Attractiveness of initial vocational education and training in German speaking countries

Selected findings from a large-scale comparative study perspective

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Overview
1. The study
2. The notion of attractiveness
3. The quest for comparable data
4. The Eurobarometer: perceptions of attractiveness
5. Selected findings for German-speaking countries
   - Germany (2 case studies)
   - Austria
   - Switzerland
6. Conclusions
The study

- ‘Attractiveness of European initial vocational education and training: identifying what matters’
- Funded by CEDEFOP, 2011-13
- Carried out by RAND Europe and SKOPE
- Team members: Cathleen Stasz, Susan Guthrie, Craig Holmes, Hubert Ertl, Sophie Castle-Clarke, Samuel Drabble, Lydia Villaba Van-Dijk, Elizabeth Watters
The study

- Project covered 27 EU member states plus Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, Australia and South Korea
- Short profiles on attractiveness of IVET in 32 countries
- Case studies of 2 measures to increase IVET attractiveness in 6 selected countries: Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Ireland, Spain
- Prescriptive tender document:
  ‘provide evidence to support policy decisions and actions’
  ‘evaluate current policy initiatives and measures to increase attractiveness of IVET attractiveness’
The notion of ‘attractiveness’: some starter questions

- attractive to and for whom?
- attractive compared with what?
- what factors make IVET attractive/unattractive?
- what are valid and reliable indicators of attractiveness?
- how can attractiveness be measured?
- how comparable are indicators and measurements of attractiveness across different contexts?

→ answers to questions might be different depending on whether one takes a research or policy-led perspective
The notion of ‘attractiveness’: some potential indicators

- participation rates in IVET
- supply of and demand for IVET places
- employment/unemployment rate of graduates of IVET programmes
- transition rates to higher education
- IVET graduate premium
- IVET drop-out rate
- perceptions of attractiveness held by stakeholder groups/ wider society

→ availability and reliability of data in different contexts?
The notion of ‘attractiveness’: conceptual framework

**Policy levers: IVET system**
- Improving mobility/permeability of pathways
- Introduction of VET qualifications
- Recruitment strategies
- Qualification frameworks
- Recognition and validation of non-formal learning
- Guidance services
- Promoting work-based learning
- Apprenticeship schemes
- Partnerships
- Etc.

**Endogenous variables: drivers of IVET outcomes**
*VET providers and programmes delivery*

**IVET outcomes**
- VET System characteristics:
  - Flexibility of pathways
  - Access for different socio-economic groups
  - Transparency of qualifications
  - Quality of provision
  - Institutional background
  - Etc.

**Communication of IVET outcomes**
- Who communicates?
- What is communicated?
- How is it communicated?

**Attractiveness of IVET**
- Perceptions of learning benefits
- Perceptions of learning experience
- Work conditions for teaching staff
- Etc.

**Exogenous drivers: IVET outcomes**
- Demographic trends
- Labour market trends
- Entry requirements in other sectors of education
- Etc.

**IVET system**

**Policy levers: Communication**
- Re-structuring and renaming VET courses and programmes
- Organisation of information campaigns
- (Financial) incentives
- Highlighting excellence in VET skills provided by VET (competitions, awards, etc.)
- Etc.

**Exogenous demand drivers of attractiveness**
- Labour market trends (inc. demand for specific qualifications)
- Technological trends
- Expected professional income
- Status of occupations
- Economic progress: (un)employment
- Demographic trends
- Globalisation (outsourcing, etc.)
- Etc.

**Exogenous supply drivers of attractiveness**
- Social factors, e.g.: family traditions, peer pressure, social identity, norms
- Attractiveness of other education systems
- Etc.
The quest for comparable data: educational expenditure

Public expenditure, % GDP

Vocational programmes
General programmes

Total public expenditure on upper secondary education (ISCED 3-4), % of GDP, 2008. Source: OECD and Cedefop
The quest for comparable data: relative youth unemployment

Ratio of the unemployment rate of 20-24 year-olds to those of adults (aged 25-64). Source: Eurostat
The quest for comparable data: participation in IVET

Participation rates in IVET (Level 3 & 4) vocational programmes as a % of all at ISCED 3 and ISCED 4 (18-64 year olds). Source: Eurostat
The quest for comparable data: employer engagement

Firms participating in IVET,
Source: Continuous Vocational Training Survey (CVTS), Eurostat
Perception of attractiveness: Eurobarometer 2011

- Eurobarometer: public opinion surveys on behalf of European Commission since 1973
- Main survey carried out every spring and autumn, most items constant
- Supplementary surveys on special issues, in-depth exploration of selected topics
- Attitudes towards vocational education and training (2011)
- Representative sample of population (15+) of all EU member states
Proportion of respondents stating that vocational education has a 'positive' or 'very positive' image in their country.
(Source: Special Eurobarometer 369 (2011))
Perception of attractiveness: Eurobarometer 2011

Relative esteem indicator (difference in percentage points between the percentage recommending general education and the percentage recommending vocational education).

(Source: Special Eurobarometer 369 (2011))
Comparison between participation rates in IVET and perceptions of image of vocational education.
Attractiveness of IVET in Germany

- overall good image of IVET based on success of dual system training (although: negative esteem indicator)
- stable and high demand for training places
- high levels of employer engagement
- low (absolute and relative) youth unemployment
- two types of aims of initiatives to improve IVET attractiveness:
  1) ensure perceptions of high achieving students remain positive
  2) improve IVET outside the dual system
- current challenge: integration of (young) immigrant population
1) ensure perceptions of high achieving students remain positive

- concern about shortage of highly skilled labour
- rapidly increasing participation rate in higher education

→ case study: dual study programmes
Dual study programmes: structure

- Student/Trainee
- Training contract/Internship contract
- Employer/Training company
- Contract of cooperation
- Enrolment/Matriculation
- Higher education institution
Dual study programmes: assessment

- rapid increase in participation
- traditional strong involvement of *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied science) but universities have started to compete for students
- high student satisfaction
- positive employer feedback:
  - practice relevant skills
  - contextual embedding of trainees
  - high rates of transition into permanent positions
Attractiveness of IVET in Germany

2. improve IVET outside the dual system
   - concern regarding ‘training readiness’ of sizeable proportion of young population
   - 6.5% of young people leave school without qualification
   - high drop out rate of trainees without/low school qualification in dual system
   → case study: Educational Chains initiative
Educational Chains initiative: structure

Figure: Educational Chains from school to career entry

1. Building on competences
   - Analysis of potential from Year 7 or 8

2. Keeping a firm eye on objectives
   - Career entry support from the last two years at school to the end of the 1st year of training

3. Planning for the future
   - Vocational orientation from Year 8

Source: JOBSSTARTER Programme Office, Bonn
Educational Chains initiative: assessment

- substantial funding: €460m (2010-2014)
- significant engagement: 1050 schools, 170 training providers (2012), 26,000 participants (2010)
- survey results: positive feedback from participants (improved career chances, etc.)
- drop-out rate: 14% (‘lack of motivation’)
- complex division of tasks
- trade unions: initiative does not go far enough
  → ‘ultimate success indicator’: transition into dual system training
Attractiveness of IVET in Austria

- strong position of IVET generally (see Eurobarometer measure on image and relative esteem)
- low (absolute and relative) youth unemployment
- high participation rates
- school-based training as popular as dual system training
- 5-year vocational colleges (BHS) particularly attractive

Initiatives to improve IVET attractiveness:
  - improving status and quality of teacher education and training of trainers
  - training guarantees (‘Youth employment package’)
  - dual system training with HE-entry qualification (Berufsmatura)
Attractiveness of IVET in Switzerland

- consistently high transition rate into IVET at 16 (70%)
- apprenticeship training at the centre of IVET provision, but participation patterns vary between cultural/linguistic regions
- low (absolute and relative) youth unemployment
- strong engagement of employers in IVET (‘productive contribution of trainees’)
- participation in higher education relatively low but increasing, mainly via IVET routes
- Initiatives to improve IVET attractiveness:
  - combination of VET qualification and HE-entry qualification
  - reduction of drop-out (mentoring, co-ordination of support etc.)
  - investment in research (teacher education, pedagogy, quality)
Some conclusions

- The limits of comparability
- Attractiveness a complex concept, difficult to measure
- Exogenous drivers of attractiveness determine perceived attractiveness of IVET
  - societal status
  - group pressure
  - perceived attractiveness of other types of education
- Nuanced differences between IVET in German-speaking countries important for thinking about increasing attractiveness:
  - how central is dual system training?
Thank you for your interest!

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