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Ph.D. Course

Vocational Education and Training Institutions: Theory and Evidence

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Department of Management, King’s College London
Course Programme for Doctoral Students in the Economics of Education
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Aims and objectives
The course provides an introduction to institutional aspects of vocational education and training, with particular attention to work-based training, including apprenticeship. Students will be familiarised with institutional attributes by country, sector and occupation, introduced to methods of institutional analysis, both microeconomic and other, to the contributions of both economics and other social sciences to an understanding of institutions, and to the role of historical and comparative methods in institutional research.

Course structure
The course comprises nine separate units: an introduction, followed by eight sessions of one half a day each. Each session contains a lecture, introducing the topic and issues, followed by a seminar, at which one or more members of the class present issues and start a wider discussion. All students are required to read the core readings for all sessions (marked by asterisks below).

Assessment
Students’ learning and contributions to the course are assessed through (i) a 2,000 written word essay, to be submitted within two weeks of the end of the course, on a topic to be chosen from a set of questions to be distributed in the second half of the course (80% of marks), and (ii) a participation grade, in which marks are awarded primarily for the quality of contributions, both as individual presentations and to class discussions (20% of marks).

Topics and readings
The issues to be discussed in lectures and seminars and the relevant readings are listed below. The questions listed at the start of each topic are those around which the seminar will be organised. Required readings for each topic are marked with an asterisk (*). Students who sign up to introduce particular topics are expected to read most or all of the readings for that topic.
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1. Introduction (HG, PR)

Why is vocational education and training of interest for social science? What is meant by ‘institutions’, and what is institutional analysis? What is the contribution of comparative and historical analysis? What is path dependency? What is the role of ‘methodological individualism’? How might theories of institutional content account for institutional change?


2. Apprenticeship training and labour market structure (PR)

Who bears the cost of work-based training for skills when occupational labour markets are imperfectly competitive, and why? Does a deregulated market system generate an adequate supply of that kind of training?


* Stevens, M., 'The economic analysis of apprenticeship', paper presented to Conference on Skills and Training, Cambridge University, 1994


* Ryan, P., 'The potential implications for training volume of assumptions about pay setting in economic models of apprenticeship training', unpublished, Department of Management, King's College London, 2009.
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3. Apprenticeship training: employer coordination (HG)
What are the benefits of and the scope for collective action by employers in relation to training and skill formation? What facilitates and what impedes such collective action? What are the implications for public policy towards work-based training?


4. Apprenticeship training: social partnership (PR)
What role is played by ‘social partnership’, ‘corporatism’, and public regulation in the success or otherwise of national apprenticeship systems?

5. Internal labour markets

What are internal labour markets (ILMs)? How and why do they develop? What role do they play in training? What are the advantages and disadvantages of ILM-oriented training? What facilitates and what weakens ILM-oriented training?


6. Trade unions, youth organisation, and pay structure (PR)

What are the goals and influence of trade unions in relation to the pay of apprentices and young workers? What role is played by labour market structure in the determination of youth pay and employment patterns? What do strikes by apprentices in British metalworking and by graduate students in American universities reveal about the influence on the pay of trainees of youth (apprentice, student) organisation, and trade unionism and collective bargaining? Why might Swiss apprentices not have followed the same path as their UK and US ‘counterparts’?


TAA, The TAA Strike Manual, Teaching Assistants’ Association, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005, ch 1, Appendix A.

Ryan, P., Compilation of internet-provided press reports and magazine articles on graduate student strikes in the US, 2009.

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7. Human resource management and training (HG)

What is human resource management (HRM)? How does it interact with training? How important is training within ‘bundles’ of HRM practices and how important are the complementarities between those practices? Do we know whether training, as a part of HRM, affects organisational performance?

How do ‘varieties of capitalism’ affect HRM practices? Do corporate finance, ownership, and governance and HR accounting practices affect HRM practices and outcomes, in particular through ‘short-termism’?


8. Public training programmes, quasi-markets, evaluation (PR)

What economic gains and losses result from organising vocational education and training through quasi-markets? What might account for differences in the prominence of quasi-markets across advanced economies? How effectively can service quality be ensured under competitive contracting?


Culpepper, *Creating Cooperation*, ch. 6