Skill formation in international comparison

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Introduction and overview

- Skill formation regimes: an institutionalist perspective
- Variety of skill formation regimes in international comparison
- Explaining variety: partisan politics and varieties of capitalism
- Illustrative case studies
Def. of “skill formation regime”: self-reinforcing configuration of institutions at the intersection between labor markets and education and training systems.

Focus on upper and post-secondary education: relationship between general academic education and vocational education and training.
Skill formation regimes: an institutionalist perspective

- Educational institutions
- Labor market and social policies
- Industrial relations between unions and employers
Variety of skill formation regimes in international comparison

Two central dimensions of variation:

- Firm involvement in initial VET: commitment of employers to participate in VET, i.e. to incur significant investments in skill formation
- Public commitment to VET: commitment of the state to support and promote VET as an alternative to academic (higher education)

→ Vocational specificity of education system, public subsidies for VET, public investments in VET
Variety of skill formation regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public commitment to vocational training</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Statist skill formation system (SW, FR)</th>
<th>Collective skill formation system (GE, ...)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td>Liberal skill formation system (US, IR)</td>
<td>Segmentalist skill formation system (JAP)</td>
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Involvement of firms in initial vocational training

Variety of skill formation regimes

Explaining variety: partisan politics and varieties of capitalism

- **Logic of influence**
  - Characteristics of the state, unions, and the relationship between business and government

- **Collective skill regime**
  - Who controls?
  - Who provides?
  - Who pays?
  - Relationship of training to general education
  - Logic of membership
  - Degree of coordination among employers

- **Statist skill regime**
  - Neuralgic points of contention

- **Liberal skill regime**
  - Public commitment to VET

- **Segmentalist skill regime**
  - Involvement of firms

Explaining variety

Point of departure: Education systems post WWII

Economic coordination

VET survives

Statist skill formation regime

Collective skill formation regime

VET declines: liberal skill formation regimes

Political coalitions

UK

SWE

DE
Sweden

Dominant coalitions in the postwar era:

- Labor market arena: cross-class compromise between unions and employers after the Saltsjöbaden agreement
- Political arena: “red-green” coalition between social democrats and centrist Farmers’ Party
- Hegemonial position of social democrats in government
- Related to privileged access of trade unions to policy-making arena
Sweden

- Long-term project: establishing the principle of comprehensive education in all sectors of the education system
  - 1950s: experimental phase
  - 1962: introduction of comprehensive school up to grade 9 (lower secondary education)
  - 1977 comprehensivation of higher education
  - 1980s/1990s: various attempts to increase employer involvement, largely failed

→ Institutionalization of statist skill formation regime
Germany

Dominant coalitions in the postwar era:

- Labor market arena: emerging cross-class coalition between employers and unions, but still fragile in the 1950s
- Collective VET system depends on, but also helps to consolidate cross-class cooperation
- Political arena:
  - Until 1969: dominant position of the Christian democrats
  - But: informal (and between 1966-69 formal) Grand Coalition between social and Christian democrats
  - supports “politics of mediation” and cross-class compromise, but employers’ interests more influential due to dominant Christian democrats
Important education reforms:

- **1969 Berufsbildungsgesetz:**
  - Statutory framework for firm-based dual training
  - Institutionalization of corporatist governance structure
  - But: principle of employer autonomy is preserved

- **1970s:** Failure of reform attempts to transform the collective model into a more statist (i.e. Scandinavian) regime type

  - Balance of power more in favor of employers and Christian democrats

- **Until recently,** limited success in transforming segregated secondary school system or improving the permeability between VET and HE

  - Institutionalization of skill formation regime with firm-based dual apprenticeship model at its core
Dominant coalitions in the postwar era:

- Changing government majorities between Labour and Conservatives

- In 1950s and 1960s: consensus-oriented policy-making, but then increasing partisan conflict, in particular in the 1970s and 1980s

- Labor market arena:
  - no sustainable cross-class coalition between employers and unions
  - dominance of craft-based unions over industry-based unions
  - government attempts of establishing corporatist framework fail
England (UK)

Important education reforms:
- Gradual introduction of comprehensive secondary education, but with private component
- Attempts to establish corporatist framework for VET:
  - 1964 Industrial Training Act
  - 1973 Employment and Training Act
- but: no long-term cross-class consensus on VET, collective institutions dismantled by Thatcher government in the 1980s
- 1980s: decline of traditional apprenticeship in industry, transformation of VET into labor market social policy program
- Shift in balance of power in VET: dominance of employer interests, unions get crowded out
- 1990s and after: repeated attempts to resuscitate apprenticeship fail
France

- Statist regime with some liberal elements
- strong focus on general skills component in VET
- academic (university) education has higher status
- various attempts to promote employer involvement
- Political conflict more about opening up access to HE rather than promoting VET as an alternative
Conclusions

- Definition of skill formation regime: includes links to industrial relations and labor market policies
- Large cross-national variety in international comparison
- Partisan politics, industrial relations and varieties of capitalism important factors explaining this variety
Thank you!
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ORTIENTATION, FORMATIONS, INSERTION : QUEL AVENIR POUR L’ENSEIGNEMENT PROFESSIONNEL ?

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