecourse approach in thenational social model
- Still, strong age convention linking the age to certain types of jobs, forms of employment and sector the individual is working in