

WP2. Policy adoption. Research Design

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Analytical framework

The analytical framework of WP2 draws on the contributions of the Cultural Political Economy (CPE) approach outlined by Jessop (2010) and its application to policy adoption research operationalised by Verger (2014). For Verger, policy adoption research interrogates into the processes, reasons and circumstances that explain how and why policy-makers embrace new education policies, usually coming from outside, and aim to apply them in their educational realities. In our case, we want to understand and explain *how and why dual apprenticeships have been adopted by national governments in India and Mexico*.

CPE is a recent analytical approach in policy studies that, contrary to structuralist political economy approaches, not only considers material (economic, institutional and political) but also semiotic drivers (discourses and ideas) and the interaction between them in the explanation of processes of policy change, for example in the case of TVET reforms (Zancajo and Valiente, 2018). CPE understands power relations as consubstantial to policy processes, both in its material (hard) and discursive (soft) dimensions. Soft power (ideas, discourses) interact with hard versions of power (material resources, political hierarchies) as drivers of policy change. As Verger (2014) notes, beyond material drivers, the mobilization of policy ideas, the role of policy advisers and knowledge-brokers, and the mechanisms of persuasion and construction of meaning (soft power) are key to explain the global appeal of travelling policies like dual apprenticeships and their adoption by national policymakers and stakeholders in different contexts.

In order to operationalize the influence and interaction of these different forms of power and influence, Jessop (2010) recommends researchers to interrogate the interaction between ideational and material drivers of policy change through three 'evolutionary' mechanisms: variation, selection and retention.

- **Variation** refers to a moment of problematisation of a specific policy domain (education, labour market) triggered by some event(s) or changes in the context.

¹ To cite this document: Valiente, O., Maitra, S., Jacovkis, J., Fuentes, H., Maitra, S., Aramburu, V., Kumar, M., Cervantes, J. A. and Roy, A. (2021) WP2 Policy Adoption. Research Design. Documentation. Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF).

These changes can exceed the policy domain which is being problematised (extra-educational challenges). This moment entails conditions for discursive changes, for the emergence of new discourses and for the mobilisation of different actors' networks trying to adapt to the contextual changes. It can be also viewed as a contextual moment that allows but also constrains and limits the scope of these problematization discourses and ideational drivers. During the variation moment dominant policy discourses and practices need to be revisited due to a range of circumstances that put pressure on policy-makers to introduce substantive changes in their education systems. These critical junctures represent moments of disruption to typical operating procedures, that open windows of opportunity for policy entrepreneurs and that are conducive to competition and conflict between different views. In our case it refers to the problematization of existing TVET provision and the need to adapt it to new societal demands (e.g. skills upgrading, decent work, productivity).

- **Selection** implies the identification of the most suitable interpretations of existing problems, as well as the most complementary policy solutions (e.g. employers' involvement in skills formation, work-based learning). It refers to a moment of struggle among different definitions of the causes and political solutions to the problems emerged in the variation moment. Policy actors compete to impose their policy solutions presenting them as the most pertinent and feasible to face the problem and try to introduce them in the political agenda of those with capacity to make decisions. The adoption of borrowed policy solutions will depend on the perception of their institutional fit, their budgetary and technical viability, the credibility of the evidence base, and their compatibility with dominant policy paradigms and government ideology. The level of influence of policy actors will be mediated by their ability to discursively frame and sell their policy solutions to the other stakeholders.
- **Retention** refers to the moment of institutionalisation of the selected policy solution through changes in the regulatory framework and governance technologies of the system. This is a moment of normalisation of the hypotheses that guide the reform (causes and policy solutions of the problem) through its incorporation in the practices of the involved actors (practitioners, beneficiaries, technocrats). It is also the crystallization point of conflicts and oppositional movements. Once the government announces the adoption of dual apprenticeships, different stakeholders will position themselves to support it or resist it according to their level of (dis)agreement with the reform. Different political architectures may make more difficult the retention of the policy given the need for wide political party coalitions and the existence of veto points in the approval process. Selling the idea to the public through political marketing strategies will be one of the ways to reduce the level of contestation and gaining support to the reform. Other governance technologies might include wide consultations and the involvement of different stakeholders in the implementation of the reform (including opportunities for profit making). In our case, retention refers to the institutionalization of dual apprenticeships into the regulatory framework and into the network of educational technologies and practices of the system (e.g. education and labour laws, funding schemes).

Overarching research questions

The overarching research questions of WP2 are organized around the three evolutionary mechanisms of policy change, one for each mechanism. These research questions are:

1. What contextual changes triggered the problematization of current provision of TVET and opened an opportunity for the adoption of dual apprenticeships?
2. How promoters of the dual model of apprenticeships managed to impose it as the most adequate policy solution to existing policy problems?
3. What level of resistance and support did dual apprenticeships receive and what governance technologies were put in place to retain them into the system and govern its participants (apprentices, employers, trainers)?

Ideational and material drivers of policy adoption

Following Verger et al. (2016), we will try to map out the hard (material) and soft (discursive) drivers of the adoption of dual apprenticeships through the three interconnected moments of the process policy change: variation, selection and retention (see Table 1 below). Some of these material and ideational drivers will have their origin at the global scale or through the intervention of international actors (e.g. German cooperation), while in other cases these drivers will have a national origin (e.g. institutional architectures and national public and private actors).

It is perfectly possible that many of the drivers in this table will not be present in our cases of study, while other drivers may manifest as important in our cases and they were not included in this table. The main aim of the table is to help us to think in the potentially explanatory factors of the adoption of dual apprenticeships in an analytical manner. It does not try to prescribe potentially explanations as they can only be elucidated through empirical scrutiny. In this sense, the table will help us to develop potentially explanatory hypotheses that we will refute or confirm through empirical evidence.

For example, under this theoretical framework, ideational and discourse drivers are expected to play a more important explanatory role during the initial moments of questioning the status quo (variation) and during the political struggle to decide the best policy solution to be adopted (selection), while material factors and institutional structures may be more determinant in the moment of the actual retention of the policy. In a similar vein, and based on comparative policy studies, it is also reasonable to expect global drivers to be more influential in the variation and selection moments and to start losing their explanatory power once dual apprenticeships are to be retained and internalised in the national regulations and concrete legislation changes. Again, both hypotheses need to be empirically tested and may produce divergent findings in our two cases of study.

As in any process of policy change, 'time' is a very important variable to consider. The perceptions of policy actors and their strategies will probably change over time:

- For example, it is perfectly possible that national policy makers initially got interested in dual apprenticeships as a solution to educational problems of early school leaving or social inclusion, and they later realised that the main contribution of this policy would be to enhance the skill levels and the productivity of a workforce elite.
- Similarly, the level of ambition of dual apprenticeships could be big in an initial stage, but later national policy actors may realise that scaling up this policy innovation at a systemic level is almost an impossible task in their own context.
- The same applies to international actors. German cooperation and policy entrepreneurs may try to sell dual apprenticeships as an 'easy policy solution' or a 'quick fix' to many societal problems in the first moments of the process. But this very same actors may change their discourse once the policy is selected in order to convince national actors of the 'complexities of the process' and sell their technical assistance during the implementation of the reform.
- In parallel to the perceptions and the strategies of the actors, the policy design of dual apprenticeship may also change over time. At the beginning of the process 'dual apprenticeships' will probably remain as a vague policy idea that resembles a particular characterisation of the dual model in the donor country. Once the policy process advances, this policy idea will become more concrete and will be transformed and re-contextualized to the conditions of reception in our two study countries.

Data sources

This WP will be eminently qualitative. Two main sources of data will be used: policy documents and semi-structured interviews. Each case study will be constructed through the process-tracing technique of the policy process and the data analysed via discourse analysis.

- Policy documents: It will be important to collect, classify and analyse different types of policy documents (archives work, legal texts, policy reports, media news) from international and national agencies. The international policy documents should include those produced by the German, Swiss and Austrian cooperation but also those produced by international organizations like the World Bank, OECD, ILO and UNESCO. These international documents will be particularly useful to understand the different objectives attributed to dual apprenticeships and the reasons promoted for their adoption at a global scale. In the case of national policy documents, they will allow us to extract the explicit reasons for their adoption in each national context, unveil the logics behind the policy intervention, policy discourses that have been influential, level of alignment with other international and national initiatives, policy design, and implementation plans with roles and responsibilities allocated to the different stakeholders. The policy documents will be also crucial to start outlining a timetable of key dates and events in the development of the dual apprenticeship policy.
- Semi-structured interviews: As a first step, we will need to identify key stakeholders that have been potentially involved in the policy process of adoption of dual apprenticeships (e.g. German cooperation agencies, ministries of education, chambers of commerce, state governments, civil society). It will be important to

include not only those directly involved but also those that might have been excluded from the process (i.e. trade unions, social movements) and those that might have an external opinion about the national adoption of dual apprenticeships (i.e. experts, international organizations). The sample of informants include actors operating at two scales: the global and the national². At the global scale we will need to interview international actors involved in the policy process of adoption in the two countries. This might include German cooperation actors based in India and Mexico, but also those based in Germany. The interviews with cooperation actors based in Germany will help us to understand the logics of action and mechanisms of influence of the donor countries (minimum of 5 interviews, that can be expanded if necessary, particularly if we think it would be interesting to include actors in Switzerland/Austria). At the national scale the main bulk of evidence will come from the interviews with national policy actors and stakeholders (between 20 and 25 interviews in each country). The sampling of the key informants needs to be time-bounded, only including actors that were influential during the period of adoption of the policy. In this sense, we are interested in policy actors that played a key role during this process although they may have moved to a different position or not occupying a position of power right now.

Interview guidelines

Before starting the interviews, it is crucial to have:

- Table of drivers of the policy reform: which of the included elements appear during the interview?
- Timeline of the policy development: are there some gaps that the interview could help to cover?
- Map of actors: which were the relationships of the interviewee with other relevant actors?

Although the interview schedule is useful for all the interviews, it covers only general aspects that should be addressed and does not include specific questions for the particular actors and contexts. The table of drivers, the timeline and the map of actors will help the interviewers to prepare specific questions for each actor (depending on its role, on the period in which s/he was involved, etc.) and check and complete some information that could be missing.

1. Presentation. Could you please introduce yourself and briefly explain me your professional trajectory? Which was your role in [institution]? In which period were you there?

2. Variation: *[Overarching research question: What contextual changes triggered the problematisation of current provision of TVET and opened an opportunity for the adoption of dual apprenticeships?]*

² Please remember that we decided in the Kick Off meeting not to include the interviews with regional stakeholders in WP2 unless they played some key role in the national adoption of the policy. Regional stakeholders will be interviewed in WP3 as part of the implementation and enactment of the policy.

- How your institution started its involvement in the DA? Which were the objectives of its participation?
- Which were the main problems the DA tried to solve or address? Would you say these problems have changed? [For example, maybe at the beginning it was presented as a solution to social inclusion and after some time it was a way to improve productivity]
- Why do you think that the discussion about this policy arose in that moment and not before or after? Which are the factors that you consider relevant to explain why was it possible, in that moment, to open the discussion on DA? Do you think the context was the ideal to the discussion? Why? Which other measures were discussed to address this situation?
- Which other institutions were involved? Which aspects would you highlight about the role of your institution in the discussion? [if not State] In your opinion, which were the objectives of the State to stimulate the discussion? Which were their motivations? What did it expect to achieve through the development of this policy?
- If they haven't appeared, ask about International Organisations arguments: Were there some international organisation involved in the DA? Which was its role? [This] organisation argues that the DA could improve [equity, competitiveness, social cohesion, etc.] Did your institution share this point of view?

3. Selection: *[Overarching research question: How promoters of the dual model of apprenticeships managed to impose it as the most adequate policy solution to existing policy problems?]*

- Why do you think this policy was predominant in front of other political alternatives? Were the arguments used to defend one or other measure sustained by empirical evidence? Of what kind? Was it national? International? Was the role of the German cooperation visible in the debate around DA?
- Which were the actors in charge of leading the public discussion? Was there any public opposition to it? And private? Was the policy somehow resisted? Which were the most critical actors? And the most favourable? Were there any alignments and strategic alliances among actors? Do you think that some relevant actor in this topic was not involved in the discussion of DA? Why?
- Did the discussions provoke adaptations or changes in the original proposal? Which were the main conflicts? Were they related to the objectives of the policy [definition of the problem] or to technical/pragmatic issues [budget affordability, administrative viability, etc.]?

4. Retention: *[Overarching research question: What level of resistance and support did dual apprenticeships receive and what governance technologies were put in place to retain them into the system and govern its participants (apprentices, employers, trainers)?]*

- Which is the legal scope of the policy? Which was the consensus it reached among political actors? Which legal texts were passed?
- Does it allow to receive some national or international certification? Do you think this was important to materialise the policy?
- Which was the role of the critical actors during the process of approval? Were there some actors that stop supporting it? For what reason? And actors who engaged in supporting it at the end of the process? Why?

- Do you think that it has been fully developed through regulation and budget provision? Is it sustainable for the providers?
- Was there any campaign to advertise the policy? Which were its main messages?

Data collection checklist

After completion of data collection for WP2, each national team should share with the rest of the consortium the following documents:

- Policy flowchart
- Policy drivers table
- Policy timeline table
- List of policy documents
- Policy document quotations and codes
- Description of policy actors
- Interview sampling procedures
- List of interviews carried out
- Interview notes
- Interview transcripts
- Interview quotations and codes

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Table 1. Drivers of policy adoption of dual apprenticeships

Scale	Driver	Variation	Selection	Retention
Global	Hard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multinational companies demand higher level of skills from the local workforce • Global competition for foreign direct investment • Strategic interest in economic relations and trade with Germany (geopolitics) • Trade and liberalisation agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support from German cooperation and International organizations. • Cooperation agreements that include commitments to develop dual apprenticeships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical cooperation and assistance • International certification
	Soft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic imaginary of the knowledge-based economy • Low performance in international rankings (productivity, employment, entrepreneurship, skills mismatch, qualification of the workforce, participation in TVET, social cohesion, inequalities) • High priority of skills in the global agenda for education development • Global discourses on the importance of employers' involvement in skill formation • Global pressures to reform the TVET sector (expansion of apprenticeships, dual model as best practice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert knowledge (evidence, research products, technical assistance) • Framing strategies of experts, policy entrepreneurs, and international actors (study tours, seminars) • Alignment with prevailing international policy paradigms in TVET • Prestige of the German brand as a 'reference society' (Switzerland) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External public support to the reforms

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International reviews of the TVET system (ILO, OCED, G20, World Bank) • Branding your country internationally (Made in India) 		
Domestic	Hard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early school leaving, NEET • Youth unemployment, informality • Youth crime • Low productivity • Social inequalities (ethnicity, gender, social class, caste) • Demographic dividend • Political instability • Internal migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget affordability • Administrative viability (legal reforms, installed capacity) • Availability of institutional structures (standards of competence, monitoring bodies, collective representation of employers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political institutions (presence of veto points; separation of powers) • Political strategies of resistance/negotiation/co-optation • Mobilization of resources by key players in the struggle • Sustainable business model for the participants • Legal architecture and scope of the reform • Governance technologies
	Soft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of low employers' involvement in skill formation • Perception of inadequacy of the supply to the demand of skills (skill mismatch) • Internal pressure/lobbying to demonstrate a business-friendly education agenda (stronger vocational orientation) • Educationalisation of social problems (economic, inequalities, poverty, crime) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political alliance between public and private actors (employers, unions, private providers) • Framing strategies of experts, policy entrepreneurs, and international actors (study tours, seminars) • Perception of potential demand for skills from employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discursive battles between key stakeholders • Use of evidence to support different positions • Policy marketing to the public

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New national economic strategies and ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empirical credibility and resonance of new policy ideas (previous experiences with apprenticeships, evaluation of their results) • Political influence of the TVET sector within the Ministry of Education/Labour • Public opinion/sentiments/values • Government ideology • 'Nationalisation' of an external model 	
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Source: adapted from Verger et al. (2016)