Artículos científicos

"Training – Made in Germany" – Hecho en Costa Rica. La transferencia del aprendizaje dual desde la perspectiva de los actores estatales y paraestatales de Costa Rica

"Training – Made in Germany" – Made in Costa Rica. Dual Apprenticeship Transfer from the Perspective of State and Parastatal Actors in Costa Rica

Training - made in Germany" - Fabricado em Costa Rica. Transferência de aprendizado duplo sob a perspectiva de atores estatais e paraestatais da Costa Rica

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Revista Innovaciones Educativas
Universidad Estatal a Distancia, Costa Rica
ISSN: 1022-9825
ISSN-e: 2215-4132
Periodicidad: Semestral
vol. 26, núm. 40, 2024
innoveducativas@uned.ac.cr

Recepción: 01 Septiembre 2023

URL: http://portal.amelica.org/ameli/journal/428/4284910003/

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22458/ie.v26i40.4944

Resumen: : Este artículo analiza las discusiones sobre el modelo alemán de aprendizaje dual durante el diálogo social tripartito celebrado en Costa Rica entre el 27 de febrero y el 1 de setiembre de 2017. A este escenario de diálogo, moderado por la Organización Internacional del Trabajo, asistieron representantes de empresas, sindicatos y el gobierno. El análisis se centra en las representaciones sociales y referencias intersubjetivas elaboradas específicamente por actores estatales y paraestatales sobre las características y potencialidades del modelo alemán de aprendizaje dual para resolver determinados problemas sociales en Costa Rica. Para ello, se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas a representantes estatales que participaron en el diálogo, así como a representantes paraestatales que intervinieron en las discusiones sobre el tema. Como resultado, uno de los principales hallazgos es que, dentro de la dinámica de cooperación política, el modelo alemán de aprendizaje dual es tratado como un producto de "exportación/importación" capaz de resolver problemas como el desempleo juvenil y la pobreza entre los jóvenes. La referencia al modelo alemán de buenas prácticas y a Alemania como tal se utiliza para limitar la adecuada participación de los actores y la comprensión de los problemas sociales. *Palabras claves*: Empleo de jóvenes, Enseñanza técnica, Política educativa, Costa Rica, Formación dual

Abstract: : This article analyzes the discussions on the German dual apprenticeship model during the tripartite social dialogue held in Costa Rica between February 27 and September 1, 2017. This dialogue arena, moderated by the International Labour Organization, was attended by representatives of companies, trade unions, and the government. The analysis focuses on the social representations and intersubjective references specifically developed by state and parastatal actors on the characteristics and potentials of the German dual apprenticeship model to solve certain social problems in Costa Rica. For this

purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with state representatives who participated in the dialogue, as well as with parastatal representatives who were involved in the discussions on the topic. As a result, one of the main findings is that within the dynamics of political cooperation, the German dual apprenticeship model is treated as an "export/import" product capable of solving problems such as youth unemployment and poverty among young people. The reference to the German best practice model and to Germany as such is used to limit the adequate participation of actors and the understanding of social problems.

Keywords: Youth Employment, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Education Policy, Costa Rica, Dual Apprenticeship.

Resumo: : Este artigo analisa as discussões sobre o modelo alemão de aprendizagem dupla durante o diálogo social tripartite realizado na Costa Rica entre 27 de fevereiro e 1º de setembro de 2017. Essa arena de diálogo, moderada pela Organização Internacional do Trabalho, contou com a participação de representantes de empresas, sindicatos e do governo. A análise se concentra nas representações sociais e nas referências intersubjetivas especificamente desenvolvidas por atores estatais e paraestatais sobre as características e os potenciais do modelo alemão de aprendizagem dupla para resolver determinados problemas sociais na Costa Rica. Para isso, foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas com representantes do Estado que participaram do diálogo, bem como com representantes paraestatais que estiveram envolvidos nas discussões sobre o tema. Como resultado, uma das principais constatações é que, na dinâmica da cooperação política, o modelo alemão de aprendizagem dual é tratado como um produto de "exportação/importação" capaz de resolver problemas como o desemprego juvenil e a pobreza entre os jovens. A referência ao modelo alemão de melhores práticas e à Alemanha como tal é usada para limitar a participação adequada dos atores e a compreensão dos problemas sociais.

Palavras-chave: Emprego para jovens, Educação e treinamento técnico e profissional, Política educacional, Costa.

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the Costa Rican Congress passed a law to implement a dual apprenticeship structure in the technical vocational education and training (TVET) system. This was the result of more than 50 years of discussion on the design of TVET in the country. The law, presented as a breakthrough, was intended to respond to the growing problems caused by the high rate of people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) and to counterbalance the highly confrontational attitudes of employers and workers.

In a project announced as a liberating blow for "economic reactivation" (Carballo, 2020; Gudiño, 2019), the internationally renowned German dual apprenticeship model was to be transferred to Costa Rica. This idea was justified by the long-standing relationship between Costa Rica and Germany (Láscarez Smith, 2017; Mittmann, 2001). Examples of this close cooperation were the influence of the German embassy, the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad, and German political foundations, namely the Konrad Adenauer

Foundation (KAS) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, as well as the large number of cooperation projects with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). In addition, there are various transnational agreements between the countries in the field of education, e.g., between schools (Mittmann, 2001) or universities (Láscarez Smith & Baumann, 2020). These close economic, political, and educational relations, as well as the relevance and international recognition of the German dual apprenticeship system, have led several TVET stakeholders in Costa Rica to opt for the German model, although other models, such as the Swiss model, have also been discussed.

In addition to the International Labour Organization (ILO), KAS, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (GOVET) and Osnabrück University were involved in the immediate preparations for the introduction of a dual apprenticeship model in Costa Rica. To this end, a roundtable of government, trade union and business representatives was established under the guidance and facilitation of the ILO.

This paper examines this roundtable phase of Costa Rica's vocational training policy development. The paper focuses on state and parastatal actors, whose strategies are examined in greater detail. Specifically, this paper examines how Costa Rican state and parastatal actors used discursive references to Germany and the German dual apprenticeship system. The article is complemented by a previously published article focusing on business actors (Láscarez Smith & Schmees, 2021) and trade unions (Láscarez Smith & Schmees, 2023).

Costa Rican "Dual Mode" vs. German "Dual Apprenticeship"

In principle, Costa Rica has had a dual apprenticeship system since 1971, when a law was passed that regulated vocational training until 2019. This earlier law explicitly provided for the so-called "dual mode" as an option within a given training framework. This law also regulated the salary, status and social security of those who trained. Articles 14 and 15 of the Apprenticeship Law stipulate that the National Institute for Apprenticeships (Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje, INA), which is financed by a levy, will divide the total duration of the apprenticeship into three periods. During the first period, the apprentice will receive 50% of the minimum wage for the occupation being learned; during the second period, 75%; and during the last period, 100%. The law also stated that the apprenticeship contract should be considere a fixed-term employment.

From the state's point of view, the problem with this 1971 law was that the "dual mode" was rarely used. From the companies' point of view, the salary scheme proposed in this law was too high. In this regard, it should first be noted that the TVET system is divided into two parts: First, there is a non-formal TVET subsystem that is run by the INA. The requirements to access INA TVET may vary, i.e., depending on the training to be attended, formal qualifications may or may not be required. Second, there is a formal TVET system, financed by the state through the Ministry of Public Education (MEP), which requires formal qualifications for entry and enjoys good public reputation. It is mainly in the state-funded MEP subsystem that dual apprenticeship approaches have been piloted, sometimes with the support and funding of German actors (Mittmann, 2001; Mora, 2016; Ugalde Villalobos et al., 2018).

More recently, additional efforts have been made to promote a "dual mode" in the INA subsystem. To this end, a tripartite dialogue was held in 2017 between the state, trade unions, and business actors. In line with ILO recommendations, this tripartite dialogue was held to put dual apprenticeship training on a new footing. However, for a variety of reasons, this dialogue failed to produce a collectively binding outcome. Nevertheless, a new law was adopted in 2019 in consultation between government stakeholders and business actors.

The new (and currently valid) Dual Apprenticeship Act of 2019 has mainly brought flexibility for employers. For example, the salary requirement has been replaced by a scholarship system to be paid by the

INA. It also downgraded the status of apprentices to students. In line with the latter change, the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social, CCSS), which is responsible for monitoring social security in the Costa Rican labor market, has changed its assessment practices. This is because the apprentices in the newly developed dual apprenticeship model are no longer officially considered apprentices, but rather students, and are therefore not subject to the social security system. Instead, the Dual Apprenticeship Act of 2019 guarantees a less extensive accident insurance through the INA (Article 22, Section H). This saves employers high ancillary wage costs (Instituto Nacional de Seguros [INS]).

Against this background, the reference to the German dual apprenticeship system seems problematic in two respects. On the one hand, dual apprenticeship structures have been part of the Costa Rican TVET system for 50 years and could not be implemented on a larger scale for country-specific reasons. On the other hand, the new law on dual training undermined several fundamental features of the German dual apprenticeship system (and apparently also features of the previous Costa Rican).

The transfer of the German Dual Apprenticeship Model

The German dual apprenticeship model has been an "international bestseller" (Münk, 2017) since at least the 2010s (Gessler, 2020). One reason for this popularity was the relatively low increase in youth unemployment in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis in countries with a dual apprenticeship system, namely Austria, Germany, and Switzerland.

Countries with dual apprenticeship structures are supposed to be less affected by the problem of youth unemployment (critically, Lassnigg, 2015). Subsequently, international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) promote the implementation of dual apprenticeship worldwide (OECD, 2010), claiming that the same benefits can be achieved in other countries by transferring the dual apprenticeship system (critically, Münk, 2017). However, regardless of the truth of this statement, it leads to practical consequences according to Thomas' theorem: "If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, as cited in Merton, 1995, p. 380). Furthermore, the transfer of the German dual apprenticeship model is massively supported by the German government. Within the framework of TVET cooperation, various projects are promoted worldwide with the aim of directly or indirectly supporting the transfer of the dual apprenticeship system (Heller et al., 2015).

To this end, German actors are involved, namely the German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (GOVET), the International Marketing of Vocational Education (iMOVE), and the working group "Internationale Zusammenarbeit in der Berufsbildung" (International Collaboration in Technical and Vocational Education and Training), located at the DLR Project Management Agency, advice the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. These actors are committed to the global marketing of the dual apprenticeship model as a product. The iMOVE slogan, "Training – Made in Germany," (the slogan is used by the iMOVE program).

The German government is apparently making these efforts in pursuit of the following five goals: (1) the legitimacy of the dual apprenticeship system increases in its country of origin, Germany, is enhanced by its reputation abroad (Klassen & Schmees, 2022); (2) transfer activities abroad support the recruitment of skilled workers by German companies; (3) German providers are enabled to generate (more) sales and profits in a global education market (Peters & Meyne, 2021; Peters, 2021); (4) the structures abroad could support the recruitment of a trained workers by German companies; (5) the transfer of dual apprenticeship structures can be used to exercise soft power (cf. Nye, 1990) or in the form of educational diplomacy.

Against this background, it seems plausible that governments all over the world are showing interest in dual apprenticeship structures, often with explicit reference to the German model. In this sense, one could speak of a combination of mutually dependent push and pull factors: German and international actors use soft power including financial incentives to trigger initial reform efforts in countries, which in turn through mimesis, encourage other countries to actively demand the same reforms themselves (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research follows a qualitative approach. This approach consists, on the one hand, in the understanding that the subject-subject relationship is mediated by the characteristics of the researcher and, on the other hand, in the understanding that the construction of discourses and narratives has intersubjective foundations that emerge from a historical-cultural and complex process (HernándezSampieri et al., 2004).

It is useful to point out that the main difference between the so-called quantitative and qualitative research approaches is not precisely the use of numbers in the former and in the non-use of numbers in the latter. Rather, the epistemological and technical differences that can be identified between these two approaches stem from two basic elements: the type of intentionality and the type of reality that one or the other research approach seeks to address (Quintana Peña, 2006, p. 47).

In this sense, through a qualitative approach, we seek to understand the phenomenon from the argumentative and discursive intentionality of state and parastatal actors, and how, through certain discourses, they carry out concrete political practices, such as the construction of laws or new forms of educational action.

This article is part of a broader research project in which the actors that participated in the national dialogue table for the promotion of dual apprenticeships in Costa Rica were interviewed, namely the trade unions (Láscarez Smith & Schmees, 2023) and the business sector (Láscarez Smith & Schmees, 2021) as well as state and parastatal actors (this paper). In total, six interviews were conducted for this paper. Interviews were held with representatives from the Department of Technical Education of the Ministry of Education (hereafter MEP, 2018), the Ministry of Culture and Youth (hereafter MCJ, 2018), the INA (hereafter INA, 2018a and 2018b), the ILO (here after ILO, 2028), and the KAS in Costa Rica (hereafter KAS, 2018). The latter two institutions were involved in the data collection process to include multiple perspectives for the sake of data triangulation (Flick, 2011).

In addition, the second author of the paper observed the technical sessions of the roundtable (which were held in addition to the political sessions) as a participant. At the time of data gathering, one author of this paper was an employee of the National Technical University (Universidad Técnica Nacional, UTN) in Costa Rica, which plays a crucial role in collaborating with the INA and MEP, as well as other actors of the Costa Rican TVET system. Finally, position papers of state actors were consulted as additional sources.

The interviews were transcribed (in one case a memory log was used) to apply a qualitative content analysis (for details, see Kuckartz, 2016). For this purpose, we used the open-source program QCAmap to mark text passages with references to Germany or the dual apprenticeship model. The extracted passages were then reviewed and divided into the following subcategories: (1) German actors as supporters of the transfer, (2) mythification of the dual apprenticeship model, (3) "tropicalization" as a prerequisite for transferring dual structures (Láscarez Smith & Schmees 2021), and (4) emancipation from the German dual apprenticeship model. These subcategories also form the basis for the following section in which we present the results of the study.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The following sections present the results of the analysis. First, the role of German actors in the transfer process is analyzed. Second, we analyze how the German dual model is mythologized. Third, we explain the relevance of the concept of "tropicalization" for state and parastatal actors. Finally, we analyze how national discourses have attempted to generate an independence from the German model to implement a Costa Rican model of dual apprenticeship.

German Actors as Supporters of the Transfer

In several interviews, the reference to Germany underlines the role of German actors as active supporters of the Costa Rican TVET reform towards a dual apprenticeship system. We were able to identify different types of support (requested support, potential support, help for self-help, and taking the lead), which are separated in the following paragraphs.

Several interviewees emphasized that Germany supported the piloting of the introduction of the dual apprenticeship structure in the public vocational training sector (MEP). The Memorandum of Understanding between the Costa Rican and the German governments, under which this support took place, was referred to as follows: "[...] [We are also being supported by the German government, thanks to a Memorandum of Understanding [...]" (MEP, 2018). In addition to the actual support, the question of how the evaluation of these pilots will be implemented was also mentioned in the interviews.

However, the interviewee is more reluctant to specify the support from the German side and formulates the support as a possible option in the future: "Currently, the pilot plan is in its second year, and it will formally end next year in four secondary schools, when the students finish their studies. At that point we will ask the German actors to join us" (MEP, 2018). Already at this point in the analysis it becomes clear that the support of German actors is more welcome on the input side than on the output side. A first interpretation could be that the Costa Rican government wants to keep control over whether and how this evaluation and the discussion of its results take place. Support should therefore be limited to specific requests.

Regarding the cooperation with German partners in the transfer of the dual apprenticeship system to the privately financed vocational training at INA, the cooperation with German partners is explicitly praised and recommended. This cooperation is seen as a necessity for the successful transfer of the dual apprenticeship system to INA TVET.

In this sense "[...] German development cooperation must continue to provide technical support, research, translation, and knowledge transfer" (INA, 2018a). More specifically, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) produced training materials for the training of electricians: "INA contacted the German GIZ and together they prepared a profile and a training program related to INA as well as to the [needs] of the companies [...]" (INA, 2018b). An important notion is the discursively constructed dependency on German support, also for the future. Continued support is seen as a prerequisite for a successful implementation. A transfer without German support is therefore unthinkable.

In addition to GIZ, KAS is a separate contractual partner that supports further training for enterprises willing to participate in the dual apprenticeship model. This form of reference can be understood as support to be independent and therefore contradicts the first category. In this sense, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is asked to help the private sector to better understand the dual modality within the dual apprenticeship model so that they can implement the system by themselves. In addition, the KAS was also an important financial supporter of these trainings (for the whole paragraph, see INA, 2018b). In short, the support of the KAS is seen as an important actor when it comes to knowledge transfer. Moreover, the support is structured and perceived primarily and foremost as an additional source of support.

After the change of government, the roundtable came to a standstill and, despite assurances from the government, the future of the roundtable remained unclear. Considering this, the German side took the initiative to hold unofficial events with similar partners: "There were some tripartite events, such as the event held with German cooperation partners together with the Ministry of Education [...]. In the end, it was an event like a public forum" (ILO, 2018). However, these efforts were not successful as the dialog table was not continued by the new government. It can be said that as soon as the German actors took the lead in the efforts to transfer the dual apprenticeship model, the support of the actors in Costa Rica declined. This interpretation is in line with the first interpretation in this subsection that support from "Germany" must be requested to be welcome.

In summary, the support from Germany and the reference to German actors is mostly positive and framed as a condition sine qua non. However, the support seems to be particularly welcome when it is requested. Initiatives to support evaluation and the continuation of the tripartite dialogue were less successful.

Mythification of the Dual Apprenticeship Model

In addition to the decontextualization of the dual apprenticeship model, the idealization of this model seems to be both an inherent part of the transfer process and to benefit from it. In the light of this paper, it is of particular importance what the Costa Rican state and parastatal actors expect from the transfer of the dual apprenticeship model.

According to the MEP, the German side presented the German model in a biased way: "The German delegation said that in Germany, they handle the dual apprenticeship agreements in a very harmonious way [...] It seems that the system works quite well [...]" (MEP, 2018). The focus on the dual apprenticeship model covers problems of the so-called "transition system", an TVET subsystem that absorbs potential apprentices who could not find an apprenticeship place (see Steib, 2020). This subsystem is usually neglected when it comes to international transfers of the German model.

Since the global discourse only emphasizes the positive aspects of the dual apprenticeship model, it was felt that the transfer would be most effective the closer the Costa Rican version is to the German one: "At some point, people believed that in order to create this model, they had to basically duplicate the German model of dual apprenticeship" (MEP, 2018). Moreover, the observation of the German model was highly selective as one interviewee put it: "And that was exactly the biggest problem in the dialogue table that some people see in certain models projected in Costa Rica. We met with the German delegation, but we only see what we want to see from the German model" (ILO, 2018).

In summary, it seems that the German model was presented in an overly positive way, supporting a discourse that is already multiplying around the world by international organizations (see OECD, 2010), making it an "international bestseller" (Münk, 2017) or a global blueprint (Chabbott & Ramirez, 2006) for TEVT, comparable to the Finnish model for general education, triggered by the PISA studies in 2000. The German model is seen as a cure for youth unemployment through its labor market adaptability even though it faces fundamental and increasing problems in Germany (see Greinert, 1994). However, the myth, understood as assumed causal connection between a reform and its impact (Koch, 2009), that makes the dual apprenticeship model unsurpassed, persists.

"Tropicalization" as a Prerequisite for Transferring Dual Structures

More than the question of whether the dual apprenticeship model should be transferred, the question of how it should be transferred has sparked a debate between the state, unions, and the business sector. This political confrontation is expressed in the question of how Germanized the Costa Rican TVET system should be and how "tropicalized" the German model needs to be to "work" for Costa Rica.

Basically, there is no doubt that some adaptation to the German model would have to take place. Since the German model has evolved historically and is strongly embedded in the German industry, labor market policy, and social partnership which are different than those in Costa Rica, it also sounds very plausible (see also Láscarez Smith & Schmees, 2021): "Our experience at the MEP has shown that any pattern you bring and establish, just like the source model, will never work" (MEP, 2018).

More specifically, the prerequisites for students to enter the TVET system are also different, at least from the perspective of a Costa Rican government actor: "In the German model, students finish secondary school first, and then enter the dual modality through the industrial sector. Here in Costa Rica, we have not thought about that yet" (MEP, 2018). Although this statement does not reflect the German dual apprenticeship policy where students can enter at the age of 16 regardless of previous qualifications, it does construct a possibility for adaptation.

This is also stated in the following quote while at the same time it is expressed with regret, meaning that the implementation of the pure German model is still seen as superior to any kind of "tropicalized model":

"In Costa Rica, there cannot be a pure dual apprenticeship model, it has to be a model with face-to-face tutorials, with the characteristics of a school. A model like the German one, pure, cannot be implemented in Costa Rica. The German representatives, like the GIZ [German Development Cooperation], have helped us a lot, but unfortunately, we do not have the conditions that Germany has, which means that we cannot implement a dual model like the German one. We have an INA model, and it may not look like the German model, but it works for us." (INA, 2018b)

The main dispute in Costa Rica, however, was over the way "tropicalization" would take place. And here, the status of the apprentices was a central issue. According to the 1971 law, apprentices are considered workers, receive a monthly salary from the company, and are protected by social security, which the company must pay for. In fact, these rules have a lot in common with the German apprenticeship model that was to be adopted in 2018.

However, the "dual option" in Costa Rica has rarely been used by employers due to these high standards, which are also associated with high costs. Therefore, the roundtable discussed possible solutions. While the unions favored the German model, the employers' representatives argued that they were already paying for the INA. Therefore, the INA should pay the students instead (see MEP, 2018). When the official government argued in favor of the German model stating that the status of apprentices should be "within the framework of employment relationships" (ILO, 2018), it caused a "political scandal, especially in the business sector" (MEP, 2018). After his statement the Minister of Education "was under a lot of pressure from the business organizations and powerful people" (MEP, 2018).

Theoretically, this observation can be explained by the division between "talk" and "action" (Brunsson, 2003). While at the level of talk all actors agree on the implementation of the German model and frequently refer to "Germany," the consensus stops when it comes to action. In the end, a dual apprenticeship law was passed, according to which apprentices have the status of students, i.e., unpaid, unprotected and with no responsibilities on the part of the company.

Thus, the transfer of "Training – Made in Germany" became in a way an anti-transfer, where the existing type was replaced by a model that is further away from the German benchmark than the original model. Despite this, the reference to "Germany" was kept alive, even when the actors emancipated themselves from the German original, as in the following category.

Emancipation from the German Dual Apprenticeship System

Finally, we found quotes that are calling for an emancipation from the German model. This is expressed by actors who actively called for the support from the German side. Moreover, the reference to Germany is still present, even in these statements.

The different way of arguing in these statements refers to an acknowledgement of what the German side has to offer and an appreciation of what they have done in Costa Rica, but ultimately the Costa Rican government must think about what is right for Costa Rica.

"The work that has been done with the Germans is essential for us, because several German experts have told us that the INA does not offer dual education, although we say that we do, and the truth is that we do not really do it. The question is, what should a system that works for us look like in terms of education, employment, and quality priorities?" (INA, 2018a)

It is also expressed that the German actors were not really interested in the detailed discussions and challenges during the adaptation of the dual apprenticeship model in Costa Rica. Implicitly, the German actors would have preferred a 1:1 transfer: "The Germans made it clear in a forum we organized, that in Germany the apprentice is treated as a worker. But in Costa Rica the apprentice is a student, he will never be a worker. These discussions are not public, and the Germans do not participate in these details. There are many interest groups in Costa Rica "(MEP, 2018). This orthodox perspective could have led to an emancipation of these actors.

This emancipation is clearly emphasized in the following quote, in which the INA official seems to be tired of explaining himself in terms of how close the INA system is to the German system: "I am no longer afraid of being told that what we call 'dual' is not 'dual' from the German perspective. Our main goal is to meet the needs that the company requires, and often that cannot be dual" (INA, 2018b). However, even when explaining the differences, "Germany" was still referred to as a benchmark at the meta level: "It took Germany many years to improve their model and I think that Costa Rica should do the same. This is the first model. We will see the results over time". (KAS, 2018).

In a way the emancipation from "Germany" as a reference is presented as contradictory in this chapter. On the one hand, the Costa Rican actors emphasize that they have the right to develop a model that works. On the other hand, the reference to Germany persists even in these statements. This is done either by actively rejecting the imagined demand of the German actors or by emphasizing that the German apprenticeship model itself had to adapt and improve over time.

CONCLUSIONS

TVET models are not a product. However, German actors seem to treat the dual apprenticeship model as one, as it is indicated by the slogan "Training – Made in Germany." This process of productization is accompanied by an international mystification. The fight against youth unemployment is one of the main reasons given internationally to justify why the dual apprenticeship model is superior to other TVET models. Apart from the veracity of these statements, we analyzed how these global discourses are taken up in the countries to which the dual apprenticeship model is transferred.

In this article, we focused on the perspective of the state of Costa Rica and its references to "Germany" to answer the question of how the transfer is legitimized within Costa Rica. Not surprisingly, the reference to Germany was omnipresent. However, we were able to distinguish four specific uses of this reference: (1) German actors as active supporters of the transfer: This means that during the transfer process, the German actors played an active role in accompanying, constructing, and implementing the dual apprenticeship system. (2) Mythification of the dual apprenticeship model: Mythologizing is understood as the set of symbolisms and beliefs about the functioning of the German dual apprenticeship system. Causal relationships have been derived from this mythologizing to explain, for example, the relationship between unemployment and dual apprenticeship training, although these problems are more complex in the German context. (3) "Tropicalization" as a prerequisite for the transfer of dual structures, and the process of adapting a policy based on a foreign experience has been understood, inaccurately and often sarcastically, as tropicalization. A process of local adaptation would imply a series of technical and scientific analyses that integrate the transfer variables of the dual apprenticeship model into the local context and needs. The tropicalization of the dual apprenticeship, however, omits all these requirements.

(4) Emancipation from the German dual apprenticeship model: Even though a detachment between the German and the Costa Rican models is claimed, the reference is still active even in these claims as the further development of the system and its adaptability within Germany is emphasized.

These four inductively created categories could also serve as a basis for future transfer research in TVET to expand or adapt the ways in which legitimizing references are used by actors in receiving countries. Furthermore, our approach could, in the future be combined with network analysis to be able to ascribe importance to certain claims and references over others. Finally, this line of research contributes to sociological institutionalism theory by further conceptualizing the ways in which legitimation is created. Sociological institutionalism emerges as a valuable analytical framework for comprehensively examining the intricate dynamics of institutional operation and administration within the context of TVET. It facilitates an in-depth examination of key aspects such as the roles played by different actors and the

governance mechanisms inherent in the dual apprenticeship model. In addition, this approach is proving to be instrumental in examining the historical transformations that these institutions have undergone.

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