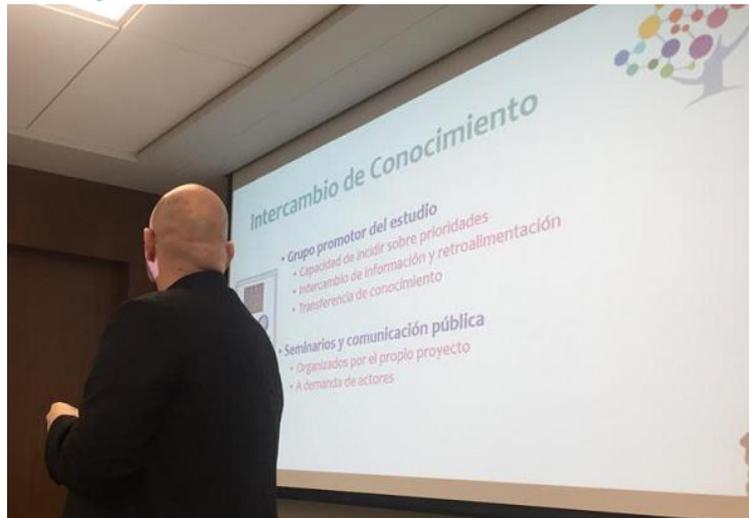




# DUAL APPRENTICESHIP



## Why did India and Mexico adopt dual apprenticeship policies?

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This comparative study analyses why and how policymakers adopted the dual model of apprenticeship in India and Mexico. It investigates the reasons of policymakers in India and Mexico to adopt the dual model of apprenticeships and how their different institutional conditions explain variations in the way the two countries have re-contextualised this global policy idea.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Policymakers in both countries adopted the dual model of apprenticeships as an education policy response to economic development challenges, including: skills gap in India, low economic productivity in Mexico, and employability of marginalised youth in India and Mexico.
- The pro-market ideology of the two governments made policymakers keener to embrace the idea that employers can train young people better than publicly funded vocational schools.
- Chambers of Commerce played a larger role in the adoption of the policy in Mexico than in India due to the different historical legacies of collaboration between the state and business actors.
- The intense knowledge mobilisation of private and public German cooperation actors was instrumental to convince the Mexican government of the strengths of the dual model.
- The nationalistic orientation of the Indian government explains the lack of public references to the Germanic example of dual apprenticeships in the adoption of the policy.
- Policymakers in both countries institutionalised dual apprenticeships without introducing changes in the labour law to avoid political resistance from trade unions, leaving the labour rights of students unprotected.
- The Mexican government created a small subsystem that tried to emulate the high standards of training in Germany, while the main concern of the Indian government was to design a model that could quickly expand to large numbers of young people.

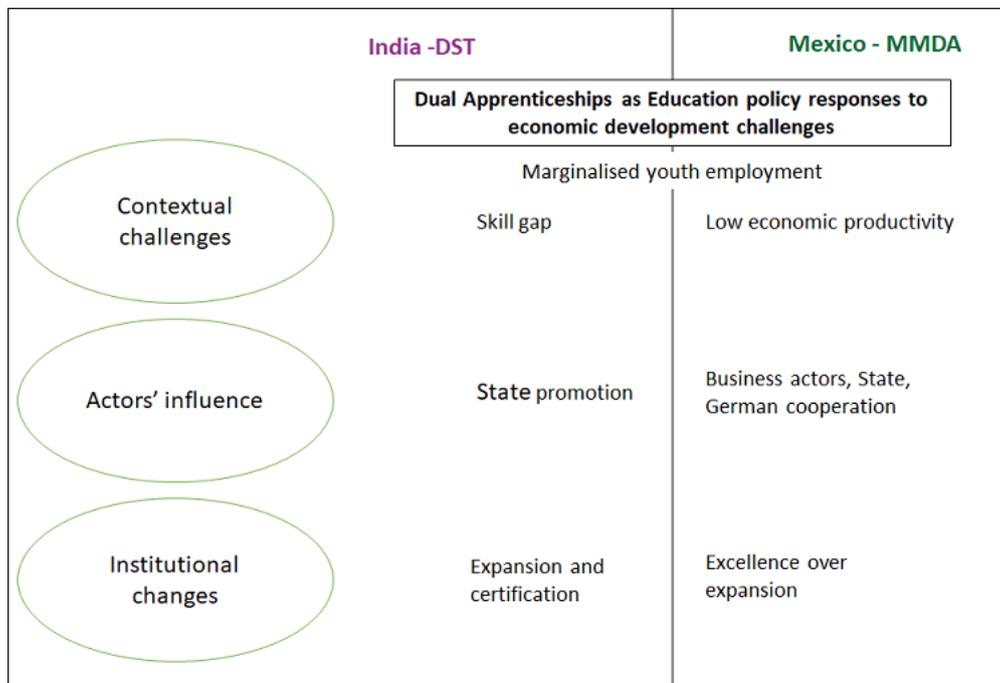


## About the study

The dual model of apprenticeships is one of the travelling policies that have attracted the attention of governments globally. This is because of its alleged positive effects on student learning of occupational skills, the early labour market integration of young people, and the contribution of TVET graduates to the productivity of companies in countries like Germany, Switzerland and Austria<sup>i</sup>. Three fundamental characteristics define the dual model of apprenticeships in its countries of origin: 1) combination of strong school-based education with vocational training in the workplace leading to a formal qualification; 2) intense coordination between social partners and the state in the governance of the system; and 3) highly demanding occupational standards based on broad profiles of occupational competence. While there is wide international consensus about the strengths of the dual model of apprenticeships in its home countries<sup>ii</sup>, there is also extensive evidence of the difficulty of transferring to large scale while maintaining the same standards of quality to other political, economic and cultural contexts<sup>iii</sup>.

Whilst most comparative education studies have focused on the historical processes that gave birth to the dual model in donor countries, our research aims to explain why policymakers adopt the dual model of apprenticeships and how they re-contextualise it in their own educational context. Our study specifically investigates the reasons of policymakers in India and Mexico to adopt the dual model and how their different institutional conditions explain variations in the way the two countries have re-contextualised this global policy idea. The selected cases are particularly interesting for the comparison because of the broad ambitions of their national reforms and the significant differences in the type of dual model of apprenticeships finally retained in the two countries (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Comparing the adoption of dual apprenticeships in India and Mexico**



Source: Authors' elaboration

## Research Findings

### *Youth employment and economic competitiveness*

The two cases present similarities and differences in relation to the contextual challenges that triggered the problematisation of TVET and set the scene for the further adoption of dual apprenticeships. In both countries it was considered that TVET should respond to youth employment and international competitiveness challenges. National governments in the two countries discursively problematised TVET provision under the argument that it was not serving the needs of the economy, thus causing a mismatch between the supply and demand of skills.

Blaming TVET schools for the poor labour market prospects of young people is a recurrent discursive trend in the human capital orthodoxy that has dominated global TVET agendas for years. The Indian government attributed the difficulties of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) graduates to access formal employment to their lack of employability skills and the Mexican government interpreted that the poor labour prospects of vocational school graduates were due to their low level of technical skills. Interestingly, the same policy discourse was used to define different 'educational' causes of labour market mismatches in the two countries, demonstrating the versatility and attractiveness of the human capital framework for policymakers.

### *The influence of business actors and international cooperation*

In both countries the federal government led the adoption of dual apprenticeships as a policy solution to get employers involved in the provision of TVET, but the cases diverge in the level of influence from business actors and international cooperation. These differences do not imply more or less dependency of national governments on external forces but a different interplay between the ideological orientation of the government, historical institutional relations between the state and the business sector, and international cooperation links.

Despite the conservative orientation of the Indian government and the liberal orientation of the Mexican government at the time, both shared the same pro-market and business-friendly ideological principles. These principles made it easier for them to select a policy that seeks to increase the involvement of employers in the training of the youth. Also, blaming the education sector for the economic problems of the country would be a more palatable explanation than pointing to the same employers that are politically supporting their administration.

The ideological preference for a greater involvement of employers in training does not automatically imply that business actors will influence the decision of the government to select dual apprenticeships as the most suitable response to the economic challenges. The low level of involvement of the business sector in the policy process in India is explained by the state-led development model that the country has followed since its independence in 1947. In the case of Mexico, the significant influence of the chambers of commerce in the selection of dual apprenticeships is a clear example of the centralised interdependence between business actors and the state in the development of policies since the Mexican revolution of 1910.

Finally, both India and Mexico are strategic economic partners of Germany and have a long history of bilateral cooperation in different domains, including TVET. However, India opted for a 'silent' adoption of the dual model, not making explicit references to the German example, probably because of the nationalistic orientation of the current government and the difficulty to sell a 'borrowed' foreign solution to the public opinion. In the case of Mexico, the German reference was 'explicit' and publicly advertised as a signal of reputation. Also, the intense knowledge mobilisation of private and public German cooperation actors was instrumental to convince the Mexican government and the chambers of commerce of the strengths of the dual model and its feasibility in the Mexican context.

### ***Institutional changes and political resistance***

The comparison between the two cases shows the importance of contentious politics for a smooth retention of the reform. In the case of India, the highly contentious politics in the country have led authorities in states governed by opposition parties to directly block the rolling out of dual apprenticeships in their provinces.

In the retention of dual apprenticeships, it is also necessary to investigate the level of contentious industrial relations and the balance of political influence between trade unions and employers' representation. Policymakers in both countries institutionalised dual apprenticeships within the initial TVET offer but no changes were introduced in the labour law. This decision allowed government authorities to avoid potential blockages from trade unions represented in the Ministry of Labour, but also left students without legal recognition of their labour rights as apprentices. In fact, in both countries, students were not considered as 'apprentices' but 'trainees', and they were not subject to the labour law.

The comparison also shows how the involvement of corporatist institutions (e.g. chambers of commerce) in the governance of the model facilitates the engagement of individual companies and the monitoring and certification of the quality of training at the workplace. In India, the government has hierarchically mandated ITIs under its authority to offer the dual apprenticeship model and to reach out for companies. However, it cannot force employers to join it and has not devised any institutional arrangement to assure the quality of the training at the workplace. In the case of Mexico, the chambers of commerce are directly responsible for recruiting individual companies for the programme and organise the external certification of the occupational competencies of apprentices according to highly demanding standards. The involvement of corporatist institutions has been key to convince individual companies and the Mexican government of the importance of the quality of training at the workplace, sometimes at the expense of a rapid expansion of the model.

## WAY FORWARD

The decisions made by policymakers in each of the moments of the process in the two countries put them in divergent pathways towards the retention of different types of dual apprenticeships. Policymakers in India wanted to expand the opportunities of workplace learning among large numbers of young people rapidly and they considered that reaching out to business representatives or German cooperation would not help them to achieve this objective. Policymakers in Mexico took a different path and co-designed, together with business representatives and German partners, a TVET sub-system that tried to emulate the dual model in the donor countries.

The literature points out that governments have two options when adapting the dual apprenticeship idea into their own institutional context: to 'dualize' part of its own TVET offer or to create a small TVET subsystem of excellence mirroring best practices from abroad. The 'dualization' option adopted by the Indian government is less demanding in terms of institutional changes but may dilute the essential principles of dual apprenticeships and jeopardize its effectiveness on quality learning. Conversely, the small sub-system option adopted by the Mexican government may certainly be very effective to train a 'blue collar aristocracy' for international companies but it will be difficult to expand to other companies and sectors of the economy given the demanding institutional requirements for its operation.

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<sup>i</sup> Hoeckel, K., & Schwartz, R. (2010). A learning for jobs review of Germany. *OECD Reviews of vocational education and training*. OECD iLibrary website: [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/oecd-reviews-of-vocational-education-and-training-a-learning-for-jobs-review-of-germany-2010\\_9789264](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/oecd-reviews-of-vocational-education-and-training-a-learning-for-jobs-review-of-germany-2010_9789264).

<sup>ii</sup> Steedman, H. (2012). Overview of apprenticeship systems and issues. *ILO contribution to the G20 task force on employment*, Geneva.

<sup>iii</sup> Valiente, O., Scandurra, R., 2017. Challenges to the Implementation of Dual Apprenticeships in OECD Countries: A Literature Review, in: Pilz, M. (Ed.), *Vocational Education and Training in Times of Economic Crisis, Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Issues, Concerns and Prospects*. Springer International Publishing, pp. 41–57. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-47856-2\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-47856-2_3)