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Vocational Education and Training and Intervention and Regulation Policies in Argentina

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Abstract

This paper purpose is exploring a possible answer to the question: How is the link between technical and vocational education and training and productive demands according to territorial location configured? The theoretical approach is built on the recognition of multiple social and educational demands; education and vocational training diversification and differentiation; the territory considered from economic and educational regionalization processes held in regions, provinces, and local spaces of the country; education planning strategies and education and vocational training mechanisms and regulation bodies. The study also carried out a series of selected cases throughout the country considering different regions, provinces, and localities. The cases analysis made it possible to account for the diversity of actors and instances that directly and indirectly intervene in the relationship between sectors and demands from the world of production and technical and vocational education institutions in different provinces. The relationships and links collected, respond to different objectives and present different scopes in terms of the demands they respond to, the sectors and productive branches and territorial areas in which they are developed. These works allow us to review links between education and vocational training in Latin American countries or in those nations with lower development levels. The purpose could be to make a contrast with the reality of European countries and the existing responses in different countries. This comparative perspective can be complemented with a review of responses and attention types derived from the economic and productive heterogeneity, size and types of companies. For example, the scope of these experiences in small and medium-sized companies, cooperatives and other types of organizations; as well as to verify the functioning among excluded population from production and employment in Europe.



Keywords

vocational education and training, multiple social and educational demands, territory, mechanisms and regulation bodies, Argentina

1 Introduction

This paper aims to explore a possible answer to the question: How is the link between technical and vocational education and training and productive demands according to territorial location configured? The approach is based on a theoretical-conceptual interpretation and on a series of selected cases throughout the country derived from a previous study¹.

The theoretical approach is built on the recognition of multiple social and educational demands; education and vocational training diversification and differentiation; the territory considered from economic and educational regionalization processes held in regions, provinces and local spaces of the country; education planning strategies and education and vocational training mechanisms and regulation bodies.

Argentina has strong provincial inequalities resulting from historic disparities in the productive performance, that coincide with high economic and social heterogeneity among and within provinces.

The analysis of provincial and local social and economic conditions for the insertion into the world of work, allows considering differential situations among areas according to main productive sectors, labour markets' demands, populations' size and relative living conditions.

What is the meaning of education and vocational training in a country like Argentina with growing dualization, polarization, segmentation and economic and social exclusion facing a crisis exacerbation due to pandemic? In this context, it is necessary to respond to workers' educational needs and to multiple economic and technological demands derived from alternatives for the country's recovery.

The possibility to participate again in the 4th International Conference Crossing Boundaries in Vocational Education and Training, responds to the advantages of comparative education approaches within Europe and other continents. This allows recognizing regularities, problems, agencies, actors and trends in different systems. In the case of our country, this provides the possibility to apply analytical strategies to inequalities and differences between provincial states. Our research orientations and transfer practices to VET's management bodies coincide with: the need of recognizing singularities, identifying strengths, improvement needs and gaps; understanding of the role played by different institutions, involved agencies and actors; and to characterize margins and possible spaces for TVET bodies' regulation, all topics included in this 2021 Conference.

This paper supports the need to explore explicit or implicit ways in which education and vocational training actions respond to social and productive reality in local and departmental areas, or in public and private organizational spheres focusing on:

- a) Multiple social and educational demands: considering i) effective demands derived from the economic and productive heterogeneity according to sector dynamics, size and organization characteristics; ii) occupational demands derived from technological transformations and work processes expressed in socio-professional profiles; and iii) various social sectors and population's implicit demands not usually manifested through institutional mechanisms

¹ "Collection and analysis of available studies on geo-referencing linking socio-productive sectors and existing technical and vocational education offer", prepared by PEET-IIICE / UBA-FFyL for the National Institute of Technological Education (INET). Buenos Aires. August 2019- October 2020.

but that aim at improving life quality (FUDAL-FNUAP, 1978; Cetrángolo & Gatto, 2002; Anlló & Cetrángolo, 2007; Cetrángolo & Godschmit, 2013; Riquelme, 1985, 1991, 2010, 2015).

- b) Vocational training and education diversification and differentiation: numerous investigations analyzed socio-educational segmentation and related processes such as institutional differentiation, educational fragmentation and segregation. There's evidence of the deepening of educational inequalities in secondary education and regarding the configuration of schooling circuits in education and vocational training (Filmus et. al., 2001; Kessler 2002; Riquelme, 2004; Riquelme et.al., 1999, 2018; Riquelme & Herger, 2015).
- c) The territory considered from economic and educational regionalization processes occurred in regions, provinces and local areas. Spatial analysis allows understanding socio-economic problems, by admitting economic, sociological and geographical approaches to conduct studies on social, educational and productive facilities location (Cetrángolo et al., 2011; Farah, et al., 2010; Moreno Jiménez, 2013; Riquelme & Herger, 2005, Riquelme et al., 2018; Sassera, 2020).

There are some studies that analyze productive systems from a territorial approach (Borello, 2006; Yoguel et al., 2009) that recognize that economic activities are geographically rooted; and that the territory is a constitutive part of objects and processes (Borello 2006; Boscherini & Poma, 2000; Harvey, 1977; Massey, 1995, Soja, 1996). The concept of industrial district is an example that refers to learning and innovation among actors that are possible in productive systems geographically concentrated.

Boscherini and Poma (2000) propose to update the concept of industrial district. Even though the territory is the axis of the productive grid because the same spatial location may produce advantages among enterprises, there is a competition between territorial systems. Another element to take in consideration are the districts or territories dynamics for understanding enterprises' actions and potentialities.

In Argentina, another work addresses local innovation systems and the local economic areas as an empiric approach to these systems:

Local innovation systems encompass both production systems and education and training institutions, unions and professional associations and technological research and development bodies. All production systems have a local facet, leaving aside the fact that some include a variety of local organizations from a region, different regions in the same country or even different countries. (Yoguel et al., 2009, p. 66-67)

Within this framework, local innovation systems are analyzed though the concept of local economic area defined on the basis of population commuting (Mazorra, Filippo y Schlessler, 2005; Yoguel et al., 2009)

- d) Education planning strategies and education and vocational training mechanisms and regulation bodies. Planning processes haven't been nationally, provincially and locally consistent and it's difficult to reconstruct diagnoses on education and training requirements (Riquelme, 2015; Riquelme et al., 2015).

Although there is weakness in policy planning and programming, it is possible to recognize possible instances of regulation, which could convene different areas of the State and other actors from the business sector, trade unions, workers and society:

these institutional agencies of articulation, intervention and coordination could be considered as a whole regulation and training mechanisms for work in the long term, insofar as: they can take the form of commissions, councils, stable or ad hoc forums, regular work meetings, debate seminars, strategic or even intersectorial programming and others; and they link public and private actors in the discussion about work processes and education and training needs (Riquelme, et al., 2015, p. 233).

2 Complex scenarios of education and vocational training

Argentina's situation could be understood through the existence of complex education and vocational training scenarios in which demands and interventions from different areas and groups co-exist and require regulation, see Figure 1.

Figure 1

Complex scenarios of education and vocational training: intervention and regulation policies

| | Enterprises, enterprises associations | Education system | | Articulation |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| | | University and scientific and technological system | Education and vocational training policies | Labor and social policies |
| Dynamic leading and cutting edge sectors of the economy | Technological centers sectors Forums on production | In local areas to foster scientific and technological links with technical schools and universities Short term specializations | | Internship programs in technical and vocational training centers for unemployed workers with development potential |
| Small and medium (efficient / dynamic) | Model schools Excellence technical and vocational training center by sectors and / or common processes | | | Training model centers for operators and technicians for labor reintegration |
| Small and medium | Intervention in local, interprovincial and regional technology parks | | | |
| Non-formal employment Social movements Micro-enterprises Unemployed workers | Comprehensive quality and modernization programs Production processes and organization advice centers | | | - Internship programs in technical and vocational training centers for unemployed workers with development potential - Technical and vocational training regular programs - Training model centers for operators and technicians for labor reintegration |
| | | | | Primary and secondary education completion programs Programs for basic technical training modules Programs for the production of basic social services at the community level, health, child care Training programs in trades, construction, basic infrastructure, educational services expansion, classrooms, occupational workshops. |

Source: PEET-IICE-FFyL/UBA

It is necessary to generate an Intermediary Alternative among the educational conducting agencies, where the state develops regulatory capacities for funding assessment and criteria distribution. Also, demand assessment according to population and productive employment features, for producing certification and quality recognition systems of education and training and to promote the articulation in formal and non-formal education.

Other countries experiences show the importance of the regulatory role of the State to avoid generating a certification market, as well as the fragmentation of validation practices between different sectors and public and private agents. Some studies warn about the resulting certification market's risks, since "the certification market is prosperous and expanding. This leads to commercial practices that sometimes involve states and public services" (Bouder et al., 2002,

p. 151). Recent studies show that this type of functioning persistence excludes young people and adults with lower levels of education who cannot finance these services (Endrodi, 2018).

Other authors (Marhuenda, 2009) have warned about the risks of increasing the exclusion of those who cannot accredit any training, and the importance of support mechanisms that “in the form of advice and guidance, have to avoid generating a new source of discrimination in an area which it is increasingly difficult to aspire to equal opportunities and the recognition of citizens' rights” (Marhuenda, 2009, p. 11).

In contrast with the developed countries, in our nations the promotion of certification systems for prior learning obtained by social or work experience, seems to ignore that they were established on a basis of greater differentiation and even educational and labor polarization. Thus, there is a risk of

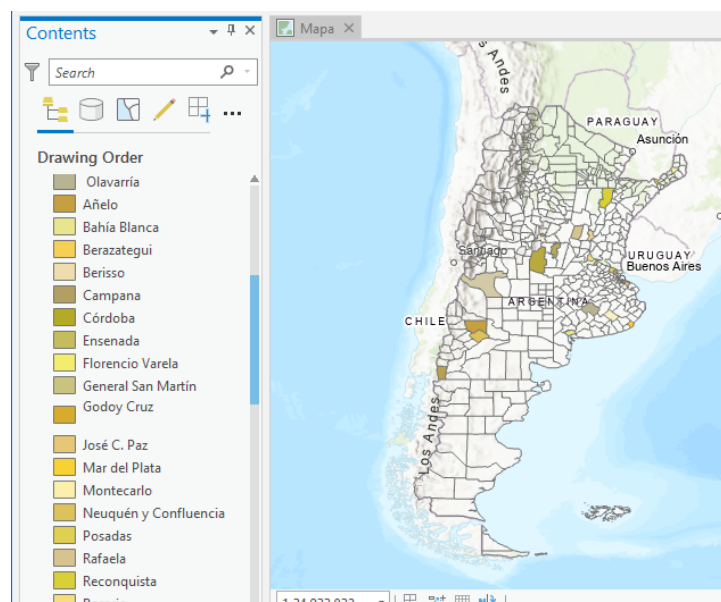
leaving to their fate those who, due to their structural conditions, do not have the minimum requirements for accessing to training information, and whose experiences, due to their development in marginalized spaces, lack social validation in the access to goods and services through employment distribution (Spinosa & Drolas, 2009, pp. 3-4).

3 Exploring links and relationships between education and vocational training and the social and productive reality

This paper aims at exploring links and relationships between education and vocational training and social and productive reality through selected cases along the country. Our study explored the links between technical and vocational education and training and productive demands according to territorial location. The research design carried out by PEET aimed for identifying existing connections between TVET and multiple demands derived from existing "areas" in the national territory such as regions, public policies planning, development plans, industrial parks, and ecosystems and experiences of local innovation systems, local economic areas and education and work articulations. This type of linkage was interpreted according to education and vocational training in the country looking into the extent that institutions, programs, projects or interventions responded to multiple social and economic demands. The research was based on a selection of cases in provinces from different country regions, see Figure 2.

Figure 2

Map of Argentina with selected cases in local economic areas



Source: PEET-IICE-FFyL/UBA

The intervening actors and institutions in the selected cases are diverse, and belong to national and provincial education public sector or to other sectors of local governments and other social sectors, see Figure 3.

Figure 3

Number of cases according to intervening actors, agencies and objectives

| Actors and agencies involved | Quantity | According to objective types | Quantity |
|--|----------|---|----------|
| Public or private provincial institutions of technical and vocational education (technical secondary schools, higher institutes, vocational training center) | 5 | Promotion of improvement of competitiveness, productivity, territorial development and technological innovation | 30 |
| Other education and vocational training institutions. Trade unions, social movements, NGOs | 5 | Promotion of local, productive, social and territorial development | 10 |
| Companies, chambers and other business organizations | 19 | Implicit and explicit references to attention of demands derived from economic and productive heterogeneity | 59 |
| Higher technological education institutions | 6 | Regulatory mechanisms and other articulations dependent of different national or provincial government areas | 18 |
| Universities | 13 | Organization of education and training proposals for adolescents, youth and employed and unemployed adults, study and work practices. | 18 |
| National government agencies | 13 | Total | 135* |
| Provincial, departmental or local government agencies | 32 | | |
| National, provincial agencies and areas of science and technology | 5 | | |
| Total | 98 | | |

*Some cases may repeat because have more than one objective

Source: PEET-IICE-FFyL/UBA

In the selected cases, it was possible to identify and recognize possible regulation, coordination and intervention agencies of education and vocational training. These agencies could be considered as regulatory mechanisms in which intervene different areas of the state and other actors such as the business sector, trade unions, workers and society. The cases take different forms, have different degrees of institutionalization, formality and participation of actors from the state, society and the world of production that give rise to the articulation of experiences between education and work.

In relation to aims around education and vocational training, the research made a description of the objectives and purposes that explicitly or implicitly refer to human resources training or technical and vocational education actions. These mentions were organized according to actions' main orientations: a) promotion improvement of competitiveness, productivity, territorial development and technological innovation; b) organization of education and training proposals for adolescents, youth, employed and unemployed adults; c) identification, diagnosis, or approximation to social and productive demands; d) promotion of productive, social and territorial development.

In relation to the implicit and explicit references to demands attention derived from economic and productive heterogeneity in some provinces, the study achieves to briefly present an illustrative approach on how selected cases attend demands according to sectors dynamics, productive establishments' size and organization features, jobs types; specific groups employed, under-employed and unemployed population requirements.

The study collected cartographies and geo-referenced maps of economic and productive information, since geo-referencing is a fundamental aspect in the analysis of geospatial data. It is the basis for the correct location of the information on a map and its adequate comparison of data from different sectors in different spatial and temporal locations. The research verified the use of maps that account for economic and productive activities. Also, the use of school maps

as techniques and instruments that could contribute to education and vocational training policies' regulation and planning. The maps and cartographic systems that were explored are developed by national, provincial and local authorities and present diverse types of information with different territorial coverage, which could become a mechanism or instrument for planning the relationship between education and work.

The selected cases coincide with situations in which actors or organizations with territorial, provincial or local scope intervene and express interests in education and work articulations, and have sectorial perspectives referred to local or specific regional production requirements. In a lesser extent, some cases refer to training institutions located within industrial parks. These cases were identified in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Jujuy, La Pampa, Mendoza, Misiones, Neuquén, Río Negro, Salta, Santa Fe, Tucumán and Tierra del Fuego.

4 Some considerations about intervention and regulation of education and vocational training policies

The scenarios and responses to our country challenges are multiple and require the participation of various sectors: the state, the productive sector, social and workers' organizations, as well as the innumerable communal instances that exist in local spaces. The attention alternatives must respond to: the relatively disadvantaged groups in the labor market and the educational and training needs, and the existence of multiple demands derived from economic and productive heterogeneity.

The cases analysis made it possible to account for the diversity of actors and instances that directly and indirectly intervene in the relationship between sectors and demands from the world of production and technical and vocational education institutions in different provinces. The relationships and links collected, respond to different objectives and present different scopes in terms of the demands they respond to, the sectors and productive branches and territorial areas in which they are developed.

This type of study and analysis makes it possible to contextualize education and vocational training institutions, to account for the different actors they relate to. Also, these revisions allow to recover experiences of articulation with the productive sectors, municipal authorities and with other provincial and national organizations. This reality may be similar to cases in Europe that can be studied recovering different territorial levels. The lessons of Argentina's experience can be read from the central countries and the European Union, and could lead to comparative studies that consider countries, provinces or states, regions and local areas and considering the richness of existing actions.

Based on the selected cases and the approximate description of some similarities between them, the work sought to identify responses or attention types to demands derived from productive economic heterogeneity. The interpretation took into account sectors dynamics, productive establishments' size and organization, features associated with jobs types and requirements of specific groups of the employed, under-employed and unemployed population. It was interesting to show the extent to which responses from different sections of economic activity or production organization forms and from workers: large companies, dynamic or cutting-edge sectors; SMEs, micro-businesses, entrepreneurs; cooperatives, organizations and producers of the social economy; formal sector workers; informal sector workers and unemployed people.

These types of work allow us to review links between education and vocational training in Latin American countries or in those nations with lower development levels. The purpose could be to make a contrast with the reality of European countries and the existing responses in different countries such as Spain, Italy and Germany among others, and to compare existing actors and their objectives in different latitudes as well. This comparative perspective can be complemented with a review of responses and attention types derived from the economic and productive heterogeneity, size and types of companies. For example, the scope of these experiences in

small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives and other types of organizations; as well as to verify the functioning among excluded population from production and employment in Europe.

Strengthening planning bodies and regulatory mechanisms for education and vocational training is a concern for PEET, which can lead to identify and compare experiences. As part of the study, a website was developed and made available for national authorities of technical and vocational education in Argentina. The website consists in a digital library that allows retrieving documents, information, sheets with data systematization, and to access study's different productions in digital format. The site also offers a bibliographic analysis according to territorial and planning areas and with the interpretation axes of education and vocational training. The available materials allow recognizing

- explicit and implicit social and productive demands for technical and vocational education and training in different levels of territorial spheres (national, regional, provincial, local) and within public policies planning, development plans, industrial parks and ecosystems and experiences,
- existing planning bodies or mechanisms at national, provincial and local levels and identification of actors who intervene in these bodies,
- scope and limitations of the existing sources, related with documents produced by public bodies and studies carried out by research centers, as well as other identified information sources.

The sectors of education, labor, social development and social security have developed different programs and actions that impacted on education demand, either through flexible courses offers or income transfers' conditionalities. Public resources rational use will require agreements to overcome the overlapping of objectives and resources in education, employment and social policy.

Social demands pressure for an expansion of educational attention and a progressive improvement in the appropriation of knowledge, require new forms of educational and social engineering. The need is compensating limited available funds with flexible proposals and designs to overcome the educational social debt with vast population sectors. As a final consideration, it is possible to think about what is to come as ideas for politics and for social intervention.

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