



Third mission of transnational experts
to Reutlingen, Schwaebisch Gmünd, Stuttgart und Tübingen from 21st to 25th May 2012

Prof. Dr. Josef Schmid

Transfer of Good Practice



Excerpt of a lecture of 23rd May 2012

(...)

I come now to the question of when good practice is *transferable*. And what we can learn from it.

Let us take a step backwards. I would not even say: we are looking on learning opportunities at the project level. One important component of looking at good practice example is becoming aware of processes that usually we might not reflect on. Who only know their own project, in basic does not know anything. It is first of all important to see why your project works, am then have a look at other projects and look how they proceed.

At the political level it is important to show that problems do have a solution. You often hear: “Well, you just cannot do anything about it.” So that means that practical examples from other countries give us some motivation also on a political level. So basically it is all about putting problems on the political agenda and what I mean by this – and I am speaking as a political scientist – that there are many problems, but only a few of them are addressed by policy makers and politicians.

Going forward in this short reflection this brings us to a phenomenon then I like to the U-curve of transferability. So if the problems are rather general and if the solutions are quite general, if they are philosophies or paradigms, then they are quite transferable. Or said with other words: if here you do find problems then these problems are of political nature, problems of political consensus. What always works well is providing specific instruments. Problems are rising with big, big programmes; there is a problem of intermitting.

If we want to see at framework conditions and want to see, if they are similar or not, we have a simple approach: we just distinguish different types of welfare and of welfare status. So we know the *liberal*, the *social democratic* and the *conservative model*, and now we in Europe often add the so-called *Mediterranean model* too. There at least as some 20 meters of literature on whether we have 3 or 4 models. I chose in a pragmatic *four-models-approach* because here there a many coming from Mediterranean countries.



Third mission of transnational experts
to Reutlingen, Schwaebisch Gmuend, Stuttgart und Tuebingen from 21st to 25th May 2012

Prof. Dr. Josef Schmid — Transfer of Good Practice — Page 3

For Germany that means that the so beloved example of Sweden often represent a problem. And for those who have another political point of view: we have to admit that the so beloved model of the United States is just as difficult and problematic. Whenever I suggest Austria as a model well people just are smiling. So terms of what are the cases we can learn from: it is those cases that might not be so sexy, so appealing, but it is those cases that are *a little bit different*. These are the efficient one that you can actually use.

So whether or not transfer is possible this does not depend only on the framework conditions but also on people and political processes. So our database is not going to save the world all by itself. What we need policy makers who will be convinced that these findings are relevant and who will be convinced that this is the way to go. Up to now databases do not take decisions.

But it is also important that policy makers are policy makers, politicians are politicians: they are not only interested in problem solving but in securing power. So this sometimes explains why certain project examples are very popular amongst politicians. Their popularity not necessarily depends on their transferability or on their value. This fact is much linked to political communication we will have to face.

So my short conclusion is: you *can* learn from the examples of others, but it is *not easy*.

Applause.

