

# **Lifelong Learning Policies Targeting Employment Contexts**



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# Comparing temporal agendas of policies and institutions in (work-related) adult education

**Abstract:** Policies of the European Union contain a certain temporal agenda based on a conception of functionalistic, manageable, and abstract time. The text shows how this agenda has significant but different influences on national strategies (Italy and Germany) in the field of (work-related) adult education, such as the historicity or distribution of time and participation.

## Introduction

At a first empirical glance, time is understood – similar to money – as a resource. Time seems to be one of the important factors of conceptualisation and even participation in lifelong learning in modern societies. As recent statistics show, the main reason for non-participation in adult education – formal or non-formal – all over the OECD countries seems to be a lack of time (OECD, 2014, Tab. C6.5, and 2016). Different duties and learning activities in our accelerating world (Rosa, 2005) are in a state of constant competition over the scarce time resources of each individual lifetime. To solve this time conflict individually, innovations in competent time balancing are seen as a solution for combining adult learning with other time-related aspects of adult life, such as work, family, and recreation. This conception of time strongly resembles a functionalistic, management-type paradigm. That leads to the central question: How did this management-driven paradigm of time and learning become the leading temporal paradigm in (European) adult education?

In a first step, a short recapitulation of certain contemporary conceptions of time shall be laid out. Secondly, the role given to adult education in this setting is analysed. In the third step, the temporary paradigm and some phenomena are analysed in comparative terms and described via national laws, regulations, and social partners in Germany and Italy. Both countries have unique adult education systems that are influenced directly or indirectly by European policies. Whereas the German system strongly relies on institutions (time ‘rulers’ such as trade unions), the Italian system is guided mainly by laws (time regulations). In the last step, selected PIAAC data on (1) the distribution of time between formal and non-formal education and (2) the motivation for (non-)participation in adult education is presented in comparative terms to point out these differences.

## **Towards ‘modern times’ in contemporary capitalism**

Citing Norbert Elias’ conception of time as a social dimension that is dependent on its own historicity, Leccardi (2013, p. 252) states that our understanding of time is the result of an evolutionary route, tending more and more towards an abstract conception of time (which means measured time) as the complexity of society grows. The question would arise how and in what direction contemporary capitalism has modified the temporal coordinates of early modernity. The sociologist David Harvey gives a thorough account of the impacts of postmodern production on society: New technologies in production and flexible accumulation, vertical disintegration intensifying the labour process and the need for reskilling to meet new labour needs, a shift in consumption from goods to services, and the dematerialisation of money (to name a few examples) lead to an overall instantaneity, a temporariness that is described as an intensified time-space compression (Harvey, 1990, pp. 284–286, 297). In a similar vein, Leccardi states that earlier understandings of space and time have been altered through the means of electronic communication technologies: As they accelerate the economy and society alike, the temporal profundity of one’s life is replaced by a succession of instants. As a result, simultaneity functions as a new normative ideal. On top, globalisation creates a single (global) temporal system, whose core is instantaneousness (Leccardi, 2013, p. 253). The question is: What does that mean for everyday life and work in general, and adult education in particular?

As the world ‘gets smaller’, significant changes in the temporal structure of work and life in general can be seen. Alhadeff-Jones, Lesourd, Roquet, and Le Grand (2011, p. 397) state that in every moment one knows what is happening on the other side of the world and, depending on one’s work, has to constantly adjust to it. This changes the individual’s relationship to past, present, and future. Alhadeff-Jones et al. see a key challenge for adults in the development of the capacity to pilot the temporalities and rhythms of their own life, meaning to be able to connect their own past, present, and future to negotiate changes and transformations in life (ibid.). This explicitly does not only mean learning time management but learning how one relates to time. Following Nowotny, what we experience is an ‘extended present’, as constant change and time pressure decrease our temporal horizon. We have to focus on the ‘now’ in the ‘real-time’ moment (ibid.). Harvey calls it ‘playing the volatility right’ (Harvey, 1990, p. 286), Leccardi talks about ‘projectuality’ (2013): being highly adaptable, flexible, and fast moving instead of relying on (now) difficult long-term planning.

Given the emphasis on the present to near future, adult education becomes the role, and lifelong learning becomes an instrument to cope with the constant need to adapt to transformation in modern Western society – in a purely functionalistic and affirmative way. As Schmidt-Lauff and Bergamini (2017, p. 99) critically state, lifelong learning is often the answer to the erosion of temporal structures: ‘Learning over the lifespan emerges as an example of a successful (educational) biography’. Lifelong learning thus becomes a norm, matching the ideal of simultaneity or individual managerialism.

### **Movements in-between adult education and the economy**

The above-mentioned functionalistic approach to lifelong learning can also be found in its supposed role for economic prosperity in European policies. Lima and Guimarães (2011, pp. 25–27) describe a policy shift from the welfare state to the neoliberal state starting in the 1970s; humanistic and social democratic policies were abandoned in favour of a new capitalistic configuration inspired by what they call managerialism. Economically, a transition from the post-war model of full employment supported by the welfare state towards a knowledge-based society produces constant transformations. Thus, constant fundamental change stresses the need for lifelong adaptation. Ideologically, a shift from state-centred welfare to market-centred individual responsibility took place that shows strong similarities to the postmodernist condition described by Harvey above. The relations between education, learning, and employment changed along with that shift: ‘[E]ducation is reconfigured as a form of knowledge that makes it possible to decide on the future of work, the organisation of knowledge institutions, and the way society will be in the future.’ (Lima & Guimarães, 2011, p. 27)

According to Lima and Guimarães (2011, p. 29), UNESCO was particularly important in developing adult education as a public policy segment. A main reason for the commitment to lifelong education and the combination of formal, non-formal, and informal types of education lays in the fact that since at least World War II, many countries’ education systems failed to fulfil the expectation of upward social mobility through traditional formal education systems. As UNESCO-published research like R. H. Dave’s *Foundations of Lifelong Education* (1976) shows, the promotion of lifelong education to overcome ‘the dead end of equality of opportunity’ (p. 150) and to cope with the ‘changing requirements of the system’ (p. 151) paralleled the neoliberal economic turn of Western societies.

In 2016, Lima, Guimarães, and Touma combined the description of shifting state priorities concerning adult education into a framework that depends mainly on three idealised models: the democratic-emancipatory model, the modernisation

and state control model, and the human resources management model. The latter one strongly resembles aspects of the postmodernist condition and its effects mentioned above in the context of lifelong learning. It 'stresses the withdrawal of the state that is justified with the internationalisation of the economy, global competition, and diminishing public resources' (Lima, Guimarães, & Touma, 2016, p. 39). In the human resources management model, learning, especially seen as lifelong adaptation to labour needs, is a responsibility of the individual. Accordingly, the model focuses on the acquisition of competencies in the context of employment, contradicting the modernisation and state control model's focus on formalised education aimed at qualification (*ibid.*, p. 36).

At this point, we can summarise that the contemporary economic configuration and its concept of education require lifelong adaptation to transformations in all parts of life, especially focused on employment. Adaptation most often translates into gaining specific competences, which leads to a temporal pronunciation of the (extended and accelerated) present in favour of the past and distant future in the context of learning. As we want to show, this functionalistic conception of time can be traced in European and national educational policies, promoting a functionalistic concept of education named 'lifelong learning'.

Nowadays, the EU concept of lifelong learning incorporates aspects of various earlier models: Whereas OECD's 1970s concept of 'recurrent education' mainly focused on alternating phases of (mostly formal) education or training and work (Trappman & Draheim, 2009, p. 534), and UNESCO's visionary and emancipatory 'lifelong education', as laid out in the 1973 Faure report, proposed 'learning to be' in a learning society (Faure et al., 1973), lifelong learning combines both the employment focus of OECD and the temporal simultaneity of UNESCO, in an ever accelerated condition. In addition, the described shift from public to personal responsibility described by Lima et al. requires 'lifetime flexibility' (Greenwood & Stuart, 2006, p. 115). Lifelong learning thus refers to both Leccardi's simultaneity as well as Harvey's temporariness in a space-time-compressed environment, including a 'biographical dimension' (Trappman & Draheim, 2009, p. 534) through individual temporal responsibility. In the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, the Commission of the European Communities laid out its picture of a future Europe: Redrawing the changes to society described above, the document defines them as an 'overall transition to a knowledge society, whose economic basis is the creation and exchange of immaterial goods and services. In this kind of social world, up-to-date information, knowledge and skills are at a premium' (EC, 2000, p. 7).

## Temporal strategies of lifelong learning

The adult education systems of Germany and Italy are the product of their respective history. Both systems are directly influenced by European policies (Lima & Guimarães, 2011; Lima et al., 2016). But as complex as the national systems are, the effects of EU influence are the same. Accordingly, the following sections will give a small insight into major strategies concerning temporalities (e.g. historicity, functionalisation and explicitly of learning time, future shaping of lifelong learning strategies) of each country to introduce the respective paradigms considering 'Europeanisation' factors.

### Historical developments (laws and social partners)

The EU concept of lifelong learning has undoubtedly had a strong impact on the German adult education sectors. Two main reasons can be identified: First, the adult education sector in Germany is traditionally highly diverse, and thus hard to reform as a whole. Second, the strongly corporatist character of policy-making includes many stakeholders, which often follow their own agendas. A 'Europeanisation' of German lifelong learning policies in the way of a 'central penetration of national systems of governance' (Olsen, 2002, p. 923), meaning 'domestic impacts of European-level institutions' (ibid., p. 932) occur, if at all, fractional. The fact that the states have jurisdiction over education in Germany has produced 16 different, sometimes similar laws covering adult education. Many of them originally date back to the 1970s by referring to the ILO C140 Convention, concerning free learning time via Paid Educational Leave (ILO, 1974). The federal adult and continuing education laws provide for a legal foundation of the highly diverse and heterogeneous system of adult education and training in Germany (institutions, programmes, financing, target groups, learning time, etc.).

Historically, the development of adult education laws in Italy started (like in Germany) in the 1970s. The national law 300/1970 art. 10 and many national collective agreements of 1973 define and declare the right to study for workers. The law promotes the education of workers, who are entitled to a certain number of paid hours off work (maximum 150 hours per year, but up to 250 for employees who need to obtain a basic level of compulsory education) to attend any kind of institution or certified organisation offering courses related or not related to their professional activities. Learning time – as hours per year – are clearly defined and therefore triable. Art. 10 also defines the number of individuals who can be absent from the company to attend courses at the same time. Further agreements of paid (or unpaid) education for workers are described in national workers' agreements,

trade union agreements, and the individual job contract. Workers who are enrolled in any formal educational courses (such as a bachelor's or a master's degree) have the right to a paid day off to take exams (see below).

Different and not easily compulsory, was the development of the 'Quaternary Segment: Adult Education' in Germany: The political struggle over the future shape of vocational education and continuous training was and is strongly influenced by important stakeholders, especially the 'social partners' (trade unions, their associations, and the employers' associations). The managerialist approach of the EU lifelong learning concept does not go unchallenged by those institutions. Temporal and formal/non-formal aspects of learning and working play a major role in this struggle, too. Both policy-makers and the social partners rely strongly on scientific analyses to strengthen their point.

In the Italian context, concepts such as adult education and lifelong learning are still not common and sometimes confused. Adult education is defined as 'an educational offer, both formal and non-formal, aimed at and designed for adults (Italians and migrants)' (La Marca, n. d.) and is considered a responsibility of the state (policy). It is possible to divide offerings into two macro-categories: first, adult instruction, or *Istruzione degli Adulti*, which concerns literacy skills or the achievement of a formal diploma (e.g. high school diploma); it is entrusted to the Ministry of Education. It is accompanied by professional training, or *Formazione Professionale*, which is administrated by the regions and provinces (in partnership with other entities) (Gallina, 2016). The first category, as will become clear in the next paragraph, targets people who are unemployed and people with a gap in their education. The second macro-category concerns continuous training, or *Formazione Continua*. It refers to activities connected to professional development and employee requalification (ISFOL, 2016). In 1997, the Italian ministerial decree 455/97 represented the first step towards the concretisation of adult education (first category). Nowadays, after years of evolution and reforms, the main protagonists (for formal education) of adult education are the 'Provincial Centres for Adult Education' (*Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti* – CPIA). Most of the adults who attend formal courses there have special needs regarding time (e.g. due to their job). The full-week courses offered by the centres are organised in the evenings to be more accessible to potential learners to earn the desired formal diploma. CPIA offerings are not limited to primary, secondary, or upper secondary school, they also include functional literacy courses (literature, foreign languages, IT, etc.) and literacy and social integration courses for foreigners (Gallina, 2016).

## Learning-time regulations

For Germany, an overall regulation about learning-time (as the 150 hours of learning per year in Italy) does not exist. But the concept of paid educational leave includes the 'Länder Regulations', which deal with educational leave (*Bildungsurlaub, Bildungs- und Freistellungsgesetze*). Fourteen out of sixteen German states have these legislative options. Every employee has the option to request approximately five days of paid leave per year to participate in specifically accredited courses on differing topics (mostly vocational but also language courses, study trips, political topics, etc.). The instrument's primary objective is to grant employees time off to participate in learning outside the work environment in something outside of their employability focus. Some states have further instruments (e.g. educational vouchers or *Bildungsscheck*) to encourage adults to take learning time by means of financial stimuli.

In some aspects comparable to the above-mentioned German situation, the Italian Law 53/2000 Art. 5 regulates learning times. Most of the initiatives are directed in a human resources management model view, which focuses on the empowerment of individuals and their competences to support the economic view of new public management: the market orientation. Law 53/2000 Art. 5 re-regulates the time aspect regarding workers, who can ask time off work for educational purposes that must be related to the work context. Individuals who have accumulated five years of seniority in the same company or organisation can request up to 11 (unpaid) months, consecutive or not, with respect to the whole work-related lifetime. The training leave concerns only the training activities and education activities not organised by the employee. Article 6 of the same law, incorporating the 5th as its evolution, declares the right to education and training, including the right to leave for continuous training, employed or not, to develop professional knowledge and competence. The training, in this case, can be proposed by the employee and be granted together by the employer and social partners. The regions and autonomous provinces (Trento and Bolzano) are responsible for funding the project – with funding received from individuals or organisations (companies, NGOs, associations, training bodies, etc.) – and for communicating the data and prospective developments.

To communicate and reflect on the data for a supporting concept in Germany, the closing report of the 'Independent Expert Commission on Funding Lifelong Learning' (*Unabhängige Expertenkommission zur Finanzierung Lebenslangen Lernens* (UEK), 2004) was published as a strategic paper. It defines objectives to 'propose funding suggestions that are suitable to promote innovation, economic growth and social cohesion' (UEK, 2004, p. 12). Knowledge and learning are seen

as key factors for economic development; *Bildung* as an investment in human capital (p. 18), which, through innovation, promotes economic growth. The impact of knowledge expansion is estimated to be higher the faster new knowledge is created (p. 17). The key resources for this investment in the individual and collective future of a knowledge-based economy and society are time and money (p. 33). The report thoroughly presents the many different possibilities in which way the temporal and financial costs of this 'investment' can be shared between state institutions, companies, social partners, and individuals. The expert commission recommends a set of instruments that divide the overall costs between these stakeholders. For job-related learning, the resources are provided by employers (learning during work-time, financial costs) and individuals (learning during non-paid work time and leisure time) (p. 187). This division follows the basic rationale that companies, on the one hand, should be responsible for vocational education and training investments, but that individuals, on the other hand, should contribute adequately to the costs (p. 182). From the commission's viewpoint, work-related learning agreements should become a standard paragraph in employment contracts (p. 235). Learning-time accounts are seen as a suitable instrument and should be further developed (p. 236).

### **Partnerships – to the future of lifelong learning – struggling between general adult education and vocational education and training**

The national government started to stimulate partnerships and networking in Italy in 2001 with Directive no. 22/01, which declared that there should be an integrated system of institutions and organisations responding to the educational and instructional needs of the population, referring also to their culture and the level of education. Formal adult education, as explained before, is not only about literacy and instruction. Professional training, which is more connected to the Ministry of Labour, is the other side of the coin, fostering the possibilities for people who do not have any certification or diploma giving them access to a profession. It is strongly connected to adult instruction; it relates to basic competences and knowledge in formal certificate/diploma courses, designed to transmit professional skills for middle- and low-qualified jobs. Professional training is organised in collaboration with the region or the province and other entities, such as regional professional training bodies, universities, public technical and professional institutions, and companies.

After six years, not least because of the influence of the EU agenda aims and the goals of the European Social Fund (ESF), an Italian financial law (269/06, art. 632) was passed describing the duties of the whole national system with respect to

regions, local entities, and the aims imposed by the EU. Adult education direction has been shaped with the European aim to increase educational attainment. Since the beginning, the EU has played a central role because of the strong financial subsidies for courses and activities, mostly for professional training and continuous training. As a consequence, the EU and the ESF started to play a central role influencing the providers.

The situation is similar for the non-formal education side, where associations, non-profit organisations, training bodies, and third-age universities are engaged in the same search for funds. Each entity coordinates the design of its programmes and courses in cooperation with the region and the province to be able to obtain funds that allow the entity to offer courses for individuals. One of the most important laws defining and giving a protocol to lifelong learning and hence adult education is law 92/2012. Before that law was passed, a direct definition of lifelong learning, as connected to formal, non-formal, and informal education did not exist; neither was there a focus on learning as the most important principle for personal, civic, social, and professional growth. It is clear how the definition and inspiration refers to the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (EC, 2000). The law was introduced by the Ministry of Economic Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, University, and Research, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The law took effect in 2013 with the national administrative order number 13, which underlines the right to lifelong learning of every individual.

To underline the German context and its conceptualisation of lifelong learning as vocational education, two examples of governance partnerships should be presented here: The trade union pamphlet 'Education is not a Commodity' (*Bildung ist keine Ware*, Bayer et al., 2006) and the trade union campaign 'My Life – My Time' (*Mein Leben – Meine Zeit*, IG Metall, 2015).

The trade union pamphlet 'Education is not a commodity' (Bayer et al., 2006) focuses on the effects of employment on the employed but covers the same considerations. The authors acknowledge there is a broad consensus in society to implement lifelong learning in everyday work relations (p. 84). The process of doing so, on the other hand, seems to be far from completed (p. 84). From their viewpoint, the vocational education system is facing a crisis (p. 2) rooted in the accelerated pace of economic development. To solve this crisis, they recommend a list of objectives that the trade unions should fight for. Lifelong learning should provide individual ways of access, shared responsibility (of employers and employees), and reliable regulations. The authors acknowledge that investing in society's human capital (such as lifelong learning), as demanded by politicians, today also includes self-responsibility, meaning the privatisation of costs (p. 84). They argue that the

promised benefits for the individual from personal investment into continuing education and training are highly questionable. They state that new allocation patterns emerge in practice, which in general foster individual responsibility for indirect costs, mainly through temporal resources (p. 85). Contributing time can evoke 'temporal conflicts' between different qualities of time, meaning different responsibilities that require one's time. The risk of time conflicts is not equal for all employees, relating to individual conditions of income and life in general (p. 85), and different time responsibilities in detail: family, side jobs, overtime hours, to name a few. The general shift towards individual responsibility for adaptation gets formalised in time-sharing agreements between the companies and the employees. The new 'allocation patterns' require time contribution by the employees not only in self-initiated learning but also in learning that is directly required by the job (p. 88). From the trade unions' point of view, this trend is the result of a shift of power between employers and employees – and it is the responsibility of the state to reverse it, mainly by taking up extensive financial responsibility for continuing education, which to this date is not the case (p. 89).

Launched in 2015, the trade union campaign 'My life – my time' (IG Metall, 2015) showcases a number of steps the trade unions believe have been achieved since the 2006 pamphlet. One of the key points are regulations concerning the shared investment of temporal resources into work-related learning: the so-called 'educational part time'. Since 2015, agreements have been made with different economic sectors (employers' associations) to regulate the contribution of time (and financial resources) to qualification arrangements for employees. The unions' rather strong position is evident from the fact that these arrangements concern self-initiated learning, that is, learning not necessarily directly required by the current employment. Learning directly required for the job should be the sole responsibility of employers. 'Educational part time' could mean vocational qualification and upper secondary or tertiary education, for example. Employees gain the right to reduce working time in favour of learning time for up to seven years while remaining eligible to return to full-time employment afterwards. Learning time can be full time or part time (next to the job), whilst retaining at least 50 per cent of wage payments. Employees can increase their earnings during educational part time by regular payments into educational accounts. Moreover, they can invest financial (special payments, savings) and temporal resources (e.g. overtime hours) to increase wage payments during the learning phase up to a targeted 70 per cent of the former full-time payment.

## Empirical view on learning times: Comparative PIAAC data analysis

In the following section, the effects of both systems are ‘temporally’ traced again, empirically within the PIAAC data (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) collected by the OECD.

### Temporal resources for learning

The PIAAC data on Germany (OECD, 2016) provide empirical background that clearly shows the challenges or even disparities between political policies and the reality of adult education and training (AET). Focussing here only on time-related data, a trend of mostly non-formal education at the workplace versus formal education outside of employment arrangements can be reconfirmed by looking at the contribution of temporal resources:

*Table 1: Distribution of time between formal and non-formal education with employed interviewees.*

	Germany		Italy	
	Formal Education	Non-formal Education	Formal Education	Non-formal Education
<b>Working hours only</b>	17.2%	53.3%	4%	49%
<b>Mostly working hours</b>	10.9%	13.6%	5%	14%
<b>Mostly in non-working hours</b>	13.1%	5.8%	19%	8%
<b>Non-working hours only</b>	58.8%	27.4%	72%	29%

Source: OECD (2016), own arrangement (Variables B\_Q10b; B\_Q15b), ISFOL. (2013). PIAAC-OCSE – Rapporto nazionale sulle Competenze degli Adulti. ISFOL.

For Germany, we can see that the highest rate (58.8%) of learning occurs in the formal AET segment but outside of the workplace (formal learning during ‘non working hours only’). At the same time, 53.3 per cent of learning as non-formal education takes place during ‘working hours only’. All in all, 50.3 per cent of employed interviewees participated in formal or non-formal AET for job-related reasons in the 12 months before the interview (without table). What is more, 43.7 per cent participated in non-formal education for job-related reasons (only 7.5% for non-job related reasons).

For Italy, the PIAAC data show fairly similar proportions. Whereas formal AET is mainly done in an ‘out of the office’ setting (72% of formal learning during

‘non-working hours only’), non-formal AET takes place mainly at work (49% during ‘working hours only’ versus 29% during ‘non-working hours only’).

Table 1 clearly shows that the temporal resources for formal education are mainly invested outside of working hours – both in Italy and Germany. Temporally, this provokes the ‘competent time balancing management paradigm’ in modern lives, as pointed out in the introduction. On the one hand, it seems problematic that workplace-related demands (skills and knowledge) – which are available via formal learning activities – compete strongly with private time, individual personal or social/family time, recreation, and so forth. On the other hand, the individual responsibility for formal qualification seems to be very strong. By adding monetary aspects to the PIAAC data for Italy, we can find that most non-formal education in Italy is fully or partially paid for by the employer (50%; cf. ISFOL, 2013, pp. 146–161). And most of the formal education is paid for by employees (31%); the majority (61%) of learners had to pay for it completely in order to be able to get the job they were looking for (ISFOL, 2013). Although the emphasis in both countries is on non-formal education during working hours, and formal education outside of working time, the values show slightly different pronunciations: While in Germany much more people take part in formal education during work time, those approx. 13 per cent are placed in strictly non-work time hours in Italy. But more research and reflection on the data is needed to connect it to the described struggle of the social partners in Germany described above. Do ‘time-sharing’ investments between employers and employees already work in Germany?

### **Temporal reasons for non-participation**

For both countries, the reasons given for non-participation in any learning activity confirm the prominent meaning of temporal resources (Table 2). In Italy, 38 per cent of the non-participants reported the educational activity was in conflict with their working time; in Germany 31.3 per cent reported the same conflict. Another 18 per cent in Italy and nearly 14 per cent in Germany did not have time because of family reasons. Concerning gender (no table), family reasons were the main obstacle for women (the main reasons for men concerned work) in both countries. Whether this would be different with so-called ‘time-management’ or ‘work-life balance’ schemes in place could not be answered with this data (for a critical analysis, cf. Schmidt-Lauff & Bergamini, 2017). Nonetheless, we propose a critical view here, which reflects structural problems and cultural phenomena as well, in the specific ‘functional conception of time’ in modernity, as pointed out above.

Table 2: Distribution of the reasons for non-participation in educational/training activities.

Motivation for non-participation	Germany	Italy
Not required	1.9%	3%
Too expensive	10.1%	16%
Not supported by employer	9.8%	3%
Too busy with work	31.3%	38%
Too far, or not at a good time	15.1%	6%
Did not have time because of family reasons	13.6%	18%
Unexpected commitment	2.6%	3%
Other	13%	13%

Source: OECD (2016) (Variable B\_Q26b); ISFOL. (2013). PIAAC-OCSE – Rapporto nazionale sulle Competenze degli Adulti, pp. 159–160, authors' arrangement.

The obstacle of accessibility (geographic and temporal) is nearly three times higher in Germany than in Italy (15% versus 6%). This is surprising, because the infrastructure as well as the number of providers or the wide range of courses seems to be extraordinary in Germany (e.g. more than 905 *Volkshochschulen*; DIE, 2014). Likewise, the difference between employer support ('not supported by employer') is three times higher in Italy than in Germany (9.8% vs. 3%), which is surprising for us. For Germany, there seems to be a distinct disparity between the political discourse on work-related learning or lifelong learning and reality. This disparity could be interpreted as a sign of political development that has not yet come to an end.

## Conclusion

When comparing the situation in Italy and Germany, it becomes clear that the EU policies' influence on national (work-related) adult learning and education is much more diverse than policies assume. Historically grown systems follow national structure (e.g. the federal system in Germany) as well as international influences (the ILO Paid Educational Leave as an orientation for Italian laws and German regulations). Nonetheless, transformations in both countries are orientated towards the European perspective of highly dynamic economies and accelerated times in general. Time becomes more and more a (countable) resource, politically and economically hard-fought and challenged between human wants, personal interests, family needs, and employers' interests (production, profit). Different stakeholders, according to their respective historicity, struggle to shape the

future of the lifelong learning system. Whereas in politically corporatist Germany, the social partners have a strong influence next to the rather diverse state laws, the policy influence in Italy proves to be much higher.

However, the centre of both the German and the Italian stakeholders' attention is on dividing the shares of financial and temporal resources in 'educational investments' (Schmidt-Lauff, 2003). The human resources management model's individual responsibility for personal qualification clearly shows in the time investment of individuals. 'Playing the volatility right' seems to be not only a question of personal disposition but also of labour politics in an accelerative modern society.

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## **Lifelong learning and skill development policies and programmes: A comparison between India and South Korea**

**Abstract:** In the era of knowledge-based economies, vocational education and skill development activities have gained a central place on global and national agendas. The paper tries to throw light on the development of vocational education and skill development policies and programmes in India and South Korea.

The comparison is made in terms of the concept of vocational education, the actors involved, the target group, and the evolution of policies and programmes. The paper also highlights the interdependencies of the vocational education and the employment context in both countries.

### **Introduction**

The world is changing at a greater pace in social, cultural, economic, technological, and environmental domains; as a consequence, there is rapid change in human affairs worldwide, which necessitated a revision of adult education and its reconfiguration as lifelong learning. According to Shah (2015), India's interest in lifelong learning has been greatly influenced by the global discourse on lifelong learning, especially the advocacy by transnational actors like UNESCO and the European Union. The idea of lifelong education is not new – the concept has been expressed by philosophers and educators throughout the centuries – but the importance given to the lifelong education has varied over time and place. The global discourse of lifelong learning initiated by UNESCO, especially after the publication of *Learning: The Treasures Within* (1996) and the *Memorandum of Lifelong Learning* of the Commission of the European communities (2000), played a crucial role in shaping India's lifelong learning policy. While UNESCO worked with government officials and tried to influence the national adult education policy, the European Commission made systematic attempts to promote lifelong learning through universities. The European specialists persuaded the University Grants Commission to formulate lifelong learning policy and programmes at Indian universities (Shah, 2015).

### Lifelong education and learning

denotes an overall scheme aimed both at restructuring the existing education system and at developing the entire educational potential outside the education system in such a scheme where men and women are the agents of their own education, through continual interaction between their thoughts and actions; education and learning, far from being limited to a period of attendance at school, should extend throughout life, include all skills and branches of knowledge, use all possible means, and give opportunity to all people for full development of the personality; the educational and learning processes in which children, young people and adults of all ages are involved in the course of their lives, in whatever form, should be considered as a whole. (UNESCO, 2005, pp. 70–71)

It is unfortunate to say that the richness of the concept of lifelong learning has not been translated into policies and programmes in the countries; in the Indian context, for example, we can see that lifelong learning is often used as an umbrella term to cover basic literacy, post literacy, continuing education, and extension programmes of different organisations, refresher/continuing courses of professional bodies, private institutions and business houses; but not conceived as an overarching framework of learning. The Global Monitoring Report 2015/2016 (World Bank Group & International Monetary Fund, 2016) makes a remark on the present status of lifelong learning in the world by reporting that the aims of lifelong learning have not been fully achieved. In the globalised world, countries are interested in growing their economies at a greater pace. Knowledge is the major driving force of the economy, and thus more attention is paid to knowledge and skill acquisition. This rising demand for knowledgeable and skilled personnel has alarmed the countries to make skill development and human resource development activities the top priority on national policy agendas.

The concept of skill development, vocational education, and its activities has far-reaching meanings and orientations. Skills development enhances both people's capacities to work and their opportunities at work, offering more scope for creativity and satisfaction at work. The future prosperity of any country depends ultimately on the number of persons in employment and on how productive they are at work. On the one hand, skills are one of the major factors for economic production and growth; on the other hand, skills have a great influence on personal development, learning, the standard of living, and social participation. A skilled and productive workforce more efficiently produces higher standards of goods and services, which in turn forms the basis for faster economic growth and rising living standards. Countries across the world have embraced the concept of skill development differently. For some countries like China and India, professional development, up-skilling, and soft skills are the main focus in skill development

activities, whereas for some countries, including South Korea, basic vocational skills are the focus (Mohanty, 2007).

In the present scenario, skill development is at the forefront of national agendas and policies. In India, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship was established on 9 November 2014 to coordinate all skill-related initiatives (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2017). Skill development activities vary by countries due to historical, socio-economic, and political developments. In complex societies, the employment context is influenced by the economy, the public, and civil society. The emergence of skill development and vocational education policies and programmes over time serves as a window for understanding the interdependency of skill development policies and vocational education policies with the employment context. This paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. How has skills training in lifelong learning emerged and developed in both countries?
2. Who are the providers of skills training in both countries?
3. What are the differences and similarities in skills training and vocational education in both countries?

The paper not only identifies the need for vocational skills development in India and South Korea but also explores the evolution of skill development and vocational policies. Towards the end, the policies are compared in terms of aims, actors, targets, and their interdependency with the employment context.

## **The Indian context**

India is a South Asian country with a population of 1.3 billion. It has a diverse socio-cultural context and widely varying demographic and socio-economic conditions. India is a developing country and one of the youngest nations in the world, with more than 54 per cent of the total population aged below 25 years. India's workforce is the second largest in the world (MHRD, 2016). 62 per cent of India's population lies in the working age group (15–59 years), and 90 per cent of its workforce works in the unorganised sector (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015). The term 'unorganised sector' refers to enterprises owned by individuals or self-employment workers and engaged in the production or sale of goods or services of any kind. If such an enterprise employs workers, their number is fewer than ten (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2008). The working age group (15–59 years) can produce the desired result if they are adequately skilled.

## What is a skill?

Skill means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. Skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments). (Government of India, 2013, p. 1)

## Need for skill development in India

India has had a need for skill development since the times it was ruled by the British. The need intensified with independence, as there was a huge demand for skilled workers in the labour market due to globalisation, technological change, and innovation – key factors that influenced the kind of work done and the way of doing it. In recent times, the economic growth of any country is driven by the knowledge and skills of its population. ‘India is in transition to a knowledge based economy and its competitive edge will be determined by the abilities of its people to create, share and use knowledge more effectively.’ (Goel, 2011, p. 1). For a smooth transition, it is necessary that India make its workers more adaptable and skilled.

Employment opportunities are affected by supply- and demand-side issues. On the supply side, professionals entering the job market are lacking in required skills, and on the demand side, there are not enough job opportunities. India’s restrictive labour laws are partly responsible for discouraging growth in industry and employment. For instance, labour laws restrict units that employ more than 100 workers from firing employees (Skilling India, 2010). A study report released by the Ministry of Skill Development estimated an incremental human resource demand of 109.73 million by 2022 (MSDE, 2016). On the other hand, only 2 per cent of the total workforce in India has presently undergone skills training. This shows that there is a large section of the working population who are to be skilled for jobs (FICCI, 2015).

Skill development of the unskilled is one issue; the employability and productivity of those entering the labour market is another. As per the 2015 India Skills Report, conducted by Wheebox, India’s leading online talent assessment company, only 37.22 per cent of the people surveyed were found employable. The National Sample Survey Office (2010) showed that only 10.1 per cent of the labour force had received vocational training, with only 25.6 per cent of them receiving formal vocational training. India is ranked last among 60 countries on labour productivity (GOI, 2010).

In India, there is a large skill gap as well as a skill shortage. In simple terms, a skill gap can be defined as the difference between the skills needed for a job

versus the skills possessed by a prospective worker. Two types of skill gap can be observed: first, a low-educated, unskilled labour force entering the labour market and second, an educated labour force unable to find jobs matching their qualification due to their lack of technical and soft skills. A survey of 303 employers across the country by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in 2010 found that a majority of graduates lacked adequate 'soft skills' to be employed in the industry. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry survey found that only 26 per cent of employers are satisfied with their employees' ability to communicate in English, 'the most widely used professionally communicated language'.

Skilling and upskilling is imperative for the country's economic development and its ability to compete with other economies in the knowledge-driven society. Various policies and programmes have been launched by the Government of India to become the most productive workforce in the world.

### **Development of skill development policies and programmes in India**

Skill development and vocational education have existed in India since ancient times, when people did all kinds of work on their own. Back then, skills were usually transferred from father to son. Over time, the idea of skill development has changed in the country. During pre-independence time, the British needed technicians in various areas, hence technical and vocational colleges were started in the country. During this phase, the education system in India was bookish and focused more on literacy; much less energy was devoted to vocational skill development. In response, many commissions and committees were formed to design strategic plans for setting up a vocational education system in India.

#### *Pre-independence*

Officially, vocational education was advocated and planned by the Abbot-Wood Report in 1936–37. This report recommended a hierarchy of vocational and training institutions to be run parallel at the institutions imparting general education (Government of India, 1967). In the pre-independence period, the Central Advisory Board of Education (1943), the Sargent Committee (1944), and the Sarkar Committee (1945) were put in action to plan various aspects of technical education and vocational education in the country. India won independence in 1947, and the country had to address lots of problems like poverty, unemployment, literacy, and so on. In order to address these problems and improve its economy, providing vocational training to its citizens was imperative.

*Post-independence*

After independence, the Secondary Education Commission (1952–53) called for introducing craft and vocational education in secondary schools, and the Kothari Commission (1964–66) suggested providing students with vocational courses at the school level to develop their interest, skills, and capacities in various vocational fields. It also suggested that students should be given the opportunity to get admission to industrial training institutes and polytechnic institutions. The National Education Policy (1986) envisaged vocational training to counter the mismatch in the demand and supply of skilled manpower. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) was given the task of providing vocational education and training programmes to general and prioritised groups (Goel, 2011, p. 9). There were also organisations like the National Renewal Fund (1991–2000), which aimed at providing a safety net to employees affected by modernisation and technological advancements. It provided training as well as funds for self-employment (GK Today). Vocational education in India is associated with the formal education system, from the secondary education level to the higher education level. Skill development programmes are programmes separate from the formal education system.

After independence, skill development programmes focused on the rural population, the illiterate, neo-literates, women, and the disadvantaged. Some examples of the programmes are: Support to Training and Employment Programme for women (1986), established to give women the competencies and skills to become self-employed/entrepreneurs; Gramin Vikas Trust (1992), established for vocational skill training of rural youth and adults; Jan Shikshan Sansthan, created to meet the educational and vocational training needs of illiterates and neo-literates in the age group of 15–35 (Jaganathan, 2013).

### **Towards the establishment of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**

In its 11th Five-Year Development Plan (2007–2012), India became serious about skill development; as a result, a series of steps were taken for skill education and training. There was a vast expansion of industrial training centres, polytechnics, vocational schools, and skill development centres to provide youth and adults with access to vocational training. The 11th Plan gave a very high priority to higher education. Initiatives such as establishing 30 new central universities, 5 new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISER), 8 Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), 7 Indian Institutes of Management (IIM), 20 Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIIT), and the like were taken to meet the challenge of skill development (Skill Development and Training, 2010). During the 11th

Five-Year Plan, various councils and bodies were created. First, the National Skill Development Council (NSDC) was set up to coordinate various schemes provided by various ministries; second, the National Skills Development Board (NSDB) was set up to coordinate 17 relevant ministries; third, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was created to operate in a public-private partnership mode (PPP) involving industry associations and industry representatives to upgrade training institutions and deliver vocational training; fourth, Sector Skills Councils were set up for about two dozen sub-sectors involving various interested industrial associations to identify skills gaps and enhance skills training in each sub-sector. Also during this period, India's first National Skill Development Policy was brought out in 2009, and subsequently, the National Skill Development Mission was launched in 2010.

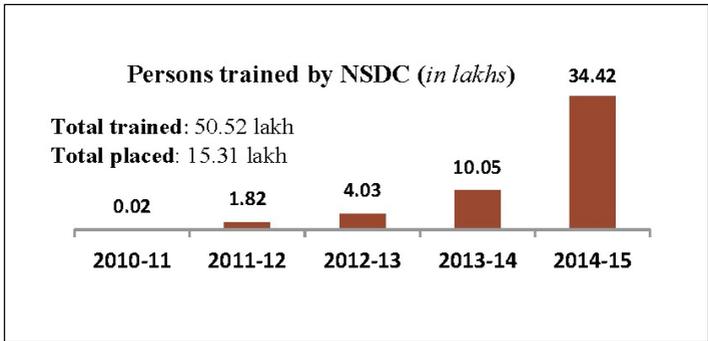
The National Policy on Skill Development covered institution-based skill development training, formal and informal apprenticeships, and other types of training by enterprises, training for self-employment, adult learning, training of retired or retiring employees and lifelong learning, non-formal training by civil society organisations, e-learning, web-based learning, and distance learning.

In 2010, the first national manufacturing policy was issued with an emphasis on skills development as a strategy to strengthen India's manufacturing sector. It also emphasised skill development for minimally educated workers in the unorganised sector. And as a result of this policy, the Modular Employable Skills (MES) scheme was started, and trainees were awarded certificates for the skills they learned. In 2013, India came up with the first National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). It is a competency-based framework that organises all qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills, and aptitude. These levels, graded from one to ten, are defined in terms of learning outcomes that the learner must possess, regardless of whether they were obtained through formal, non-formal, or informal learning. Under the NSQF, learners can acquire certification for competencies needed at any level through formal, non-formal, or informal learning (National Skill Qualification Framework, 2013). NSQF was followed by the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) in 2013, which provides guidelines for a nationally recognised qualification system to standardise training contents, set national standards, and recognise the skills learned at schools, vocational training institutes, and higher education institutions. The NVEQF has led to the close collaboration and partnership of the government with industry to develop courses, curricula, assessment, certification, and placement (MHRD, 2013).

In spite of all these developments, the 12th Five-Year Plan observes that the skill development programmes in the past had no sufficient connection to market demand, revealing poor collaboration with the labour market (GOI, 2013). Against this background, the government created a Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

The main role of the ministry includes coordination, development of frameworks, mapping of skills and certification, institute-industry linkages, and other tasks. The ministry works primarily through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), and the Directorate of Training (DT). Projections show that 500 million people need to be skilled by 2020. Out of the 500-million target, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was directed to skill 150 million, whereas the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET), under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, was mandated to skill 100 million. Figure 1 shows the increase in the number of trained people by NSDC. Currently, there over 20 different government bodies implementing over 70 skill development schemes at the state and central levels (MSDE, 2016).

Figure 1: Persons trained by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).



Source: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (2016)

The most recent development in the skill development area is the launch of a National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2015, aiming to accelerate the skilling activities in a high-quality and sustainable manner. Designed to align all skilling activities with the demand side, the policy focuses on increasing capacity and synergies among the existing schemes, promoting global partnership and inclusivity, streamlining entrepreneurship in the education system, improving the ease of doing business, and providing access to funding.

India has the potential to produce a skilled workforce not only within the country but also to fulfil the expected shortage in the ageing developed world. The 2015 National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship emerged as an umbrella term covering all the skilling activities in the country. It also identified the overall institutional framework to reach the expected outcome. The responsibility is to be shared among government, the entire spectrum of the corporate sector, community-based organisations, outstanding highly qualified individuals, and others (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015).

To sum up, the government of India has taken a series of steps, by establishing ministries and departments, to make its working-age population skilled enough to enter the labour market. The post-independence skill development policy and programme targeted mainly the rural population, the illiterate, and women, but in recent times, the target group has been expanded to include rural, urban, skilled, and unskilled populations, neo-literates, women, youth, and adults. In the past, skill development activities were mainly undertaken by the government. The present policy adopts a public-private partnership (PPP) model for skill development activities, in which the government collaborates with private agencies working in the field of skill development to provide large-scale skill development training throughout the country. This has helped to mobilise resources and create links to the labour market. Whereas skill development programmes in the past had poor linkages with the labour market and industries, at present there is an increasing linkage and partnership with the labour market at both the local and global levels through the PPP model. NSDC has 203 training partners under its PPP model, including for-profit as well as non-profit entities. In the last four years, these training partners have trained over two million people in more than 25 sectors, at 2500+ fixed and mobile centres, in over 350 districts across the country (Skill Development in India, 2015). There is sea change in governmental strategies from providing opportunities for employment to emphasising entrepreneurship. The concepts of soft skill development, upskilling, sustainability of skills, and entrepreneurship have gained a central place on the national agenda and policy documents. Above all, the skill development policies and activities in India are mainly demand-based and hugely dependent on the labour market.

## **The South Korean context**

South Korea is officially called the Republic of Korea. It is a sovereign state in East Asia. The population is 51,732,586 with a population of 43,735,000 above 15 years (Statistics Korea, 2017). South Korea is a technologically advanced and developed country driven by a highly educated and skilled workforce.

The main concept of vocational education and skill development in South Korea is 'National Human Resources Development'. Human resources include human abilities and qualities including knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for individual, societal, and national development (NHRD, 2011).

### **The concept of Human Resources Development (HRD)**

The concept of human resources development refers to the overall activities of central and local governments, education institutions, research institutes, and corporations that cultivate, allocate, and leverage human resources and develop relevant social norms and networks – in short, activities related to developing human capital and social capital (NHRD, 2011).

Human capital: the ability to increase productivity and wealth through economic activities using the knowledge, skills, and capability embedded in individuals.

Social capital: intangible assets that create social cohesion and trust, including a sense of morality, cooperation, and social norms.

### **The concept of National Human Resources Development (NHRD)**

NHRD means comprehensive efforts at the national and societal level to develop and efficiently manage human capital and social capital in order to promote knowledge creation, utilisation, and distribution for individual development and national competitiveness (NHRD, 2011).

### **The need for National Human Resources Development**

In South Korea, human resources were relatively immobile. They gained importance with respect to strategy, policy, and programmes due to globalisation, which increased the free flow of capital, technology, and information across borders. In other words, the development and dissemination of technology and the globalisation of information increased the importance of not technology or information in themselves but of quality human resources that can absorb, develop, and utilise them (NHRD, 2011).

The advent of the lifelong learning society required sustainable and systematic training of human resources. As knowledge is spreading rapidly and changing fast, time- or space-restricted education can no longer meet the learning and knowledge needs of managing an advanced economy. Thus, there was a dire need for the creation of sustainable human resource development in the country and a robust education system (NHRD, 2011).

National competitiveness and socioeconomic restructuring are ultimately sustained by the restructuring of human resources. Thus, government ministries and offices made collective efforts to support continuous learning and education training for individuals (NHRD, 2011).

The increased importance placed on human resources development in the world has made it easier for government ministries and offices to introduce human resources development and management as major policy area in their overall policy (NHRD, 2011).

### **The development of vocational education policies and strategies in South Korea**

As mentioned earlier, vocational education and skill development come under the umbrella of National Human Resource Development, which is managed by the Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET) (Lee, 2016). Steady investment in human resource development has triggered the driving force of development, including economic growth in South Korea. In the early 1960s, human resource development was promoted in the Five-Year Economic Development Plan to recognise the importance of resources and to pay attention to its development and application (Lee, 2004). In this section, we will briefly consider how vocational education policy changed after the 1960s, and then moves to explore how vocational education is classified as a part of lifelong learning (LLL), and how it is emphasised. Lastly, the direction of vocational education and training is contemplated through the research and project directions of KRIVET, which is a national research institute about Korean vocational education.

#### *The shift of vocational education priorities in the past*

In 1945–1960, promoting technical and vocational education was a policy in order to cultivate skills and attitudes for practical life, with an emphasis on the one-man, one-skill principle (Song, Min, & Seong, 2009).

In 1960–1970, the system of vocational education was promoted. From 1962, vocational education saw innovative change due to the Five-Year Economic Development Plan. During this time, vocational high schools began to be fostered under the education policy aiming to nurture industrial manpower while the industrialisation policy was executed (Song, Min, & Seong, 2009).

From the mid-1970s to the 1980s, vocational education policy focussed on meeting the demand of industrial manpower for economic development. The 1970s focus on training technicians for efficiency shifted to a higher education-centred focus on training advanced engineers to prepare for industrial

advancement in the 1980s. Then, the framework of the education structure was established as 'demand-centred education' for political and social reasons (Song, Min, & Seong, 2009).

### *Enacting the Lifelong Education Act*

Meanwhile, in the early 1990s, as public demand for education reform increased, the Education Reform Committee was established as a presidential advisory body to systematically promote education reform in 1993. And the Education Reform Commission legislated the Lifelong Education Act, which replaced the existing social education law in 1999 (Kim et al., 2010a).

Likewise, it means that the previous concept of 'supply-centred social education' converted into the concept of 'demand-centred lifelong education' in order to build the lifelong learning system, which allows everyone to have and keep their education anywhere and at any time (Kim et al., 2010a).

The second Lifelong Education Act was enacted by the Korean government in 2007. The act reinforced lifelong education support policies for the educationally underprivileged and supported education for diploma achievement, basic adult literacy, vocational capacity-building, liberal arts, culture and arts, and education on civic participation beyond traditional formal education (MEST & NILE, 2009). In terms of vocational education, the act promoted structured learning activities in the workplace and activated vocational lifelong learning (Lee, 2010). It also granted employees paid or non-paid study leaves and payment for study expenses (e.g. book purchases) and research (Lee, 2010).

### **Vocational competency education in the Korean Lifelong Education Programme Classification Scheme (KLPCS)**

KLPCS means 'Korean Lifelong Education Programme Classification Scheme', and it includes six large categories and three sub-categories for each large category. The six large domains of the programme are classified similarly to the legal classification of Lifelong Education: 'Basic Literacy Education', 'Schooling Complementary Education', 'Vocational Competency Education', 'Culture & Arts Education', 'Humanities & General Education', and 'Citizen Participatory Education' (Kim et al., 2010b, pp. 224–225; NILE, 2013, cited in Han & Park, 2015, p. 999).

Table 1: Vocational competency education in KLPCS.

<b>Vocational Competency Education</b>	Professional Preparation Programme	Hoping to get a job in a specific career and new knowledge necessary for successful entrepreneurship, information, technology, and programmes to help acquire the functionality to prepare the relevant conditions systematically
	Qualification and Licenses Programme	Expertise necessary to perform particular career duties, skills, functions, programmes that help you to reach a certain level of certification for certain qualified institutions
	Continuing Professional Development Programme	This is for incumbent workers to acquire the knowledge and information needed for the development of work performance and programmes to help you learn and acquire the relevant technology and features

Source: Han & Park (2015), p. 999; Kim et al., 2010b,) pp. 224–225

In the Vocational Competency Education domain, there are three functional elements: ‘Professional Preparation Programme’, ‘Qualification and Licenses Programme’, and ‘Continuing Professional Development Programme’ (Kim et al., 2010b, pp. 224–225). Table 1 contains a description of each function element.

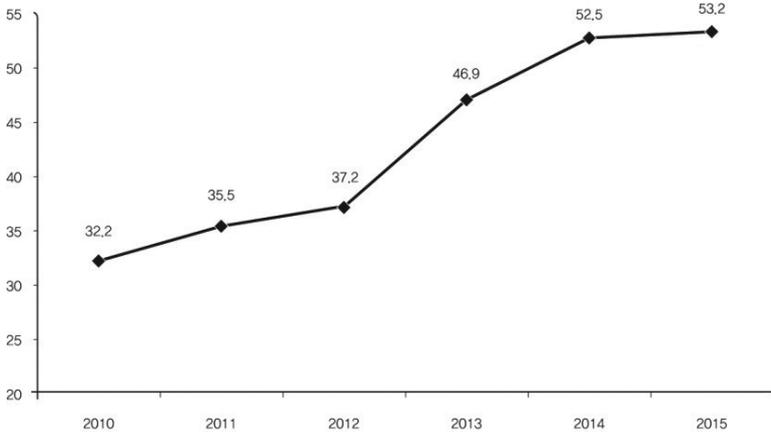
As Table 1 shows, it seems that vocational education is no longer part of supporting industrial society, nor does it focus on basic skills. Instead, it is realistic and future-oriented for ‘pre-’, ‘in-’ and ‘continuous-’ education for vocational necessities and purposes.

The actions taken by the government have increased the participation of paid workers in education and training. Figure 2 shows that the education and training participation of paid workers has increased by 21 per cent over the past five years, from 32.2 per cent in 2010 to 53.2 per cent in 2015.

At this juncture, it is worth mentioning the research and project directions of KRIVET, because these directions substantially reflect the prevailing practical vocational education and training trend in South Korea. Some of the directions of KRIVET strengthen research on future human resources development policy, intensify research on lifelong career education policy, strengthen research on employment and skills development policy, consolidate support for the establishment of a competency-based society, and reinforce global cooperation in HRD (KRIVET, 2016). First, Korean vocational education and training might be regarded as investment-oriented and future-oriented. That is because at present, the education system is designed to prepare workers for the concept of ‘human

resources, whereas in the past, the focus was on providing the necessary workforce to meet the demand of industry and society.

Figure 2: Rate of education and training participation of paid workers in South Korea.



Source: KRIVET (2016), p. 14

Besides, vocational education aims at increasing ‘potential’ as much as improving ability, enabling workers to acquire and develop any skill, in line with the concept of ‘competency’, instead of simply acquiring and advancing a certain skill.

Moreover, current vocational education and training is promoted and supported at all levels – individual, corporate (where the individual belongs), and national. And it seems to aim at reflecting both local and global situations, whereas domestic industries and society were the primary reference for education in the past.

Therefore, it seems that Korean vocational education policy seeks to emphasise ‘long-term’ sustainability, unlike previous policies, which were relatively ‘short-term’.

## Conclusion

The conceptualisation of vocational education and skill development differs in India and South Korea. In the case of South Korea, vocational education and skill development focuses on the overall development of an individual, whereas in India, it is focused more on developing the skills that make an individual employable. South Korea has a Lifelong Learning Act dedicated to imparting skills, whereas

such an act is missing in the Indian context. However, in both countries, improving people's skills for economic development has become the major concern of the state. A comparison makes the differences visible. In India, skill development focuses on basic vocational skills in a vast range of fields. Previously, skill development programmes targeted rural populations, women, and youth; at present, it targets the jobless, college and school dropouts, and educated persons from rural and urban areas. In South Korea, under the umbrella of Vocational Competency Education, all professional preparation programmes, continuing professional development, and in-service professional development are carried out. In both countries, the policies and programmes have led to increased participation in skill development activities. As in South Korea, vocational education is part of the lifelong learning continuum, and all the involved ministries work together. India also involves numerous ministries as well as various public and private players in skill development activities, but coordination between ministries is not as strong as in South Korea. The analysis of the governance of vocational and skill development activities shows that India, in spite of its centralised governmental regulations, has decentralised skill development activities and involved private partners in the implementation. In South Korea, strong governmental regulation is seen in vocational education policies and practices. In South Korea, skills training is mostly covered by the Lifelong Learning Act, whereas India has numerous policies in place which contribute to the formulation of skill development policies. Structurally, we can say that India has a more decentralised system than South Korea in terms of imparting skills.

Finally, both countries focus on developing people's skills to compete in the knowledge economy. In both countries, vocational education and skill development policies are interconnected with the employment context, although the level of interdependency in each country varies. The concepts, policies, strategies, and practices with regard to skill development and vocational education have varied over time, depending on the political system, history, demographics, and the country's socioeconomic development. The skill development field is young in India and has only become prominent in the recent past. In South Korea, by contrast, skill development and vocational education have been emphasised since the 1940s, and the field has taken various shapes and now is a major part of the country's lifelong learning system. There are also research institutes developing the knowledge base in the field for further improvement.

Comparing policies, strategies, and programmes helps each country develop innovative and robust vocational education systems. Each country's skill development system has its own origin and evolution, and it is influenced by the

history, political system, socio-economic conditions, and demographics. Hence the development of skill development and vocational education systems can be compared but not replicated. Furthermore, the discussion has opened up ways to seek opportunities for cross-country collaborations to learn from each other and understand different ways of developing policies and strategies. However, in India, the focus is on basic vocational skill development, and it is a challenge to move towards lifelong learning, unlike in South Korea, where vocational education is part of human resource development and the lifelong learning continuum.

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Shalini Singh, Leonardo Silveira & Janiery da Silva Castro

# Comparing the Continuing Vocational Education and Training Policies of Italy, Brazil, and India: What could be compared and what could not be compared, and why?<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This paper explores how the continuing vocational education and training policies in Italy, Brazil, and India are embedded in the economic context along the lines of productivity, labour market, and employability. It also reflects on countries as units of comparison in research.

Italy, Brazil, and India are sovereign countries and members of UNESCO. While Italy is a member country of the European Union, Brazil and India are BRICS countries, categorised as newly industrialized countries and known for their high growth rates. However, merely being a predefined geographical unit (countries) or political unit (sovereign states, UNESCO members) might be insufficient for scientific comparisons in the current transnational context.

In this paper, we compare the continuing vocational education and training policies in Italy, Brazil, and India and reflect on the selection of units of comparison for comparative studies in scientific research.

## Defining continuing vocational education and training

The most widely used definition of continuing vocational education and training (hereafter CVET) in research and policy is the one by Cedefop (2014), which defines CVET as

education or training after initial education or entry into working life, aimed at helping individuals to improve or update their knowledge and/or skills; acquire new skills for a career move or retraining; continue their personal or professional development (Cedefop & Tissot, 2014, p. 51).

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1 The authors thank Professor Søren Ehlers (University of Aarhus), Professor Regina Egetenmeyer (Julius-Maximilian University of Würzburg), Professor Natália Alves (University of Lisbon), and Professor Paula Guimarães (University of Lisbon) for their intellectual input while conceiving this article.

Cedefop (2015) specifies that CVET can take place in formal, non-formal, and informal settings (Cedefop, 2015, p. 22). Cedefop (2015) refers to adult learning outcomes connected to professional development (vocational education) as ‘continuing’ only after an individual enters the labour market (Cedefop 2015, p. 23).

Cedefop defines CVET as a ‘way to improve participation of adults in lifelong learning, reinforce their employability and increase employment in Europe’ (Cedefop, 2015, p. 18). By contrast, for the OECD, entering the labour market is not the criterion to decide whether a VET programme is initial or vocational (OECD, 2015, p. 5). If the individual has received VET at a level in the European Qualification Framework, VET at the next level will be called continuing (OECD, 2015, p. 49). Therefore, for the OECD, the complexity of the function and the required competencies in VET are the criteria to decide whether it is initial or continuing VET (OECD, 2015, p. 49).

CVET is neither defined nor used by UNESCO. UNESCO uses the term ‘technical vocational education and training’ (TVET), ignoring the differentiation between initial and continuing VET. It defines TVET as

those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic life (UNESCO, 2017, online resource).<sup>2</sup>

Unlike Cedefop or OECD, it focuses more on soft skills and employability (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005; King 2009).

The operational definition of CVET for this paper is based on the definition adopted by Cedefop due to the clear distinction between initial and continuing VET. We therefore define CVET in this article as the

learning process of an individual in formal, non-formal and in-formal settings, within and outside the work environment, after entering and before retiring or finally leaving the labour market to improve professional knowledge, skills and competencies (International Winter School, 2017, personal communication).<sup>3</sup>

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2 Unesco: TVETpedia, retrieved 15.05.2017, from <http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=TVETipedia+Glossary+A-Z&term=Technical+and+vocational+education+and+training>.

3 This definition was agreed upon at the International Winter School, Comparative Studies in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning on 6–17 February 2017 in Würzburg, Germany, during the group work on lifelong learning and national/regional CVET policies with researchers from Portugal (Natália Alves), Italy (Beatrice Galligani), Brazil (Leonardo Silveira and Janiery da Silva Castro), and India (Donika Arora and Shalini

## Research questions

We focus on two research questions in this paper. The first research question discusses the way CVET policies are formulated in Italy, Brazil, and India, including primary influences on policies, actors, policy objectives, and target groups. The first research question is therefore:

### *1. How is CVET policy (not) formulated in Brazil, Italy, and India?*

The second question builds on the first question, enquiring about the reasons why CVET policies were formulated in Italy and Brazil but not in India. The question is:

### *2. Why are CVET policies (not) formulated in Brazil, Italy, and India?*

The question focuses on the context of comparison and investigates the linkages between the provisions, providers, target groups, and the societal sectors influencing CVET in the three countries.

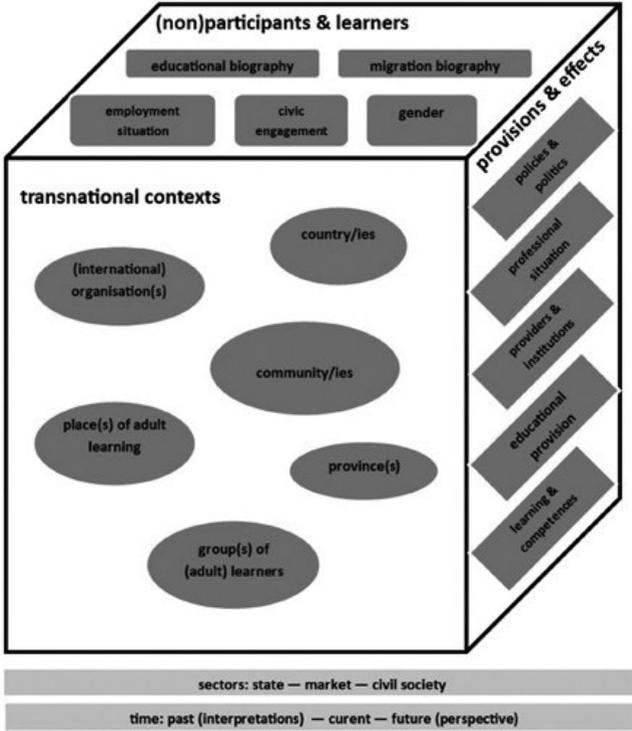
## Analytical framework

1. The ‘relationship model for comparative research in adult education’ for choosing the focus of research, designing the contexts, and formulating categories of comparison (Fig. 1): Egetenmeyer (2017) argues that the focus of research comparing adult education in different countries should be replaced by a comparison of contexts owing to the ‘diverse range of providers, levels and modes of learning’ in adult education, which could not be restricted to the boundaries of states and are rather transnational in nature (pp. 80–81). Egetenmeyer argues for designing contexts of comparison according to what is relevant for answering a particular research question rather than using pre-defined contexts (like states) as categories for comparison (p. 81). She argues to go beyond the predefined, traditional, hierarchical, or vertical structural arrangements and theoretical paradigms; politically driven empirical data sets (with categorisation) provided by transnational actors; and even the discipline of education to adopt an inter-disciplinary approach (p. 94).

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Singh). The authors acknowledge the intellectual input from these researchers that informs this article.

2. *Figure 1: Relationship model for comparative research in adult education.*



Source: Egetenmeyer’s ‘Relationship model for comparative research in adult education’ (Egetenmeyer, 2017, p. 85)

In her model, Egetenmeyer proposes three dimensions of comparison that comprise the context of comparison:

- a. provision & effects
- b. (non)participants & learners
- c. transnational contexts

Egetenmeyer argues that comparative research in adult education should be focused on ‘provision & effects’ or the practices and the underlying phenomena in adult education. She suggests studying the linkages of these provisions and effects (policies, professional situation, providers and institutions, educational provision and/or learning and competencies) across the ‘transnational contexts’ in relation

to ‘(non) participants and learners’, embedded in time and the ‘relevant societal sector (state, market, civil society)’ (pp. 84–85).

We use the insights from Egetenmeyer’s model and focus on the comparison of CVET ‘policies’ as ‘provision & effects’ in the contexts of Italy, Brazil, and India, analysing the (non)existence of transnational contexts (transnational/national policy influences and providers) on the policies in question, the ‘employment situation’, ‘civic engagement’, and ‘educational biographies’ of ‘(non) participants and learners’, embedded in the relevant societal sectors.

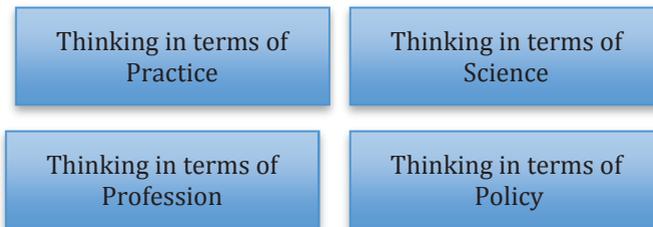
2. Analytical policy models for adult education to describe contexts in a structured manner: Lima and Guimarães (2011) propose to analyse policies along the following dimensions:
  - a) ‘Political-administrative orientations’: Policy formulation apparatus or legislative apparatus including ‘laws, rules and norms’.
  - b) ‘Political priorities’: Objectives, target groups, and resource allocation.
  - c) ‘Organisational and administrative dimensions’: Policy implementation apparatus or bureaucratic apparatus.
  - d) ‘Conceptual elements’: Policy orientations.

(Lima & Guimarães, 2011, pp. 39–66)

We use the four dimensions used by Lima and Guimarães (2011) as categories of comparison to compare CVET policies.

3. The ‘box model’ to understand whether the chosen units of comparison could be used for scientific comparison (Fig. 2): Ehlers (2006) argues that there are only four ways in education to understand totality: the ways of thinking (or approaches) in ‘practice’, ‘profession’, ‘science’, and ‘policy’. Ehlers emphasises that thinking in one way or box is not completely compatible with the thinking in another way or box (pp. 10–11).

Figure 2: Ehlers’ box model. Source: Ehlers, 2006, pp. 10–11.



We use the model to analyse whether it is scientifically appropriate to consider India as a unit of comparison using a scientific approach, which is different from CVET policies and practice in the three countries.

## Review of scientific literature

Perkin (2007) describes CVET as a phenomenon of post-industrial society or the late twentieth century with the inclusion of services as a product, followed by competitive trends to acquire the most advanced skills and expertise through intense specialisation of the workforce (Perkin, 2007, p. 41)

Alves (2007) describes CVET as essential for 'employability', making individuals more productive in the labour market (Alves, 2007, p. 60). She points out that CVET also signifies the transfer of responsibility from the state to the individual, from employment to employability, subsequently influencing economic growth (p. 59).

Heyes (2007) and McCowan (2015) analyse how CVET is becoming increasingly important in the policies of transnational actors, such as the EU and the OECD (Heyes, 2007, p. 1; McCowan, 2015, p. 3). Trampusch and Eichenberger (2012) and McCowan (2016) highlight the increasing role of non-state actors in decision-making regarding CVET because of their involvement in various settings: formal, non-formal, and informal<sup>4</sup> (Trampusch & Eichenberger, 2012, p. 2; McCowan, 2016, p. 506).

Trampusch and Eichenberger (2012) suggest that, apart from the market, the state and civil society are equally interested in CVET, owing to the dynamic nature of the economies since the 1990s. Thus, there currently are far-reaching consequences that underlie the relationships between the different structures and agents regarding CVET (Trampusch & Eichenberger, 2012, p. 1).

Even though CVET has been quite popular in recent years, there are critics. Frigotto (2013, p. 390) emphasises the difference between education and qualification, claiming that education for people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds – generally the focus of CVET policies – should go beyond professional training, as the latter is subordinate to the interests of the market and not those of society. Alves (2007) also claims that professional education in general is governed by the interests of capital and has been reinforcing the status quo rather than promoting real opportunities for social mobility among people coming from disadvantaged

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4 This is an important feature of CVET, because unlike other education-related topics in which education may be analysed entirely within the formal framework, in this case it transcends the boundaries of formal qualifications and environment.

backgrounds. On the other hand, Cedefop (2014) and Heyes (2007) characterise CVET policies as a requirement for engaging these groups in the economy and that it is the real key to unleash the potential of economies and build prosperous societies. Whilst presenting the case studies, it will be part of this paper to understand the conceptual foundations of CVET policies in each country: even though the terms may sound similar, a conceptual foundation based on employability can be considerably different from one based on compensatory education, just like national or provincial state-driven policies may differ in theory and practice from the rhetoric of international organisations. It will be possible to observe that in the next section, as we move on to the case studies.

## **Case studies**

### **CVET in Italy**

Since 1958, Italy has been a democracy, divided into 20 regions and 110 provinces. The CVET system in Italy is quite complex, organised through the state, which has exclusive legislative powers over most issues related to education. The regions have specific competences for social care and other legislative powers, but they have no authority on education and vocational training, except in projects involving the European Union (Ulicna et. al., 2013, p. 170; Refernet Italy, 2011, p. 7). The understanding of CVET in Italy is thus quite close to Cedefop's understanding of CVET. In Italy, CVET refers to training as a permanent process embedded in environments, acquired formally or informally, both inside and outside of the workplace. Therefore, it is understood as an opportunity for lifelong learning, employment and corporate innovation, career guidance, development of occupational identity, autonomy, adaptability and career management skills of the individual (Cedefop, 2015).

Italian laws (Laws 53, 107, 196, 388, and Ministerial Directive 22; Decree 13) provide further clarity on CVET provisions aiming at high employability for individuals and high productivity for the economy. The target groups for CVET policies in Italy are individuals who enter the labour market and the providers of CVET. The CVET reform integrated the vocational and academic training system with higher education and employment. CVET is essential for the evaluation of competences, non-formal and informal learning, and included in the minimum standards of service described in the national system for the certification of competencies. Italian policies favour lifelong learning and thus promote employability and social cohesion through different modalities including CVET. CVET policies

in Italy aim to make the population employable in the entire European Union rather than just in Italy.

CVET is financed by the state (through the Ministry of Education, the regions, and the local authorities), the market (public and private agencies), and social partners apart from the EU. Joint inter-professional funds for continuing training strengthen CVET policies in Italy. Consequently, the institutional jurisdiction in the programming, management, and evaluation of the actions regarding CVET is highly specialised. Primary providers of CVET services in Italy include employers and professional associations, non-accredited training and guidance structures, universities and research institutes, upper secondary schools in collaboration with other training bodies, job centres, non-governmental organisations, and voluntary associations. CVET offerings are managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, and coordinated by regions and provinces at the local level. Some primary CVET initiatives in Italy include:

Sectoral training funds (*Fondi Paritetici interprofessionale per la formazione continua*) coordinated by social partners (associations and trade unions) under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The regions and provinces offer CVET.

Technical education and higher technical training is offered by the regions to (un)employed youth as a compensation for their social exclusion, aiming at their inclusion.

First and second-cycle adult education within the educational system is provided by adult education centres in public schools or autonomous educational institutions.

Apart from this, private companies provide non-formal training to their employees. However, many beneficiaries of CVET in Italy end up financing their courses on their own (ISFOL, 2009|10, p. 58). The ISFOL (*Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori*) – now called a state institution for research, work, and social policy under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – which aims to promote professional qualification, social inclusion, and local development and the Leonardo da Vinci Programme, which aims at meeting the needs of education and training (run by ISFOL), are worth mentioning in the Italian context, as they form the core of CVET policy implementation mechanisms in Italy.

## CVET in Brazil

Brazil is the largest Latin American country with approximately 200 million inhabitants and 26 provinces. The official language is Portuguese. The country has

widespread social inequality, and some of the marginalised groups even lack basic citizenship and education rights. Due to the high rate of illiteracy among youth (8.6%, i.e. 13 million people), adult education is compensatory in Brazil.

Most of the initiatives are state-driven without any engagement of the market (potential employers). In legislation, the terms ‘employability’ or ‘competence’ are rarely found. ‘CVET’ is not used in Brazilian policy documents, whereas ‘technical vocational education and training’ (TVET) and ‘continuing education’ are used by the Ministry of Education, similar to UNESCO’s position regarding TVET.

Haddad (2007) states that the recognition of EJA (Young and Adult Education) as a right for millions of marginalised people without opportunities to complete their basic education has existed since the mid-twentieth century but that it was not until 1988 that it was legally formalised as a duty of the Brazilian state and reaffirmed in 1996.<sup>5</sup> However, it was not integrated into policies or programmes. Sporadic initiatives based on Paulo Freire’s methodology existed initially before he was extradited from Brazil during the military dictatorship period (1964–1986).

The policies regarding EJA in Brazil are still inconsistent and exclusive, benefiting only certain sections of society, leaving the needs of marginalised populations unaddressed and rendering the EJA law unfulfilled.

In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, EJA and vocational education started evolving as concrete realities in Brazil. In 1996, the national curricular guidelines for technical professional education were designed and adopted, while the National Curricular Reference Levels, approved in 2000, structured the required pedagogical details (BRASIL, 2000). This was accompanied by a wave of reforms, starting in 1995, regarding vocational education in the country to increase productivity through CVET.

In 2004, initial and continued training of youth and adults was integrated with formal high school non-technical/academic education and professional technical education.

Table 1 summarises the provision, objectives, and the key programmes identified:

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5 This was reaffirmed by the 1996 Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education.

*Table 1: Major CVET initiatives in Brazil. Source: Authors' own, based on current legislation*

Programme	Summary	Funding	Provision
Solidarity Literacy Program	Reduce illiteracy of young adults	Federal government and private companies	Schools, universities, city halls
Brazil Literate Programme	Social and professional inclusion of historically excluded individuals	Government (federal, provincial, and municipal)	State-managed
ProJovem	Massive vocational education training programme for the social and professional inclusion of people under 30	Primarily government (federal, provincial, and municipal) and private organisations (e.g. employers)	Industries, selected government-related foundations and educational organisations
ProEJA	Massive vocational and basic education training programme to integrate professional education with literacy	Government	Primarily schools and universities
Pronatec	Technical and technological education programme for intermediate skills training and IVET/ CVET	Federal government and private companies	Industries, selected government-related foundations and educational organisations

## CVET in India

With reference to the definition agreed upon in this paper, there is no concrete policy in India regarding CVET. Neither is there a concrete difference between initial and continuing VET at the policy level.

However, related or similar policy terms are used in policy documents, reports, and official papers, but they usually refer to initial VET (IVET) (Government of India, 2016, pp. 82–85).

Goel (2011) differentiates between technical and vocational education in India, stating that whereas technical education refers to postsecondary education with practical training, vocational education requires a lower level of qualification and does not add to the qualifications of an individual (Goel, 2011, p. 3)

The term 'continuing' is used in combination with 'education' in policies to refer to VET offered as part of the literacy programmes in India to motivate non-literates to join these programmes. Continuing education programmes in India are a temporary answer to the question 'Literacy for what?', a social policy and expenditure. They are non-formal, there is a lack of provision and providers, and there is no focus on learning outcomes or professional acknowledgement.

CVET in India, however, does exist in practice. Possibilities exist for individuals in the labour market to stop working, take up CVET, and then work again (something similar to recurrent education); to take up CVET with part-time work; to get trained by the employer (on-the-job training or in-service training) (World Bank, 2007, pp. 61–67); to be sent by the employer to a provider (refresher courses); or to go for job rotation. However, no concrete macro data is available regarding CVET in India. The lack of social security policy in the labour market except in the public sector creates no need for the collection of such data. In fact, such data might prove to be politically disastrous, just like the existing data regarding VET, labour market, and employability, which point alarmingly towards policy failure (Sharma, 2016; 2017).

CVET is ignored in the policy agenda in India due to several reasons. With only 2.3 per cent of the population receiving VET in the first place (City & Guilds, 2015, p. 2), it is difficult to imagine a policy regarding CVET, which refers to the advanced phase in VET.

International Labour Organisation (2017) data reveal that with an unemployment rate of 3.4 per cent, India has 17.8 million unemployed people, a figure likely to increase in the future (ILO, 2017, p. 39). Also, ILO (2016) and official Indian government data reveal that 92 per cent of the total employed population in India fall under the category of informal employment. Furthermore, 48.9 per cent of people in the labour market are employed in the primary sector, contributing only 15.4 per cent of the GDP (indicating low productivity levels and a high rate of disguised unemployment), whereas 32.3 per cent are employed in vulnerable jobs (ILO, 2016, pp. 2–3; Reserve Bank of India, 2016). The skills gap is enormous, and there is a mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market, almost on the verge of turning the Indian demographic dividend to a demographic disaster (Singh, 2015, pp. 250–255; Mehrotra, Gandhi, & Sahoo, 2014, pp. 1–36; Rengan, 2012, pp. 171–178).

Consequently, policy priorities include expanding the formal sector, promoting sectorial transition in the economy, and providing employment to larger number of people rather than CVET, which is left to the market and civil society by an overburdened state unable to reduce the non-development expenditure due to political reasons. Hence the focus of policies in India is quantitative rather than qualitative, and to a very large extent, CVET is a qualitative policy choice.

Since India has a large informal sector and employment opportunities for specialists are fewer compared to those for generalists and multi-takers, the return on investment on CVET is low for employers who have possibilities to hire inexpensive, inexperienced individuals rather than highly specialised professionals demanding hefty remuneration. Working conditions are not regulated for informal employees, and there is less incentive and more pressure to take up CVET with the burden of costs lying usually on the individual (except in the public sector and high-profile private sector firms and institutions, where the cost of CVET is paid by the employer).

Vocational and technical education courses are designed for IVET rather than CVET, without any acknowledgement for recognition of prior learning or even formal experiential learning. The absence of any policy or mechanism to support CVET even in combination with part-time work or short-term leave from work to acquire CVET makes it difficult and less attractive even in practice.

CVET in India is therefore not on the policy agenda, lacks macro-level data due to political and economic reasons, and is less attractive for individuals in practice due to the costs involved.

Table 2: CVET policies of Italy, Brazil, and India.

Categories of comparison (based on Lima and Guimaries (2011))	Brazil	Italy	India
<b>Political-administrative orientations*</b>	Policies are formulated by the state with UNESCO as a <i>guiding factor</i>	The EU, particularly Cedefop, provides a framework within which policies are formulated and implemented by the state and social partners	No special CVET policy; policies regarding VET (more focused on IVET).
<b>Political priorities*</b>	Compensatory programmes for social inclusion	Employability and productivity	Not applicable

Categories of comparison (based on Lima and Guimarães (2011))	Brazil	Italy	India
<b>Organisational and administrative dimensions*</b>	Primarily state, participation	State, market, civil society	Not applicable
<b>Conceptual elements*</b>	Social	Economic	Not applicable

\* These rows represent dimensions relating to policies rather than practice and cannot be used to describe data from practice.

Source: Created by authors based on a cumulative analysis of information available from different sources used in this paper.

Table 2 shows the dimensions of the case studies according to the policy analysis framework by Lima and Guimarães (2011). Evidently, there are far more differences than similarities between the case studies. When it comes to the political-administrative dimension, there are three different types of CVET policies: one as part of a national strategy and not particularly described (India), another one led by the government with transnational influences but also not explicitly identified as CVET (Brazil), and one that responds to a transnational discourse (Italy). These differences also affect the following dimensions, especially the political priorities of CVET policies. In India, the other dimensions are not applicable due to the characteristics of the policy analysis when applied in that context. This shows a direct connection with Egetenmeyer's (2017) transnational contexts dimension of what should be considered when analysing policies. The Brazilian context of focusing adult education on compensatory initiatives also has a role in its political priorities, as the main argument is to enable social inclusion. In Italy, the policies are aligned with Cedefop (2014), using the same vocabulary.

The last two dimensions complete the consistent difference between the three countries analysed. Whilst Indian policies remain non-applicable to the comparative framework, Brazil's CVET policy argument is more social-driven and led by the state, whilst Italy has a more economically driven strategy featuring a higher level of collaboration among different stakeholders.

## Discussion

The context for comparing how CVET policies are (not) formulated in Italy, Brazil, and India is the economy and particularly, the labour market, the employment situation, and the nature of economic activities. Below is a summary of our findings.

### *1. How is CVET policy (not) formulated in Brazil, Italy, and India?*

Transnational influences are evident only in the case of Italy, whereas in Brazil and India, the primary role of the national government in policy formulation is evident. In Brazil, the state is the primary provider; in India, the market and civil society are active; whereas in Italy, all three sectors – state, market, and civil society – are active. There is a huge gap in India between policy and practice, because even though CVET policy is non-existent, CVET does exist in practice.

In Italy, CVET is an economic policy, as in most other European Union member states, whereas in Brazil, it is a social policy. The focus in Brazil is on input or curricula whereas in Italy, the focus is on learning outcomes. In the case of India, the practice of CVET leads to a focus on learning outcomes as well, thus making it fundamentally different from educational provisions that focus on input and are a primarily a part of social policy.

CVET is not used as a policy term in Brazil and India. It is a transnational policy term and has been used by the European Union, particularly Cedefop, influencing Italian policies. Although there are mentions of TVET – a clear influence of UNESCO – in Brazil, the idea of continuing and initial VET, as referred to in this paper, is not truly recognisable in this case or in the Indian case.

### *2. Why are CVET policies (not) formulated in Brazil, Italy, and India?*

CVET is used by the European Union and Cedefop to describe and formulate policies regarding the specialisation and optimisation of the productive capability of the invested resources (including the workforce) because of the European Union's highly structured and organised economy. Italy follows the model to harness the vast opportunities for growth, employment, and employability but at the same time, it monitors the quality of CVET through benchmarking and an open method of coordination to keep it from dropping below a certain level. In the cases of Brazil and India, transnational influences are limited. Consequently, there is neither an imposing framework within which the two countries formulate policies nor any check to prevent the absence of policy mechanisms for optimised productivity and overall development through CVET. Italy is more integrated

transnationally, driven by economic considerations, whereas Brazil and India, for political reasons, adhere to a stronger nation-state model.

As a consequence, policy priorities and contexts are different in Italy, Brazil, and India, resulting in advanced CVET policies in Italy, a weak CVET policy Brazil, and no policy in India. As a consequence, Italy has a higher level of productivity with mobility opportunities across the EU, whereas Brazil and India are struggling with low productivity and the wastage of resources.

## Conclusion

The discussion leads us to some scientific reflections about the choice of units for comparison. The authors chose the three countries to initiate a deep discussion about the units of comparison. The arguments by Ehlers (2006) and Egetenmeyer (2017) make it clear that adhering to pre-defined categories cannot qualify India as a unit of comparison for comparative studies in scientific research. Neither are predefined comparative categories relevant for all research questions.

Even though CVET exists in practice in India, it lacks a specific policy. It would therefore be scientifically inappropriate to include India as a unit of comparison. Policy cannot be equated with practice from a scientific perspective. Policy is different from practice in terms of objectives, scope, nature, process, outcomes, and most importantly, approach.

This discussion is more methodological and refers to the difference between what could be compared and what could not be compared scientifically. The assumption that the units of comparison should be similar enough to be compared and to be similar or different (Singh, 2017, pp. 298–299) underlines the fact that India is not scientifically comparable regarding CVET policies.

The comparability of Indian policies might increase in the future as it gets more integrated into the global economy. The problem of low productivity in India and Brazil raises questions about the lack of CVET policies in India and the social orientation of CVET policies in Brazil. Both need to reconsider and change their stance. However, whether Brazil and India follow the EU model or develop their own competitive models as BRICS countries or individual states cannot be predicted at this time.

For comparing provisions different or similar, designing suitable contexts to answer research questions and formulating categories of comparison accordingly make comparative studies more systematic, scientific, and fruitful.

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