



Hertie School of Governance - Working Papers, No. 49, March 2010

**International Policy Learning and Learning Capacity:
The Case of Hungarian Vocational Education and Training**

Mihály Fazekas (RAND Europe)

working papers

About the HSoG Working Paper Series

The Working Paper Series of the Hertie School of Governance is intended to provide visibility, internally as well as externally, to the current academic work of core faculty, other teaching staff, and invited visitors to the School. High-quality student papers will also be published in the Series, together with a foreword by the respective instructor or supervisor.

Authors are exclusively responsible for the content of their papers and the views expressed therein. They retain the copyright for their work. Discussion and comments are invited. Working Papers will be made electronically available through the Hertie School of Governance homepage. Contents will be deleted from the homepage when papers are eventually published; once this happens, only name(s) of author(s), title, and place of publication will remain on the list. If the material is being published in a language other than German or English, both the original text and the reference to the publication will be kept on the list.

Foreword

International policy learning has developed into something close to a panacea for addressing any wicked policy issue. It is seen as a tool to overcome the stasis of domestic policy making by systematically drawing lessons from other jurisdictions. Cross-national “benchmarking” has become a key tool to establish best or at least good practices from which other countries can learn. Organizations such as the OECD play a pivotal role in both the process of defining good practices and advocating these practices to individual countries. All too often, the interplay between policy knowledge and political mechanisms which shapes policy learning has been neglected, both in academic research and public policy debates. Mihaly Fazekas explores the domestic learning capacity as one of the key factors shaping the process of adopting innovations. His insightful case studies from the Hungarian vocational education and training sector show that individual and organizational capacities work in combination with power relations and self-interests in determining if and how non-domestic innovations are adopted. Among the many implications that arise from Mihaly Fazekas’ analysis, one key lesson is that the design of ‘learning projects’ (of the OECD type and others) should take domestic learning capacities into account, i.e. by including a strategy of capacity building in the sequencing of projects. More widely, his work fits into a recently renewed academic interest in the link between individual, organizational and (international) policy learning.

Kai Wegrich
Professor of Public Management
Thesis Supervisor

International Policy Learning and Learning Capacity

The Case of Hungarian Vocational Education and Training

Mihály Fazekas, RAND Europe, fazekas@rand.org

Abstract

The study analyses the impact of international policy learning on domestic policy formulation in the context of Hungarian vocational education and training. It focuses on how domestic learning capacity impacts on international policy learning which, in turn, affects domestic policy formulation. Learning capacity captures individual and organizational capacities to acquire new knowledge and to apply it to subsequent actions. The analysis builds upon two case studies: (1) the creation of a labour market forecasting system to underpin the quantity steering of VET; and (2) the OECD policy review of Hungary. Since the two cases expose the same set of actors but in different settings, it allows for triangulating the findings. The empirical evidence gathered suggests that individual and organizational learning capacities play a crucial role in international policy learning as measured in policy formulation. Constraints on individual and organizational learning result in limited international policy learning; thus relevant and generally accessible policy options are neglected during the policy formulation process. Actor interests also have a considerable impact on international policy learning thus on policy formulation, however, these two set of factors do not compete with rather they mutually reinforce each other.

Acknowledgements: I wish to thank István Tóth János for his great help in accessing key policy makers and formulating the conceptual framework, Kai Wegrich and Kathrin Höckel for their invaluable comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, international policy learning has received extensive attention from academics as well as policy makers. There is a wide literature on how policies are transferred or diffused across national and other administrative borders and how this process is related to policy change (e.g. Rose 1991, Hall 1993, Sabatier 2007, Dolowitz&Marsh 2000, James&Lodge 2003). In spite of the vast efforts put into both theoretical and empirical analysis, it is still an open question which factors facilitate international policy learning and how this learning is turned into policies (Bennett&Howlett 1992, Wolman&Page 2002, Busenberg 2001).

This academic debate, nevertheless, bears significant practical consequences. It is so not only because incidence of, even pressure for, international policy learning or policy transfer is perceived to be growing (Dolowitz&Marsh 2000, Stone 2000); but also because several countries, typically at the receiver end of learning or transfer exercises, increasingly see the key to prosperity the successful emulation of international best practice, however that is defined (Stead et al 2008). This attitude, for example, in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries is supported by the perceived and often measured performance gap between them and developed OECD countries (World Bank 2008, OECD 2003).

Due to acknowledging the importance of importing policies in CEE mainly from Western European countries, this study explores the role of international policy learning on domestic policy change, particularly on domestic policy formulation; and it aims at advancing our understanding of the factors which determine international policy learning. Particular emphasis is put on domestic institutions' and policy makers' capacity to understand, internalize, and act upon non-domestic knowledge which is a rarely analyzed factor in the CEE context though the rare accounts indicate significant impact of domestic capacities on the incidence and quality of policy transfer and learning (Stead et al 2008, Randma-Liiv 2005).

These questions are discussed through analyzing two recent cases in Hungarian vocational education and training (VET). The reason for choosing the country and the policy field is twofold: The VET system has long been crucial in securing the skills base of firms, thus VET is a well established policy field. However, Hungarian VET came under stress when faced with transition to capitalism and massive economic restructuring. Consequently, Hungary, as well as many OECD countries, strives for reforming VET to make it more responsive to labour market needs, in order to better serve economic growth (OECD 2008a). Understanding this urge for reform, VET has become a policy priority for the government in the last 3-4 years, which has also been translated into implemented reforms. Furthermore, the Hungarian government is openly committed to learn from international experiences which is best exemplified by the commissioning of two OECD reviews of the country's IVET system alone in 2008 (Kis et al 2008, OECD/CERI 2008). Nonetheless, a closer look at this commitment raises concerns that behind the emblematic acts of policy learning (e.g. OECD country review) there is only a superficial and ritualistic learning process. Implying that opportunities for learning are largely let passed and resources put into learning exercises are at least in part wasted.

Two recent cases of Hungarian VET reform are selected for detailed study by which the same policy subsystem is looked at from two different angles. The first case study deals with a recent (2007-2008) policy change which created a labour market forecasting system based on employers' survey

underpinning the quantity steering of VET. The second case study exposes a typical tool for international policy learning: OECD policy review of Hungary (2007-2008). The two cases concern the same policy-subsystem, set of actors, and institutional relations, but they do so in different settings which provides sufficient variation for triangulating the findings. The important differences are (1) comprehensiveness of the learning tool; (2) dominance, relative position of actors; (3) reputation and position of the information source. The cases were selected based on recency, salience, accessibility, and the variation in the above variables.

The focus of the research necessitates the use of qualitative methods which are capable of mapping the fine grained timeline, motivations of actors, and their relations. The empirical basis derives from interviews with key policy makers¹, published and unpublished documents, and from media reports. Interviews covered the OECD, the relevant ministries and all major domestic stakeholders.² All interviewees were approached via their personal networks in order to maximize their openness and honesty. Within each institution involved in international policy learning, those individuals were interviewed who effectively influenced decisions (e.g. head of department in the ministry) and also personally were involved in the learning exercise. Many of the interviewees requested their anonymity due to political sensitivity, thus, references to the interviews in the text cannot specify the exact person or institution.

The paper is organized as follows: (1) the analytical frame is outlined; (2) the background is elaborated upon by describing the Hungarian VET system; (3) the two case studies are examined consecutively; (4) their conclusions are synthesised.

2

¹ Some of the interviews were involved in both cases. Furthermore, several key actors were approached more than one times to provide follow-up on the developments.

² Furthermore, the author was personally involved in both cases as an expert which provided the first-hand knowledge of the actors and processes of policy learning.

2. Analytical approach

The literatures on policy transfer and policy learning approach differently how lessons drawn in one context - defined by time, location and jurisdiction – are brought into another context. By implication, the variables explaining transfer or learning are different to some degree.

The *policy transfer* literature focuses on decision making within political systems and administrations, actors who play a crucial role in transferring policies, and sources of ideas (Lodge 2005, Dolowitz 1997, Rose 1993). Here the choice of policy template to be transferred and the quality of transfer (e.g. symbolic adoption, emulation) are both variables to be explained by external pressures, coercion, environmental characteristics (Dolowitz&Marsh 2000, Bennett 1991). There is also a growing interest in policy transfer from a new-institutionalist perspective where the importance of institutional processes in the choice of specific templates is emphasized (Lodge 2003, Page 2000, DiMaggio&Powel 1991). Institutional mechanisms responsible for locating innovations of other contexts are considered not as rational decision-making but as “limited searches for templates which appear more legitimate, appropriate, or successful” (Lodge 2003: 161). By implication, the policy transfer literature provides this study useful insights in two ways: (1) it highlights the importance of the organization of political-administrative nexus (Egeberg 1999, Hall 1983), and institutional power structures (Hall 1986); (2) it aids the conceptualization of different degrees of international policy learning.

3

Policy learning is often conceptualized as a process taking place within policy networks such as epistemic communities (Haas 1992) or advocacy coalitions (Sabatier 2007); though various, distinct interpretations exist (cf. Bennett&Howlett 1992, Blyth 2002, Checkel 1997). Throughout this study, following a broader conception, policy learning is said to occur when individuals acquire new knowledge and apply it to subsequent actions.³ Hence, international policy learning takes place when policy learning concerns non-domestic knowledge. This interpretation of learning does not exclude the redefinition of interests and changes in fundamental beliefs and ideas behind policy making (Stone 2004, Hall 1993). However, due to practical considerations (i.e. operationalizationability), two modes of learning are taken into account: (1) understanding and interpretation of policy problems; (2) solutions aimed at solving them, nevertheless fundamental beliefs and cognitive frames are held constant (Surel 2000, Dolowitz&Marsh 1996, Hall 1993, Rose 1991, Sabatier 1987). Therefore, this paper acquires from the policy learning literature the different notions of learning and their operationalization.

However, most of these findings have a particular focus on highly developed countries, often comparing culturally and institutionally similar contexts (e.g. Page 2000, Dolowitz&Marsh 2000, Bennett&Howlett 1992). Some authors raised concerns that this model might not be applicable to CEE countries fearing that they are unable to adopt western-style institutions due to path dependency and cultural differences (Elster et al 1998, Offe 1998). A solution to this failure of the traditional view looks at the behaviour of the receiver end of the transfer/learning process

³ This is not to say that policy learning necessarily leads to ‘better’ or more efficient policies. It can well be that actors draw wrong conclusion and learn the wrong lesson.

highlighting the characteristics and approach of public administrations in CEE (Stead et al 2008, Randma-Liiv 2005).

Thus, in order to extend the well established literature on policy transfer and policy learning the 'demand-side' is explored in greater detail by introducing the concept of *domestic learning capacity*. Besides the papers focusing on CEE – e.g. Stead et al (2008), Randma-Liiv (2005) – there are also a small number of hints at domestic learning capacity in the literature: Some authors acknowledge that institutions are able to absorb external knowledge or capable of learning to varying degrees (Stone 2004, Busenberg 2001, Bennett&Howlett 1992); or that the cognitive dimension, i.e. how policy makers acquire knowledge is important (Evans&Davies 1999); or, in a related but somewhat different approach, they emphasize possible constraints on policy learning and transfer which are internal to the domestic policy subsystem (e.g. language knowledge, culture, ideology) (Dolowitz&Marsh 2000, 1996). Nevertheless, the authors don't spell out the details of absorptive capacity, learning capacity or the 'cognitive dimension' which would be necessary for integrating the concept into existing accounts of policy learning and policy change. Furthermore, by relying on the concept of domestic learning capacity the individual level is introduced to explanations of policy learning which allows for a more detailed analysis and reveals the internal dynamics of the domestic context.

In order to address the above gaps and to reflect the novelty of my approach two hypotheses are evaluated: one measuring how the new concept performs, the other one following a more traditional view by emphasizing the role of interests in policy change (cf. Bennett&Howlett 1992). The hypotheses are by no means competing; their separation serves analytical purposes.

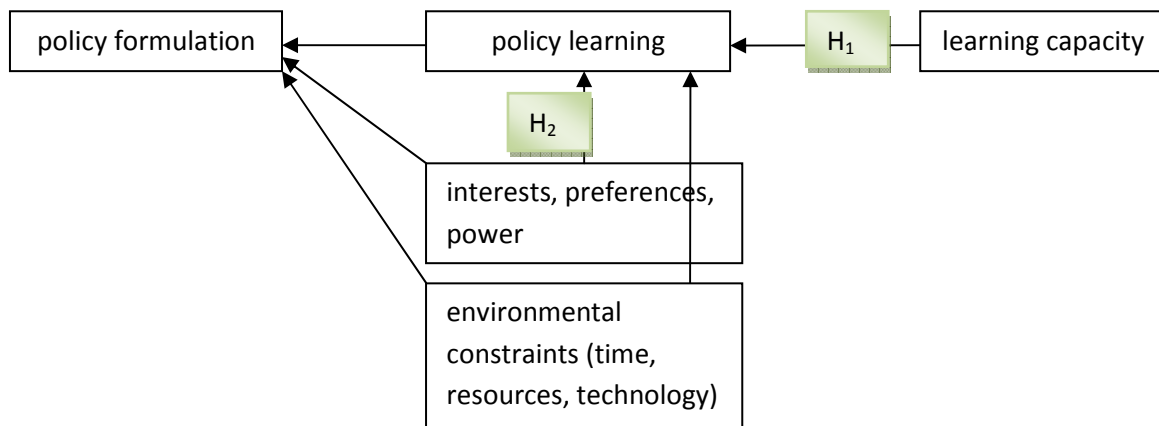
4

- H₁: International policy learning as measured in policy formulation depends on domestic policy learning capacity of key policy makers.
- H₂: International policy learning as measured in policy formulation depends on substantial interests and preferences of key policy makers.

As already said, domestic learning capacity denotes the domestic institutions' and policy makers' capacity to understand, internalize, and act upon non-domestic knowledge. It is mainly geared towards individual characteristics such as skills (e.g. language, academic), worldviews (e.g. attitudes towards foreign countries), and approaches towards learning (e.g. readiness to learn under uncertainty and ambiguity) (e.g. Cannon&Edmondson 2005, Bapuji&Crossan 2004, Dierkes et al 2001). Nonetheless, domestic learning capacity also concerns domestic institutions' processes which transfer, share the acquired knowledge within and among domestic organizations (Lipshitz et al 2002). Broadly speaking, both elements of domestic learning capacity have to be conducive to international policy learning if meaningful policy learning is to take place.

In order to better understand the hypothesized link between key variables, a simple logical model is developed which locates H₁ and H₂ (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The underlying logical model of the hypotheses

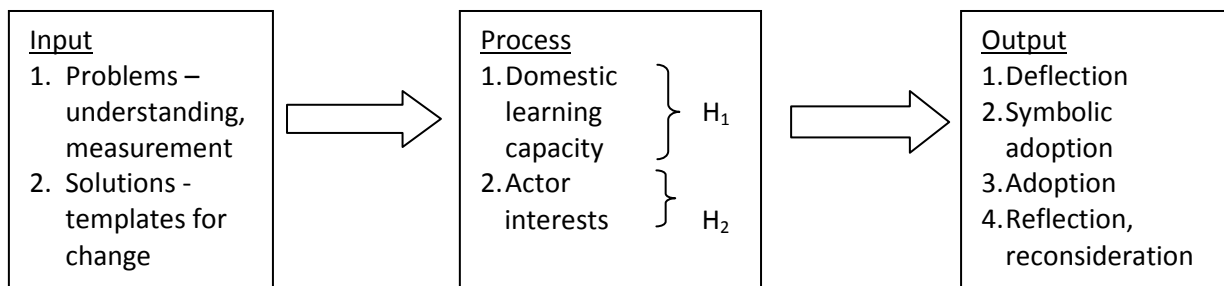


In order to maximize the comparability of results and thus to exploit the synergies between the two cases, a common assessment framework is applied for both cases which involves a common way of operationalizing variables, a comparable approach to gathering empirical evidence, and the same structure for presenting the results.

There are three analytical questions to be explored in both cases: (1) what is the knowledge which can be transferred; (2) what degree of international policy learning takes place in policy formulation; and (3) which variables explain the degree of international policy learning happened. These questions and thus variables are summarized in Figure 2.

5

Figure 2. Logical model of analysing the case studies



On the input side two types of international experience are considered: first, understanding of problems, ways through which problems can be mapped, measured; second, solutions to the identified problems, specific policy templates for change. In the process box the two hypotheses are incorporated: domestic learning capacity and actor interests. The latter encompasses the capacity to resolve conflicts, align preferences, and create coalitions for change within and across domestic organizations. On the output side four forms of international policy learning are highlighted which are by and large in hierarchical order. These are (1) deflection: international experiences are ignored, not fed into policy formulation; (2) symbolic adoption: international experiences are accepted and lessons are adopted only superficially; (3) adoption: international experiences are accepted and lessons are adopted but existing beliefs and knowledge are not questioned; (4) reflection, reconsideration: international evidence leads to reflection on and reconsideration of domestic policies.

3. Empirical Analysis

3.1 Hungarian VET

Hungarian VET shares similar roots with the other ex-communist Eastern-European countries which is particularly exemplified by the heavy reliance on state owned companies in providing practical training. In spite of the different developments of these countries since the transition they still share a number of characteristics and challenges (CEDEFOP 2008, 2004). Hungarian VET well fits in the vocational-school based training type, otherwise known as the French model, which is typical of several other European countries (Gasskov 2000); although in its more recent developments it shares traits with the German dual system (Kis et al 2008).

After finishing elementary school, typically up to age 14, students can choose among one general type of training – gymnasium - and two vocational tracks – vocational secondary schools and vocational training schools. Vocational secondary schools prepare students for the maturata which consists mainly of general subjects, but they also provide some subjects with vocational content and career orientation. At the end of this training many students enrol in post-secondary VET, frequently at the same school. Vocational training schools offer students a vocational qualification, but no maturata while providing some general as well as vocational education. When students apply to either of the two vocational tracks they only have to choose the occupational group (e.g. agriculture, construction); the choice of the occupation takes place later on in their studies: in vocational secondary schools after receiving the maturata, in vocational training schools after finishing the first two grades. Either way the choice is typically made among the occupations which are offered in the same school (Kis et al 2008, CEDEFOP 2007).

The provision of VET services – apart from non-school based training – is based on Regional Integrated VET Centres (VET Centre) which bring together several institutions - vocational secondary schools and vocational training schools alike - in order to better co-ordinate VET provision and improve efficiency. Yet, not all institutions entitled to provide VET services are integrated into a VET Centre since integration is not mandatory (2007. CII. Law). However, because of the strong financial incentives over time no institution is likely to stay out (interview).

VET funding derives from four main sources: (1) central budget, (2) school maintainer, (3) the training sub-fund of Labour Market Fund, and (4) EU funds. The central budget allocates per capita based support according to a given formula to the school maintainers which have considerable leeway in allocating the money among VET schools. However, the per student support is not sufficient for adequate functioning of schools, thus they rely heavily on additional sources (interview). In addition to allocating the amount received from the central budget to individual schools, school maintainers, typically municipalities, frequently provide the additional resources VET schools need for proper functioning. The training sub-fund of the Labour Market Fund derives from a payroll levy amounting

to 1,5% of employers' payroll⁴ and it is mainly used for investing in school development. EU funding serves only development purposes and also entails central budget contribution (CEDEFOP 2007).

Since 2007, the central elements of defining VET provision are the Regional Development and Training Committees (Regional Committees). They are responsible for determining the number of state funded places in each study program at each VET Centre, the amount of funds allocated to development purposes, and recommend enrolment numbers for VET schools not integrated into any VET Centre (2003. LXXXVI. Law). The members of each Regional Committee are representatives of government, trade unions, VET schools and employers' organizations, the latter holding absolute majority in order to secure the dominance of labour market considerations. Making VET more responsive to labour market needs was to be achieved through engaging employers in planning VET provision to a greater extent which explains the make-up of Regional Committees and their entitlements.

There are two ministries responsible for VET: the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (Ministry of Labour) which is in charge of vocational elements of VET and the Ministry of Education and Culture (Ministry of Education) which takes care of general subjects in VET. There is considerable disharmony between the two ministries with regard to goals and means (interview). Nevertheless, in general, the Ministry of Labour is the most influential actor when it comes to VET reform through preparing bills and proposals and funding allocation through its background institution: the National Committee of Vocational and Adult Training which is responsible for managing the Labour Market Fund. The ministry's influence in this committee is considerable even though formally it controls only the minority of votes (interview).

7

There are two major state funded institutes which carry out research and provide expertise for the ministries and the government on labour market and vocational training issues. One is the State Employment Service which besides implementing several active labour market policies also delivers labour market related research on short term labour market forecasts, labour shortages, and labour market dynamics which involve an active co-operation with Regional Committees and significant contribution to the evidence base used in their decisions. The other one is the National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education which attends the Vocational Qualifications Framework, examination regulations in many professions, and collects statistics on the functioning of VET schools.

Not only is decision making about a number of financial issues by Regional Committees decentralized and dominated by employers' associations and trade unions, but also the management of VET training in several – 27 – important professions is done by interest groups, namely chambers of commerce and industry (SzMM-MKIK 2007, 2008). These give considerable discretion to social partners in policy formulation and implementation.

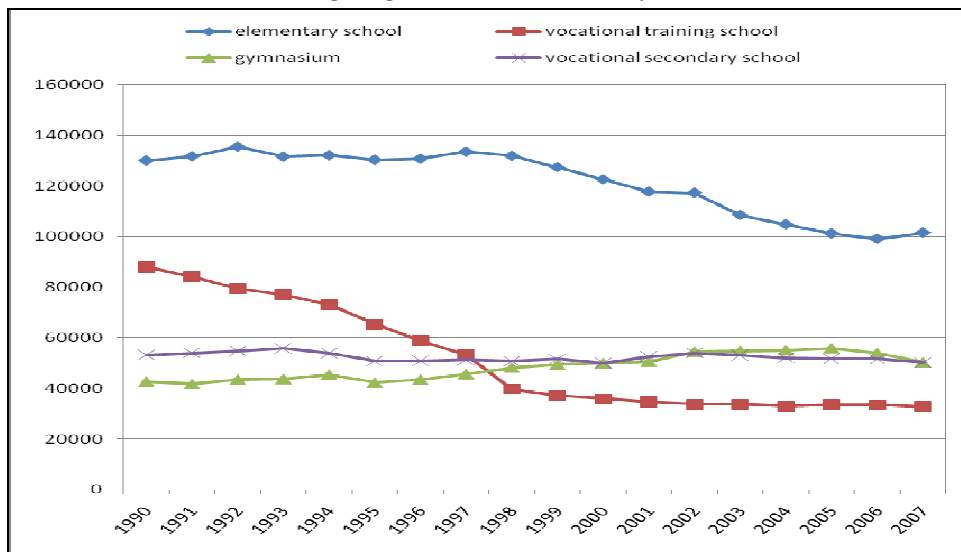
The actors of the Hungarian VET policy sub-system are by no means separated from foreign actors and international experiences. Hungary, as a member country of the EU, takes part in a number of international comparative exercises (e.g. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)). It is also a member state of the OECD which entails not only participation in meetings and decision making bodies, but also active involvement in country reviews such as the OECD policy reviews of VET or OECD/CERI Study of Systemic Innovation in VET (OECD 2008a, OECD/CERI 2008). Social partners significantly contributing to decision making and policy

⁴ Employers can be partially exempted from transferring the levy into the Labour Market Fund if they engage in practical training of VET students or directly contribute to a VET school or train their own employees.

implementation hold various memberships in international organizations of trade unions or business associations (interview) and they are clearly aware of some aspects of a selected set of international experiences⁵. These imply that the analysis is carried out in a context which has several links to external sources of information, knowledge, and experiences even though its history in this respect is relatively short.

In spite of several reforms in Hungarian VET its performance is lagging according to internal and external measures alike. Since the fall of communism the number of students enrolled in VET schools has been declining (Figure 3), wage returns to VET decreased relative to general education (Figure 4), furthermore the relative wage returns to vocational skills over one's lifespan steeply declines indicating that VET school leavers have problems in renewing their knowledge (Kézdi et al 2008).

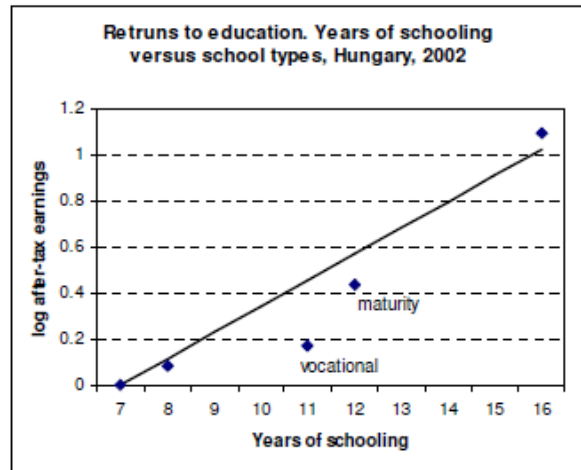
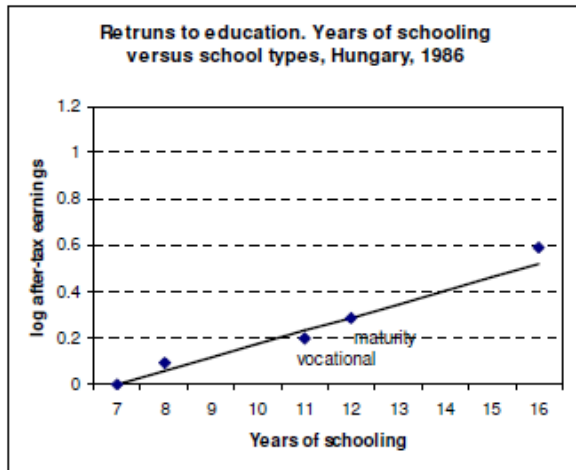
Figure 3. Number of students entering 1st grade – full-time and part-time education combined



Source: Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture (2008), *Statistical Yearbook of Education 2007/2008*, Ministry of Education and Culture, Budapest

Figure 4. Wage returns to education in communist and post-communist Hungary. Returns to years of education versus returns to degrees

⁵⁵ Most frequently mentioned countries are UK, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. The interviewees mainly used broad statements on systemic characteristics of these countries – for example structure of curricula, organization of institutions.



Source: Kézdi 2006

Furthermore, the labour market matching of VET output is poor; it has significantly declined in the early 90's and stayed on a relatively low level since then meaning that the structure and amount of VET output does not fit with demand on the Hungarian labour market (Kézdi et al 2008, Tóth et al 2008).

Measuring Hungarian VET against international benchmarks makes it clear that it suffers from a number of shortcomings: (1) Hungarian VET is strongly school-based, apprenticeship opportunity is offered to few students (Kis et al 2008) even though the goods of workplace-based training is exemplified in many contexts (OECD 2008a, Toner 2003, Ryan 1998). (2) The employment rate reached only 57,3% in 2007 which is among one of the lowest in the EU and among OECD countries alike. Moreover inactivity rate of school leavers exceeded 16% 5 years after graduation scoring as the third highest in the EU, which indicates the poor performance of the school system in general⁶. Specific results on VET students' labour market performance show a similarly poor employment record (Liskó 2001). (3) VET students' performance in reading, math, and science is relatively low in international comparison (OECD 2007).

Partially because the Hungarian government in power since 2002 perceived these problems and judged them to be significant it has put significant resources and efforts into reforming the country's VET system by and large following the path laid down in the Vocational School Development Strategy (Hungarian Government 2005). Thanks to these recent reforms Hungarian VET provision is based on firm financial base, a new governance structure, and an up-to-date Vocational Qualifications Framework (OECD/CERI 2008). The newest initiatives and measures aimed and continue to aim at increasing labour market responsiveness and efficiency of VET in which directions the two chosen case studies point (OECD 2008a, MKIK GVI 2008a).

⁶ See: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

3.2 First case study – VET quantity steering

Defining the case

The position of Regional Committees in VET steering requires information at least on prospective labour market demand for VET graduates and expected school output in 2-4 years time. Up until mid 2008, the committees only had short term indicators of labour market developments (e.g. 6 month forecasts for labour market demand by occupation and micro region) and school output (student enrollment numbers by grades) (interview). Thus, their decisions were based on limited scientific evidence and personal considerations of the members, also involving personal business interests (interview).

The case study at hand concerns the production of labour market and school output forecasts in 2008 and 2009 to underpin the decisions of Regional Committees. In order to aid the decisions of Regional Committees on student enrolment numbers and development support in 2008, the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Chamber of Commerce) together with the Ministry of Labour decided to launch a project which was carried out by social partners – i.e. 16 employee and employer associations. This created forecasts for labour market demand and school output in 2012 by occupation and region (MKIK GVI 2008a). (From here onwards I refer to the so defined project as the *Forecasting-project* to simplify the terminology.) The labour demand forecasts were based on business questionnaires and school output projections resulted from mathematical modelling. The involved actors shared a long term vision of the Forecasting-project, i.e. they intended to repeat and improve it annually (interviews). It was realized in 2008 and 2009, but the future is unsure due to budgetary pressures and possible government change.

The input side of the learning process, i.e. the policy template, manifested itself mainly in the document: “International Examples and Experiences with Determining VET Output” (MKIK GVI 2008a). In this, problem definitions can be captured as what are the crucial variables to be determined in a ‘good’ VET steering system. Specifically, it states that VET steering should focus on the output of skills rather than on the quantity of VET graduates; quantity and quality questions must be addressed simultaneously; although initial VET is crucial more emphasis should be given to renewing skills; and school-based VET should be treated together with adult training (MKIK 2008, MKIK GVI 2008a). Solutions can be condensed to how goals are ‘best’ achieved given problem definitions. According to international best practices, they spell out that mid-term forecasting are based on quantitative modelling of the economy; business questionnaires are widely used for short term projections and for exploring contemporaneous labour market imbalances; mid-term forecasts can be used for central planning but they are better utilized if disseminated to stakeholders; and a wide range of time series data is necessary for mid-term forecasting (MKIK 2008, MKIK GVI 2008a).

Need, source, and commitment to international policy learning

This innovation is a significant change compared to former decision making modes - decentralized, student demand led (Kis et al 2008) which carries the opportunity to improve the labour market matching of VET output. However, there was no relevant domestic forecasting/planning experience either within the state bureaucracy or among stakeholders (interviews). Thus, there was a clear move towards addressing an acute problem: mismatch between VET school output and labour

market demand, but the practically nonexistent domestic experience with the new methods suggests a significant need for considering international experiences.

Furthermore, quantitative forecasts of labour market demand and school output exist for a long time in a great number of countries many of which also make use of the information in VET steering either as additional information underpinning individual decisions (e.g. Ireland, USA) or as the basis for central planning (e.g. Australia) (Richardson&Tan 2007, Keating 2007, Neugart&Schöman 2002). This shows that international experiences are rich and well established thus there is a potential source of international policy learning.

The official commitment to international policy learning manifested itself in the paper titled “International Examples and Experiences with Determining VET Output” (MKIK GVI 2008a). It was commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce in order to map on international experiences (interview). The actual study was written by the Research Institute of Economics and Enterprises (Research Institute of Economics) in the first half of 2008 which is the research institute of the Chamber of Commerce. This is not to say that international policy learning could take place only through this document since each stakeholder has numerous international links.

Timeline

From the initiation of the Forecasting-project - in mid 2007 - until the end of the repeated project - in August 2009 – there were three decision making stages where policy formulation happened.

First decision making stage

- Right after the legal background of the new VET governance structure was decided upon in mid 2007 (2007. CII. Law and amendments to the 2003. LXXXVI. Law, 1993. LXXIX. Law, and 1993. LXXVI. Law) the Chamber of Commerce approached the Ministry of Labour and the National Committee of Vocational and Adult Training with the broad idea of the project which was implemented later (interview)⁷. This was paralleled by preliminary discussions among social partners and the Chamber of Commerce about the structure of the prospective project.
- The discussions with the Ministry of Labour culminated in the approval of the Forecasting-project by the National Committee of Vocational and Adult Training in November 2007; and concluding the contract between the Ministry of Labour and the Chamber of Commerce in December 2007 (MKIK 2008).
- Up until this point the broad framework of the Forecasting-project was determined: (1) the forecast will rely on business survey; (2) social partners will carry out the personal interviews at firms, (3) a series of regional and a national consultation will be held in order to discuss and disseminate the results, (4) a rough cost structure was fixed. This was mainly the result of discussions among social partners because the Ministry of Labour didn’t have a clear view on the prospective project (e.g. project design, total costs, expected results) (interviews).

Second decision making stage

- At the second decision making stage (January-May 2008) detailed questions of the project design were determined such as the final format of the questionnaire or number of firms interviewed.

⁷ In fact the Chamber of Commerce already highlighted in 2005 the need for a more exact labour market forecast which would provide a clear picture about where to adjust the VET system (MKIK 2005).

- In January 2008 the Research Institute of Economics was drawn in the Forecasting-project exclusively for analyzing the data of the survey. Nevertheless, the early discussions among the Research Institute and other stakeholders revealed several problems which led to its greater involvement (interview). Consequently, a sub-project of the Research Institute of Economics was financed which extended its mandate to creating a forecast for school output, the aforementioned study on international experiences, and a few other smaller background papers.
- Formulating the complete policy – final templates for quantitative analysis, regional and national meetings, methods of channelling the results to the Regional Committees – was finished in May 2008. However, the first draft of the study “International Examples and Experiences with Determining VET Output” was only produced in mid May 2008, casting serious doubts on that it had influence on the policy formulation process (interview).
- During the implementation stage no significant amendment to the formulated policy was made besides that the qualitative, meeting-centred elements turned out to be marginalized (interview).
- Based on the results of the Forecasting-project and the discussions at regional and national meetings in September-October 2008 Regional Committees made their decisions on vocational school intake of 2009.
- All involved actors judged the Forecasting-project as successful, however, listed a number of problems and shortcomings (interview). In addition, objective measures of the precision and reliability of forecasts indicate that the results are far from the sufficient quality for detailed VET quantity and quality steering (MKIK GVI 2008b, Tóth&Vincze 1999).

Third decision making stage

- Based on the perceived success of the Forecasting-project, its repeated implementation was approved at the National Committee of Vocational and Adult Training and the contract was signed with the Ministry of Labour in December 2008 (interview).
- The process of formulating the new project design lasted from December 2008 until March 2009 and followed basically the same structure as before. The implementation phase (April 2009 – August 2009) did not bring about significant alterations.
- Decisions of the Regional Committees are due in September 2009 and the decision on the future of the Forecasting project will take place before the end of 2009.

Discussion of hypotheses

Dependent variable

At the first decision making stage, practically no international policy learning took place since the Chamber of Commerce was pushing through an already formulated policy idea. This contained the problem definition – the quantity of VET output (qualifications) does not adequately match labour market needs – and the solution – asking businesses through a survey which then is directly translated into school intake numbers (interview). No document of the Chamber of Commerce makes any reference to international experiences with regard to the underlying policy idea (MKIK 2008, 2005). Neither did any inventors of the idea go beyond vague references to foreign examples

which were not applicable in their views (interview). The other actors didn't considerably influence the policy formulation at this stage: they either lacked a clear vision or were not consulted. *The first decision making stage thus can be characterised as deflection.*

At the second decision making stage, there was very limited international policy learning which did not take place through the study on International Examples and Experiences with Determining VET Output since its first draft was finished after this decision making stage was concluded. The source of policy learning was the Research Institute of Economics which was the only actor with significant knowledge on international experiences with large scale business surveys and considerable understanding of labour market dynamics and VET according to international standards (interviews). This could be best captured by frequent references to concepts, statistics, and approaches used in international VET discourse (e.g. wage returns to education, labour market segmentation, labour market needs for skills rather than qualifications) by Research Institute of Economics personnel and their rare incidence on the side of the Chamber of Commerce and social partners. However, this source of international policy learning was weak since the Research Institute of Economics had no formal decision making power and it also had to extend its capacity and knowledge in the specific issues at hand (interviews). The latter was achieved through collecting information for the study on International Examples and Experiences with Determining VET Output, and by systematically analyzing and addressing its own knowledge gaps. The Research Institute of Economics' impact was further weakened by the above mentioned gaps in language and understanding of the situation. As the broad design of the Forecasting-project was decided on at the first decision making stage, it implies that weak international policy learning mainly concerned the details of research design i.e. the details of solutions. *The second decision making stage thus can be characterised as a mixture of symbolic adoption and adoption both being only limited.*

The actor constellation of the *third decision making stage* was roughly the same as in the second one; nevertheless, significantly more international policy learning took place. Even though no additional study on international experiences was commissioned, several statements of the paper "International Examples and Experiences with Determining VET Output" appeared in the documents of the third decision making stage (MKIK 2008, ch. 3). Some advocated tools were incorporated into the plan of the repeated implementation such as school leavers' survey which is meant to provide additional information on the market behaviour of labour market entrants (Makó 2009) or the extension of the business survey in order to capture quality concerns (Fazekas 2009). The actor pushing for changes using international examples was again the Research Institute of Economics which still had only weak position compared to the Chamber of Commerce and social partners (interview). What changed on the Research Institute of Economics' side is that it significantly benefited from the experiences of the first two decision making stages, i.e. it increased its capacity to act and improved its understanding of the actors and the task. Furthermore, it developed a clear and coherent agenda of its own which was not the case before due to its late involvement in the project. Nevertheless, on the social partner's side, the approach to the Forecasting-project has changed somewhat due to the experiences and failures of the prior implementation. These did not bring about the direct need for international policy learning, however, they did trigger a sense of need for improvements in the design, though the overall approach – i.e. business questionnaire and series of consultations - was unquestionable (interview). Together, the sharper approach of the Research Institute of Economics and the greater readiness of social partners to change allowed for some international policy learning even if this mainly concerned solutions rather than problem definitions.

At the third decision making stage, international experiences were considered in conjunction with learning experiences of the implementation which resulted in limited adoption.

Hypothesis #1

According to the empirical evidence *individual learning capacities to draw on international experiences significantly influenced policy formulation* which was demonstrated by the differing behaviour of the Research Institute of Economics personnel and all other key decision makers. Individual learning capacity was captured in three factors which in turn impacted policy formulation: (1) ability to acquire sufficiently detailed knowledge of relevant international examples; (2) attitudes towards international policy learning; (3) confidence in own knowledge.

At the first decision making stage, the absence of international policy learning can be explained by the Chamber of Commerce's preoccupation with an already formulated policy template: For many years the Chamber of Commerce hosted the idea of quantitative forecasting of labour market demand based on a business survey which is directly translated into school intake numbers (MKIK 2008, 2005). However, in doing so it made no reference to any international experiences and the idea is not part of international best practice according to a wide variety of sources (Höckel et al 2008, MKIK GVI 2008a, Keating 2007, Neugart&Schöman 2002, Wilson 2001, Gasskov 2000). At this stage no other actor raised concerns about the Chamber of Commerce's proposal and recommended screening international examples even though each one acknowledged that they lack the relevant domestic experiences (interview). The typical reasoning behind this was that "We [social partners] can generate sufficient knowledge without external help", indicating overconfidence in their own knowledge, the disability to assess their knowledge gap with regards to the difficulty of the task. This is further supported by that the actors only realized the serious shortcomings of the project design after implementation. A further reasoning was that domestic circumstances are essentially different from their international counterparts in terms of cultural, institutional⁸, and financial⁹ characteristics which render international policy learning inappropriate. Nevertheless such claims were never made along with clear references to specific policy templates.

At the second and the third decision making stages the stronger but still limited international policy learning was due to the activity of the Research Institute of Economics. It did not share the same attitudes as other actors, and it was aware of the need and scope for international policy learning (interview). Furthermore its personnel possessed the necessary abilities to incorporate the relevant international knowledge. The latter can be demonstrated by the Research Institute of Economics personnel's active participation in international conferences, links to international organizations such as the OECD, and publications in foreign languages none of which can be said of the other actors. Based on the experiences of the discussions with the Research Institute of Economics, many of the involved associations highlighted the fact that the Research Institute of Economics was the source of international experiences however they also appeared to be reluctant to grant it more influence. This changed somewhat when they gathered firsthand knowledge about the shortcomings of the project

⁸ "We have English-type general and German-type vocational curriculum. No other country's experiences are comparable" (interview).

⁹ "It would be desirable to organize our VET as they do it in Austria; however, our financial means are not even comparable to theirs." (interview).

design (cf. Mintrom&Mossberger 2008, Freeman 2007) leading to more influence for the Research Institute of Economics thus more international policy learning at the third decision making stage.

The above demonstrates how knowledge on international experiences were unevenly distributed on the individual level and across organizations which implies *that international policy learning could only take place if organizational learning capacity allowed for international experiences to inform policy formulation. However, organizational capacity could achieve this goal to a limited extent.* In explaining this claim, two possible ways of channelling international experiences into policy formulation were considered: (1) organizational processes ensuring the transmission of information among actors and (2) decision making power of the Research Institute of Economics allowing for more coercive utilization of international experiences. It was already highlighted above that actors' attitudes and perception of their own knowledge constrained not only acquiring knowledge on international experiences by the actor's themselves but also accepting it from the Research Institute of Economics. Thus, significant transfer of international knowledge among actors did not take place in spite of many organizational solutions intended to disseminate information and to forge consensus – such as workshops, presentations, meetings with fairly open and deliberative atmosphere (interview). Since the only actor with considerable international knowledge had no formal decision making power it could not impose its view on the others either.

Besides the inter-organizational characteristics, the organizational capacity of the Research Institute of Economics to process information on international knowledge and to form a clear agenda was somewhat weak at the second decision making stage, but significantly improved by the third one which clearly correlates with its enhanced influence on policy formulation.

15

Hypothesis #2

Actor preferences and interests can explain international policy learning in policy formulation only to a minimal degree at each of the three decision making stages. At the first decision making stage the Chamber of Commerce as a well established, dominant actor promoted its already formulated policy idea and neglected any international evidence on alternatives. Pushing for its already formulated policy idea can be explained by its self-interest in co-ordinating and thus benefiting from a business survey and an extensive consultation process with major stakeholders. However, it is hard to account for why it didn't consider any other alternative. It could be argued that the Chamber of Commerce would not be able to play a leading role in alternative forecasting exercises which according to international examples are based on various forms of quantitative modelling (Keating 2007, Cseres-Gergey&Koltay 2006, Neugart&Schöman 2002, Gasskov 2000). Although it could still organize the discussions of results and channelling them to the Regional Committees. This explanation is, nonetheless, incorrect since the Chamber of Commerce was clearly unaware of any of the viable alternatives (interview). Social partners generally supported the Chamber of Commerce's proposal at this stage and did not call for considering alternative options which is again difficult to explain by H₂ for the same reasons as in the case of the Chamber of Commerce. The Ministry of Labour publicly announced its devotion to improving labour market matching of VET on several occasions which was the main goal of creating Regional Committees and reforming VET steering (SzMM 2009, Hungarian Government 2005). Thus, it is straightforward that it was interested in spending public money on the best quality forecast and channelling adequately the results to Regional Committees. This implies that the Ministry of Labour's reluctance to use international policy learning in order to aid its

decision went counter to its own institutional preferences¹⁰ since it neglected relevant and easily accessible alternatives.

International policy learning taking place at the second decision making stage cannot be adequately accounted for by H₂ either. Given the decision on the broad design, still several decisions had to be made which were crucial for the success of the project (interview). The Chamber of Commerce and social partners openly claimed that they were interested in a reliable and precise forecast which is supported by the fact that their important partners – Ministry of Labour, National Committee of Vocational and Adult Training – judged them on the basis of their results¹¹ and because the prospects for repeating the project depended on the Forecasting-project's success. Nevertheless, they refrained even from considering a great number of proposals of the Research Institute of Economics which were trying to push for changes in line with international experiences (interview). This behaviour demonstrates that, at least partially, they acted against their own long term interests by not collecting easily accessible information directly relevant for their goals. The Research Institute of Economics's approach is a telling since it engaged in policy learning right at the beginning of its involvement in the case which led to realizing the inappropriateness of the survey methodology for the task at hand. Hence, the Research Institute of Economics clearly denounced the overall project design in spite of its clear interest in taking part in the exercise (interview).¹²

At the third decision making stage actor interests stayed by and large the same as it has already been discussed, nevertheless, somewhat more international policy learning happened which exemplifies that the variation in the dependent variable cannot be adequately accounted for by the variation in interests and preferences.

16

Conclusions

The empirical evidence gathered seems to largely support H₁. Individual and organizational constraints on learning, i.e. limited learning capacity, inhibited many of the actors from considering alternatives which were easily accessible through international organizations and the document "International Examples and Experiences with Determining VET Output". Interestingly, the abundance of organizational processes which aimed at enhancing information dissemination among actors did not considerably increase international policy learning. This suggests the primacy of individual capacities in policy learning under certain circumstances. Furthermore, evidence shows that knowledge accumulated during implementation, particularly the knowledge on committed mistakes, can create a demand for new solutions thus enhance readiness for policy learning.

Even though actor interests and preferences can explain a number of moves of the policy formulation process, they are generally weak in accounting for international policy learning. Key decision makers were clearly interested in supporting the implemented design of the Forecasting-project; however, they were also interested in improving its quality. By implication, they had

¹⁰ However, the care with which ministries spend public money and the rigour with which they follow their expected institutional preferences greatly depends on the control of ministries by the public which is generally weak in Hungary (Rose-Ackerman 2005).

¹¹ Obviously there were only a few datasets which could provide clues for the reliability and precision of the forecast because the projections have been unique; still along with expert estimates on the local and national level some overall judgement on the quality of the Forecasting-project's results was possible.

¹² The Research Institute of Economics, however, did not openly criticise the overall design because it realised that it is not in the position to change this decision.

considerable motivation to attend at least a small number of alternatives which they did not do. The only exception was the Research Institute of Economics which accumulated a large amount of domestic and international knowledge of the field. Nevertheless, it did oppose a number of elements in the policy design in spite of its own interests.

By contrasting the two hypotheses, the learning capacity based account seems to bear more explanatory power. Although it must be kept in mind that the limited international policy learning taking place mainly allowed for explaining its absence rather than its specific form. A further reservation with regard to the results is that preferences and policy learning are intertwined in the sense that preferences themselves can be influenced by learning. This, however, did not significantly affect the results since international policy learning was limited.

Before making the final judgement on the hypotheses, an important intervening variable must be brought in the picture: time pressure. There was only a one year period available for formulating and implementing the Forecasting-project which was considered as particularly short by all actors and reforms of similar magnitude typically take much longer in international best practice (Nieuwenhuis&Shapiro 2004, Gasskov 2000). This reservation, however, only applies to the second decision making stage since the first stage took half a year in itself and the third stage could benefit from the experiences of the earlier stages.

3.3 Second case study – OECD policy review of Hungary

17

Defining the case

As the Hungarian Government in power since 2002 considers VET as a priority it reformed VET governance, qualifications framework along with the overall structure of training, and funding system (Hungarian Government 2005). In such turbulent times, the Ministry of Education decided to take part in the OECD's policy review of VET systems; in summer 2007 Hungary signed up for the OECD country review.

The focus of the review is on upper secondary and post-secondary VET and it examines the responsiveness of VET systems to labour market needs (OECD 2008a). Based on the Hungarian Government's request the study examines the efficiency of VET provision in particular (Kis et al 2008: terms of reference). The review process itself rested on three main pillars: two questionnaires, an initial fact-finding visit and a main visit. The questionnaires compiled basic information on Hungary's VET system. The initial fact-finding visit aimed to assemble information about the characteristics of VET and to identify the main policy challenges. The main visit compiled further information on site and developed the first version of policy recommendations. Both of the visits involved consultations with government agencies, ministries, the Chamber of Commerce, experts, VET schools, their students and other stakeholders (cf. Kis et al 2008, page 47-48.). The case study explores the review process itself and the short period between publishing the review – November 2008 – and finalizing the interviews – April 2009. By implication, only short term consequences can be analysed here which are considered as indicative for the long-run effects of the review on policy formulation.

From these follows that the input side of the process, i.e. the policy template, consists of two elements: (1) the most essential problems of Hungarian VET in general and in light of the terms of reference and (2) the recommendations aimed at alleviating them. The main problems identified by

the OECD concern the strongly school based nature of Hungarian VET, early tracking, absence of data on important aspects, ageing VET trainers, low societal status of VET, and low employment rate (Kis et al 2008 p 5-6). The recommendations addressing these concentrate on (#1) postponing the transition from primary to secondary education along with the earlier commencement of practical training, (#2) collecting and publishing data on VET outcomes, (#3) more systematic career guidance, (#4) more practical training in the workplace, and (#5) publishing data on training levy in an accessible form (Kis et al 2008 p 6).

Need, source, and commitment to international policy learning

According to the OECD country review and the interviewed policy makers, Hungarian VET underachieves both compared to international benchmarks and the training system's desired performance. Even though the emphasis put on each problem differs by actor and sometimes even the existence of a problem is disputed (e.g. early tracking) there is a wide range of accumulated domestic knowledge on both the problems and their solutions. Thus, the international learning tool exerts influence not in a relative vacuum as in the first case study, but in a knowledge-rich environment where different ideas contradict and compete with each other. In this case the domestic need for international policy learning was to generate new ideas currently not on the agenda and even more to stress certain arguments already present in the domestic debate (interviews).

International experiences both with identifying the above problems and designing solutions to them are abundant: There are several appropriately documented practices for channelling information on systemic challenges to policy makers through quantitative and qualitative research or institutions (Kis et al 2008, Richardson 2007, Gasskov 2000). Furthermore, ways to improve VET performance in light of problems similar to those in Hungary are also diverse and accessible (Keating 2007, OECD 2007, McCoy, Kelly and Watson 2007, Dar, Canagarajah and Murphy 2003).

Commitment of the Ministry of Education is clearly demonstrated by that it devoted a considerable amount of effort and public money to the OECD country review. The clarity of the commitment is somewhat blurred by the fact that most of the responsibilities for VET got reallocated to the Ministry of Labour in the meantime. Thus, the Ministry of Labour inherited the commitment and also some of the staff working on the topic. This, however, still implies that both of the ministries were formally committed to utilize international experiences in domestic policy making because changes in ministerial structure were known since 2006 and the two ministries coordinated their activities in VET (SzMM 2008, interview).

Timeline

In this analysis, two stages of the OECD review process are considered which could be means for transmitting international experiences to the domestic environment: (1) the review process itself when domestic actors were exposed to the questionnaires of the OECD and where they met the OECD review team as well as each other; (2) the dissemination phase when the country report is already finalized and domestic actors are exposed to its problem definitions and recommendations.

Review process

- The starting point of the review process was in summer 2007 when the Ministry of Education signed up in for the country review at the OECD to be carried out in 2008. This entailed completing an international questionnaire, a country specific questionnaire and hosting the OECD review team.
- In the second half of 2007, most of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education for VET were reallocated to the Ministry of Labour meaning that only the general part of vocational programmes remained under control of the Ministry of Education (SzMM 2008).
- Throughout 2007 the Hungarian authorities filled in both the international and the country specific questionnaires. This involved discussions between the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education and also their background institutions such as National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education.
- In January 2008 two analysts of the OECD conducted the so called fact-finding visit whose goal was “to assemble information about the characteristics of VET and, within the terms of reference, to identify the main policy challenges” (Kis et al 2008 p 8). Thus, this visit mainly entailed uni-directional information flows from domestic players to the OECD; and it could affect the Hungarian VET policy sub-field only to small extent (e.g. specifically framed questions new to domestic actors).
- In March 2008 the original two OECD analysts joined by two external experts carried out the ‘main visit’. This, while still aimed at gathering new information about the country, also developed tentative recommendations and ‘tested’ them on some major policy actors by presenting them (interview). Hence, this second visit can be conceptualized as a two-way information flow where domestic actors could learn from the OECD as well as from each other.
- The OECD team drafted the country report by autumn 2008 which was subsequently commented on by the Hungarian authorities, mainly by the Ministry of Labour. After introducing changes due to these comments the report got published in November 2008 which marks the final point of the review process.

Dissemination

- The dissemination process started off in December 2008 - January 2009 when the Ministry of Labour initiated the translation of the report into Hungarian and received hardcopies of the English version.
- Translating the report was still under way in March 2009 due to be finished in early April. It is planned that the Hungarian version of the report will be disseminated to a wide range of stakeholders through emails and by posting it on the homepages of the two involved ministries and the National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education (interview).
- The hardcopies of the English version were sent out to the institutions which were consulted by the OECD; nevertheless their usefulness in dissemination is regarded as relatively low due to language barriers (interview).
- Within the two involved ministries internal dissemination had already taken place through sending around short summaries of the report in Hungarian. However, no formal internal proposal was put forward which typically marks the high influence international reviews (interviews).

- Up until March 2009, no dissemination conference or seminar was planned by the Ministry of Labour which is ultimately responsible for the dissemination process organizationally and financially. The Ministry of Education shows vague signs of being in favour of organizing a seminar but it is not in a decision making position in this respect (interview).

Since the time period between November 2008 and March 2009 is too short for a complete analysis of the dissemination process no definite conclusions can be reached in this respect. Nevertheless, by explicitly incorporating the plans and prospects of the actors this shortcoming is corrected as much as possible.

Discussion of hypotheses

Dependent variable

Throughout the *review process* core domestic actors – Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education, Chamber of Commerce – were generally supportive of the OECD problem definition (interview). Nevertheless, each of them had and still has its own list of most crucial problems. This implies that while broad support is secured, a more detailed analysis reveals substantive differences in emphasis put on each item and also some problems are not recognized by domestic actors (interviews). For example, a central element of the OECD's argumentation is highlighting the problem of early tracking which entails adverse equity consequences. To a large extent, this consideration does not enter the problem list of domestic actors. Even though posing specific questions and presenting domestic data in an international context did result in some novel thinking by domestic actors (interview); it is apparent that during the review process international policy learning with regard to problem definitions was practically nonexistent. Domestic policy makers by and large approved the OECD's agenda but they also kept unchallenged their own.

When it comes to solutions/recommendations the picture is not much different. Even though, core domestic actors showed far greater interest in them than in problem definitions. Those recommendations which were already on their agenda received much support (recommendations #2, #4, and parts of #1) (interview); particularly in those cases when the proposed solution was already in implementation phase (recommendations #4 and parts of #1). Those recommendations which were not already endorsed by main domestic actors were largely refused (recommendations #3, #5 and parts of #1) (interview). That part of the recommendation #1 which referred to postponing the transition from primary school to secondary school by one year was the most debated among all recommendations. However, it was partially declined because the problem of early tracking is not acknowledged. In the case of recommendation #5 some 'blame shifting' ("it is the role of the chambers anyway") could be observed indicating that actors feel obliged to provide reasons for refusal (interview). In sum, *the review process resulted in symbolic adoption concerning both problem definitions and solutions.*¹³

During the *dissemination stage* no additional learning effect could be identified regarding problem definitions. Actually, actors treated the review process and the dissemination stage as one when they explicated their views. However, the way solutions affected the domestic policy sub-field has

¹³ „Policy makers like to refer to OECD reviews when they like them, when they accord with their own views.“ (interview).

somewhat changed during the dissemination process. A prime example is how views on the strongly debated part of the recommendation #1 changed. Instead of a complete refusal, the Ministry of Labour and to a smaller degree the Ministry of Education think postponing the transition from primary to secondary school by one year might be desirable and feasible: “Let’s keep it in the warehouse; if a broad reform is needed it might come handy.” (interview). The reasons for attitude change are explained below; however, it does not imply actions in the present, only prospects for the future. Overall, the *dissemination stage resulted in symbolic adoption along with weak signs for reconsideration*.

The present analysis could only rely on the short term reactions of major policy makers, nevertheless, beyond its time span a broader set of actors can learn from the OECD country review. This could result in a significantly different picture than the one depicted here. However, the reluctance of core actors to put much effort into disseminating the results casts doubts on a strong additional channel of international policy learning.

Hypothesis #1

For efficiently spelling out the two hypotheses, first the common characteristics of the review process and dissemination are accounted for; second, their differences in international policy learning are explained.

According to the empirical evidence *individual capacities to draw on international experiences significantly influenced policy formulation*. This time the differences in actor behaviour were less pronounced, thus the analysis relies more on differences in behaviour towards individual items on the agenda. Again, individual learning capacity could be captured in three ways: (1) ability to acquire sufficiently detailed knowledge on relevant international examples; (2) attitudes towards international policy learning; (3) confidence in own knowledge.

The most powerful factor explaining symbolic adoption turned out to be attitudes. Several actors displayed signs of preoccupation with and fixation on long standing policy images both in case of problem definitions and solutions. This neatly explains why problems and solutions were largely refused if they were not already part of domestic actors’ agenda before the OECD review process. A distinct quantitative approach towards VET could be identified in this case too. This, for example, produced the preoccupation with “shortage of VET graduates” instead of considering quality problems of VET training which are highlighted by several authors: Kis et al (2008), Kézdi et al (2008), OECD (2007), Kézdi (2006). Another typical argument for deflecting international experiences was again vague references to the uniqueness of the country’s VET system. Along with the already identified forms of this argument, interestingly, it was also often mentioned that frequent regulatory changes make it difficult for external actors to understand the situation and provide useful advice: “these analyses [e.g. OECD] are good, they are just outdated” (interview).

Most of the actors – except for the involved experts - were confident in their own knowledge about the problems of Hungarian VET and that there is sufficient data on them. This is paralleled by the refusal of both recommendations calling for more and better data (#2, #5). Nonetheless, it is clearly argued in the OECD country review that regarding many crucial aspects of VET there is virtually no data available; examples cover: labour market outcomes of fresh graduates, drop-out rates, and outcomes of programmes financed from the training levy (Kis et al 2008). This indicates the overconfidence of key policy makers in their own knowledge. Furthermore, many of the actors regarded the OECD country review as merely a collection of arguments already present in the

domestic debate; they attributed no novel claim to the document.¹⁴ It is not the aim of this paper to judge the novelty of the OECD country review, however, it is suggested that some domestic actors' viewpoint on this is somewhat extreme.

The only hints supporting the third explanatory factor – individual abilities – are the apparent lack of language knowledge by many actors and the use of a vague, imprecise vocabulary in professional discourse by some actors (interview).

The impact of organizational capacity on policy formulation could only be conceptualized in conjunction with individual capacities. The analysis suggests again the primacy of individual factors over organizational ones. Until the end of the time horizon covered by this paper, *organizational capacities were insufficient to advance international policy learning*. During the review process the OECD steered communication among actors regarding the review which resulted mainly in information flows from domestic actors towards the OECD and only a limited amount of communication among domestic policy makers themselves (interview). The very essence of the dissemination process is to spread international knowledge to stakeholders. However, the Ministry of Labour which is primarily responsible for dissemination shows only limited enthusiasm towards internal as well as external communication of the results (interview). No actor reported significant learning experience due to the dissemination activity of the Ministry of Labour. Its dissemination activity, however, goes very well hand in hand with its reluctance to engage in international policy learning due to individual impediments to learning.

The small differences in international policy learning between the review process and the dissemination cannot be explained by the individual capacities or organizational capacity.

22

Hypothesis #2

Actor preferences and interests can explain international policy learning in policy formulation to a large degree both during the review process and dissemination. The clearest cases are the recommendations on increasing workplace based training (#4) and on postponing the transition from primary to secondary school by one year (#1). In the former case, employers and their associations are strongly interested in supporting it since they directly benefit from the implementation; moreover, their prominence in VET policy making is on the rise in the last few years, underpinning the dominance of their viewpoint (SzMM-MKIK 2007, 2008). Accordingly, the mismatch between VET output and labour market demand is acknowledged as one of the most pressing problems of VET. With regards to postponing secondary school transition, it was often stressed that primary and secondary schools are strongly interested in sustaining the status quo because they face high transition costs (e.g. building new classrooms) along with considerable sunk costs (e.g. developed curricula serving the existing system). This makes it difficult for either of the involved ministries to act upon the OECD's recommendation. Simultaneously, the problem underpinning this reform idea is largely declined necessitating no action on this ground (interview).

The two recommendations advocating for more and better publicised data (#2, #4) are both mainly deflected. Even though there were no direct references to such links, it can be conceptualized that public authorities are disinterested in providing more and better data on their activities simply to avoid more account giving. This characteristic of public bodies was captured in various other contexts

¹⁴ "The OECD problem definition is trivial, everyone sees these problems." (interview)

(Peters 2001, Hood 1998, Wilson 1989). Problem definitions underpinning these recommendations were largely left aside too.

However, the recommendation on career counselling (#3) cannot appropriately be accounted for by this hypothesis, or the problem definitions behind it.

The small differences in international policy learning between the review process and the dissemination – i.e. recommendation #1 - cannot be accounted for by actor preferences and interests either. The decisive factor seems to be that the supporting evidence is stronger in the report than it was during the meetings (e.g. example of successful reform in Poland) (interview); furthermore, with more time policy makers had the chance to broaden their view and consider the links to the overall policy field.

Conclusions

The empirical evidence spelled out above supports both H_1 on the role of learning capacity and H_2 on the importance of preferences in international policy learning. In explaining the variation in the acceptance or refusal of problem definitions and solutions of the OECD country review it seems that individual learning capacity plays a crucial role. Attitudes towards international policy learning (i.e. fixation and sense of uniqueness), overconfidence in own knowledge, and, to a lesser degree, the limited ability to acquire knowledge on international experiences all led to symbolic adoption; i.e. acceptance of problems and solutions which were already hosted before the review and refusal of the rest. Since the key actor responsible for domestic dissemination showed only limited interest in pursuing it, organizational capacity could not alter the effects of individual learning capacity. Individual constraints on international policy learning seem to drive the use of organizational capacity since the actor displaying the most constrained individual learning capacity is the most reluctant to push for dissemination. This, again, suggests the primacy of individual factors.

The interests based explanation bears much stronger explanatory power this time than in the first case. Many of the domestic actors' international policy learning activities very well match their preferences and interests regarding problem definitions and solutions. Actors typically show signs of international policy learning only in cases when they are interested in formulating policies along the lines of international experiences and do not show otherwise.

The two identified explanatory factors of international policy learning do not contradict or compete with each other. It seems to be the case that they point in the same direction, particularly in the cases of recommendation #1, #2, and #5. Thus, the emergent picture is one where attitudes towards learning and interests based accounts of international policy learning mutually reinforce each other. By implication, interests and learning cannot be completely separated from each other, as in the example of the first case study. It is possible that interests not only impact on international policy learning but also on the factors of learning capacity, leading to a chain of causation different from the one depicted in the analytical background (Figure 1). Furthermore, the very nature of learning entails the possibility of changes in preferences which suggests that learning capacity not only affects policy formulation, but also preference formation, thus H_2 .

4. Synthesis

Two recent cases of Hungarian VET reform allowed for detailed study of the same policy subsystem from two different angles. While looking at the behaviour of the same set of actors, the differences of the two cases were significant in (1) comprehensiveness of the learning tool; (2) dominance and relative position of actors; (3) reputation and position of the information source. Utilizing the differences of the two cases the analysis produced a more robust evaluation whereas it introduced no imbalance in judging the two hypotheses.

Individual learning capacity was captured in three broad categories: (1) ability to acquire knowledge on international examples; (2) attitudes towards international policy learning; (3) confidence in own knowledge. These three factors form a strong impact on international policy learning as measured in policy formulation regardless the comprehensiveness, position or reputation of the learning tool. Nevertheless, the relative position of domestic actors did matter since they suffered from constraints on learning to varying degrees: some being largely free of them, such as the Research Institute of Economics, while others scoring relatively high on each category, such as the Ministry of Labour or the Chamber of Commerce.

Organizational capacity to process and disseminate international evidence within and among organizations could not compensate for the lack of international policy learning due to individual constraints on learning. This holds true in the first case where opportunities for discussing international experiences were abundant, and in the second case where these opportunities were largely missing. The evidence suggests that individual learning capacities have a primary role in defining international policy learning, at least in the case of weak individual learning capacity.

Actor preferences and interests could not account for international policy learning in policy formulation in the first case study, but this explanation performed very well in the second case. Even though the relative position of actors differed in the two cases, this does not seem to play a decisive role since in both cases all actors had some chances to influence decisions. However, the comprehensiveness/specificity of the learning tool supposedly made a difference: in the case of broader problems and solutions (OECD review) actors relate their interests to their decisions more readily than in the case of a highly technical, specific issue (labour market forecasting). In addition, learning can affect preference formation, thus actors might fail to realize their full preference space in the absence of adequate learning which can blur the relation between policy formulation and interests.

In sum, the study gathered evidence which supports the central role of domestic learning capacity in policy formulation. Constraints on individual and organizational learning considerably affect how policies are formulated. Nevertheless, interests based approaches towards international policy learning play an important role in policy formulation as well. The two explanations, however, do not compete with, but rather mutually reinforce each other. It can be inferred from the findings that resources put into international learning exercises are at least partially wasted; due to limited international policy learning relevant and generally accessible policy options are neglected during the policy formulation process. By implication, policy formulation and policy making, broadly speaking, could be better informed, and thus lead to 'better' outcomes, if the shortcomings of learning capacity could be addressed.

The identified mechanisms are likely to play a similarly important role in contexts where attitudes towards learning and drawing on foreign experiences are approximately the same, including other Hungarian policy fields and other countries. Similar patterns are expected in Hungarian policy fields where learning capacity displays comparable characteristics without strong counterbalancing forces; obvious candidates would be labour market or primary school policies. In identifying the set of countries where the findings might have relevance, broader cultural variables provide guidance. These are attitudes towards learning and towards change which variables capture how open actors are to acquire new knowledge when faced with a knowledge gap. Several authors point at the similarities among Hungary and other CEE countries along these dimensions: (1) on student level in terms of approaches to learning (OECD 2007, 2004); (2) on the level of the general population in terms of attitudes towards change and the entailed insecurity (World Value Survey 2005, 2000, Inglehart 2003); (3) on the organizational leadership level in terms of leadership styles (Bakacsi et al 2002).

The identified mechanisms are likely to play a similarly important role in contexts where attitudes towards learning and drawing on foreign experiences are approximately the same, including other Hungarian policy fields and other countries. Nevertheless, this claim must be tested throughout further analyses; in identifying the set of countries and policy fields where the findings might have relevance, broader cultural variables may provide guidance. Furthermore, since the present paper could only take the first steps in exploring the proposed problems and causal links between the constructed variables, further research is due in better clarifying the underlying definitions and the causal mechanisms. In order to crystallize the concept of domestic learning capacity, the latest results of organizational learning and cognitive psychology should be dwelled on along with developing more precise empirical methods for capturing it.

References

2007. CII. Law on Legal Amendments for Implementing the Reform Program of Vocational- and Adult Education and Training
2003. LXXXVI. Law on Training Levy and Development of Vocational Training
1993. LXXIX. Law on School Education
1993. LXXVI. Law on Vocational Education and Training
- Bakacsi Gyula, Sándor Takács, András Karácsonyi, Viktor Imrek (2002), Eastern European cluster: tradition and transition. *Journal of World Business*, 37, p 69-80
- Bapuji, Hari and Mary Crossan (2004), From Questions to Answers: Reviewing Organizational Learning Research. *Management Learning*, 35(4), p 397-417
- Baum, J, S Li and J Usher (2000), Making the next move: how experiential and vicarious learning shape the locations of chains' acquisitions. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 45(4), p 766-801
- Bennett, C.J. and Howlett, M. (1992), The lessons of learning: reconciling theories of policy learning and policy change. *Policy Sciences* 25(3), p 275–94.
- Berry, F. S. and Berry, W.D. (1999), Innovation and diffusion models in policy research. in P.A. Sabatier (ed.), *Theories of the Policy Process*. Westview Press, Cambridge
- Bíró Anikó, Elek Péter, and Vincze János (2007), A PM-KTI Makrogazdasági Modell: Összefüggések és Szimulációk. *Közpénzügyi Füzetek* 19, Budapest
- Blyth, M. (2002), *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Boswell, Christina, Silvia Stiller, and Thomas Straubhaar (2004), *Forecasting Labour and Skills Shortages: How Can Projections Better Inform Labour Migration Policies*. Hamburg Institute of International Economics Working Paper prepared for the European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs
- Busenberg, George (2001) Learning in Organizations and Public Policy. *Journal of Public Policy*, 21(2), p 173–189.
- CEDEFOP (2008), Initial vocational education and training (IVET) in Europe. Review. CEDEFOP, Luxembourg
- CEDEFOP (2007), Hungary. Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System in 2007. ReferNet, Luxembourg
- CEDEFOP (2004), Towards a history of vocational education and training (VET) in Europe in a comparative perspective. *Cedefop Panorama series*; 103
- Checkel, J. (1997), International norms and domestic politics: bridging the rationalist–constructivist divide. *European Journal of International Relations*, 3(4), p 473–95
- Cseres-Gergely Zsombor and Koltay Gábor (2006) A magyar gazdaság ágazati létszámstruktúrájának előrejelzése 2013-ig OECD országok ágazati létszámadatainak idősorai alapján. Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Economics, HEFOP 1.2, Budapest
- Dar, A., S. Canagarajah and P. Murphy (2003), *Training levies: Rationale and evidence from evaluations*, The World Bank, Washington
- Dierkes, Meinolf, Ariane Berthoin Antal, John Child and Ikujiro Nonaka (2001), *Handbook of Organizational Learning and Knowledge*. Oxford University Press, Oxford

- DiMaggio, Paul J. and Walter W. Powell (1991), *The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields*. in Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio (eds.) *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press
- Dolowitz, D (1997), *British Employment Policy in the 1980s: Learning from the American Experience*. *Governance*, Vol 10, p 23-42
- Dolowitz, David P. and Marsh, David (1996) *Whol Learns What from Whom? A Review of the Policy Transfer Literature*. *Political Studies*, 44:2, p 343-357
- Dolowitz, David P. and Marsh, David (2000), *Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy Making*. *Governance* 13 (1), p 5-24
- Edmondson, A. C. and M. D. Cannon (2005), *Failing to Learn and Learning to Fail (Intelligently): How Great Organizations Put Failure to Work to Improve and Innovate*. *Long Range Planning Journal*, 38 (3), p 299-320
- Egeberg, M (1999), *The Impact of Bureaucratic Structure on Policy-Making*. *Public Administration*, 77, p 155-170
- Elster, J., C. Offe, and K. Preuss (1998), *Institutional Design in Post-communist Societies. Rebuilding the Ship at Sea*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Fazekas Mihály (2009), *A szakképző iskolát végzettek iránti kereslet és kínálat várható alakulása – 2009 A dokumentum a „Szakiskolai férőhelyek meghatározása – 2009, a regionális fejlesztési és képzési bizottságok (RFKB-k) részére” kutatási program keretében készült*. MKIK, Budapest
- Fazekas Mihály and Tóth István János (2008), *A munkaerő-piaci kereslet és szakiskolai kibocsátás eltérése szakiskolát végzettek körében. Az Állami Foglalkoztatási Szolgálat negyedéves felméréseinek és a szakiskolák KIR statisztikájának elemzése, 2007-2008*. MKIK GVI, Budapest, unpublished
- Freeman, Richard (2007) *Epistemological Bricolage: How Practitioners Make Sense of Learning*. *Administration and Society*, 39 (4), p 476 - 496.
- Gasskov, Vladimir (2000), *Managing Vocational Training Systems. A handbook for senior administrators*. Geneva, International Labour Organization
- Haas, Peter M. (1992), *Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination*. *International Organization*, 42 (1), p 1-35
- Hall, P. (1993), *Policy paradigms, social learning and the state: the case of economic policy making in Britain*. *Comparative Politics* 25, p 275–97
- Hall, P. A. (1983), *Policy Innovation and the Structure of the State: The Politics-Administrative Nexus in France and Britain*. *Annals of the AAPSS* 466(3), p 43-55
- Hall, P. A. (1986), *Governing the Economy*. Polity Press, Cambridge
- Heclo, Hugh (1978), *Issue networks and the executive establishment*, in: King, A., *The New American Political System*, Washington, D.C.
- Holzinger, Katharina and Knill, Christoph (2005), *Causes and Conditions of Cross-National Policy Convergence*. *Journal of European Public Policy* 12(5), p 775-796.
- Hood, Christopher (1998), *The Art of the State. Culture, Rhetoric, and Public Management*. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Hood, Christopher (1986), *Administrative Analysis*, Wheatsheaf, New York
- Höckel, Kathrin, Simon Field, Troy R. Justesen, and Moonhee Kim (2008), *Learning for Jobs: OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – Australia*. OECD, Paris

- Höckel, Kathrin, Mark Cully, Simon Field, Gábor Halász, and Viktoria Kis (2009), *Learning for Jobs: OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – United Kingdom*. OECD, Paris, forthcoming
- Hungarian Government (2005), *Szakképzés-Fejlesztési Stratégia. 2013-ig*. Ministry of Education and Ministry of Employment and Labour, Budapest
- Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture (2008), *Statistical Yearbook of Education 2007/2008*, Ministry of Education and Culture, Budapest
- Inglehart, Ronald (2003), *Human Values and Social Change: Findings from the Values Surveys*. Brill Academic Publishers
- James, Oliver and Martin Lodge (2003) *The Limitations of ‘Policy Transfer’ and ‘Lesson Drawing’ for Public Policy Research*. *Political Studies Review*, vol. 1, p 179-193.
- Jones, Bryan D. and Baumgartner, Frank R. (2005), *The Politics of Attention. How Government Prioritize Attention*, Chicago
- Keating, Jack (2007), *Matching supply of and demand for skills: International perspectives*. NCVR, Australia
- Kézdi Gábor, Köllő János, Varga Júlia (2008), *Az érettségit nem adó szakképzés válságtünetei*. *Munkaerőpiaci Tükör*, 9(1), p 87-136
- Kézdi Gábor (2006), *Not Only Transition. The Reasons For Declining Returns to Vocational Education*. Prága, CERGE-EI
- Kim, L. (1998), *Crisis construction and organizational learning: capability building in catching-up at hyundai motor*. *Organization Science*, 9(4), p 506-521
- Kis, Viktoria, Maria Luisa Ferreira, Simon Field, and Thomas Zwick (2008), *Learning for Jobs: OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – Hungary*. OECD, Paris
- Lane, P and M Lubatkin (1998), *Relative absorptive capacity and interorganizational learning*. *Strategic Management Journal*, 19(5), p 461-477
- Lipshitz, R, M Popper and Victor J Friedman (2002), *A Multifacet Model of Organizational Learning*. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, no. 38, p 78-98
- Liskó Ilona (2001), *Fiatal szakmunkások a munkapiacra*. in: A. Semjén (ed.), *Oktatás és munkaerőpiaci érvényesülés*. MTA KTI, Budapest
- Lodge, Martin (2003), *Institutional Choice and Policy Transfer: reforming British and German railway Regulation*. *Governance*, 16 (2), p 150-178
- Lodge, Martin (2005), *The Importance of Being Modern: International Benchmarking and National Regulatory Innovation*. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 12:4, p 649-667
- McCoy, S., E. Kelly and D. Watson (2007), *School Leavers' Survey Report 2006*, ESRI and Department of Education and Science, Dublin
- Makó Ágnes (2009) *A pályakezdő szakmunkások munkaerő-piaci helyzete. Az elemzés a „Szakiskolai férőhelyek meghatározása – 2009, a regionális fejlesztési és képzési bizottságok (RFKB-k) részére” kutatási program keretében készült*. MKIK GVI, Budapest
- Mintrom, Michael and Karen Mossberger (2008) *The Politics of Ideas and the Diffusion of Policy Innovations*. Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, Massachusetts, August 28-31
- MKIK (Magyar Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara) (2008), *A Munkaerőpiaci Szereplők az Iskolarendszerű Szakképzés Beiskolázási Szerkezetének Kialakításában*. MKIK, Budapest

- MKIK (Magyar Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara) (2005), A Magyar Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara Középtávú Szakképzési Stratégiája. MKIK, Budapest
- MKIK GVI (Magyar Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara - Gazdaság- és Vállalkozáselemző Intézet) (2008a), A szakképző iskolát végzettek iránti kereslet várható alakulása. A dokumentum a „Szakiskolai férőhelyek meghatározása – 2008, a regionális fejlesztési és képzési bizottságok (RFKB-k) részére” kutatási program keretében készült. MKIK GVI, Budapest
- MKIK GVI (Magyar Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara - Gazdaság- és Vállalkozáselemző Intézet) (2008b), A vállalati adatfelvételeken alapuló munkaerőpiaci felmérések pontosságának vizsgálata. Az Állami Foglalkoztatási Szolgálat negyedéves felméréseinek elemzése - Szakiskola_2008 háttér tanulmány. MKIK GVI, unpublished
- Neugart, Michael and Schömann, Klaus (2002), Employment Outlooks: Why forecast the labour market and for whom? Discussion Paper FS I 02 -206 Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, Berlin
- Niewenhuis, Loek and Shapiro, Hanne (2004), Evaluating systems reform in vocational education and training: learning from Danish and Dutch cases, in Cedefop Reference series, 57
- Nilsson, Måns (2005), The Role of Assessments and Institutions for Policy Learning: A Study on Swedish Climate and Nuclear Policy Formation. Policy Sciences, Vol 38, Nr 4, pp 225-249
- NSzFI (National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education) (2009), Pályakövetés Rendszere. see: http://www.tamop.nive.hu/index.php?pageid=palyakovetes_rendszer
- OECD (2008a), Learning for Jobs. OECD Policy Review of Vocational Education and Training. see: http://www.oecd.org/document/42/0,3343,en_2649_39263238_40344106_1_1_1_1,00.html
- OECD (2008b), Enhancing the OECD's Contribution to the Political Economy of Reform (Note by the Secretary-General). Not published
- OECD (2007), PISA 2006: Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World. OECD, Paris
- OECD (2004), Learning for Tomorrow's World – First Results from PISA 2003. OECD, Paris
- OECD (2003), Regulatory Reform in Hungary. OECD, Paris
- OECD/CERI (2008), OECD/CERI Study of Systemic Innovation in VET. Systemic Innovation in the Hungarian VET. System Country Case Study Report. OECD, Paris
- Offe, C. (1998), Designing Institutions in East European Transitions. In: Goodin, R. (ed.) (1998), The Theory of Institutional Design. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Page, Edward C. (2000), Future Governance and the literature on policy transfer and lesson drawing (Introduction prepared for the ESRC Future Governance Programme Workshop on Policy Transfer, January 28 2000, Britannia House, London), available online: <http://www.hull.ac.uk/futgov/>
- Peters, Guy B. (2001), The Politics of Bureaucracy. Routledge, London
- Randma-Liiv, T. (2005), Demand- and Supply-based Policy Transfer in Estonian Public Administration. Journal of Baltic Studies, 36(4), pp 467–487
- Richardson, Sue (2007), What is skill shortage? NCVET, Australia
- Richardson, Sue and Tan, Yan (2007), Forecasting future demands: What we can and cannot know. NCVET, Australia
- Rose, Richard (1991), What is lesson-drawing. Journal of Public Policy 11, pp. 3-30
- Rose, Richard (1993), Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy. Chatham, New Jersey
- Rose-Ackerman, S. (2005), From Elections to Democracy. Building Accountable Governments in Hungary and Poland. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

- Ryan, P. (1998), Is apprenticeship better? A review of the economic evidence. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 50(2), pp 289-329
- Sabatier, Paul (1987), Knowledge, policy-oriented learning, and policy change. *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization* 8, pp 649-692
- Sabatier, Paul A. (1993), Advocacy-Koalitionen, Policy-Wandel und Policy-Lernen: Eine Alternative zur Phasenheuristik. in: Héritier, Adrienne, *Policy-Analyse. Kritik und Neuorientierung. Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 34, Sonderheft 24, Opladen, S. 116-148
- Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.) (2007), *Theories of the Policy Process*. Westview Press, Cambridge
- Stead, Dominic, Martin de Jong and Iveta Reinholde (2008), Urban Transport Policy Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe. *DISP Journal*, 172. 1/2008
- Stone, Diane (2004), Transfer Agents and Global Networks in the Transnationalisation of Policy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11 (3)
- Surel, Yves (2000) The role of cognitive and normative frames in policy-making. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 7 (4), 495-512
- SzMM (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour) (2009), Újjáalakulnak a regionális fejlesztési és képzési bizottságok. SzMM, Budapest
<http://www.szmm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=16183&articleID=33340&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>
- SzMM (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour) (2008), A szakképzés és felnőttképzés területén történt változások – 2007. SzMM, Budapest
<http://szmm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=16202&articleID=31413&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>
- SzMM-MKIK (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour – Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry) (2007), Megállapodás az SzMM és MKIK között. SzMM, Budapest
- SzMM-MKIK (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour – Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry) (2008), Megállapodás az SzMM és MKIK között. SzMM, Budapest
- Toner, P (2003), *Declining Apprentice Training Rates: Causes, Consequences and Solutions*. University of Western Sydney, Australia
- Tóth István János and Vincze János (1999), hihetünk-e a vállalati adatfelvételeken alapuló felmérések eredményeinek? *Statisztikai Szemle*, Vol 77, No 10-11, pp- 844-855
- Wilson, James Q (1989), *Bureaucracy. What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*. Free Press, New York
- Wilson, R.A. (2001), Forecasting skill requirements at national and company levels. in P. Descy and M. Tessaring (eds), *Training in Europe, Second Report on Vocational Training Research in Europe 2000: Background Report*, vol. II, Cedefop Reference Series, pp. 561–609.
- Wolman, Harold and Edward Page (2002) Policy Transfer among Local Governments: An Information-Theory Approach. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 15(4), p 477–501.
- World Bank (2008), *Governance Matters. Worldwide Governance Indicators, 1996-2007*. World Bank, Washington. available online: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>
- World Value Survey (2005, 2000), see: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>