Abstract

In the last decade, comparative political economy has emphasized that coordinated market economies respond to socioeconomic structural trends by means of liberalization. Strikingly, this liberalization thesis seems to stand in contradiction to current political ambitions to strengthen "coordinated" elements in states with a more liberal or statist tradition. In particular, a wide range of international organizations and countries have committed themselves to implement dual, collective vocational education and training in previously non-collective systems. This leads to the paradoxical situation that some collective skill formation systems are plagued by decreasing collectivism, while a variety of countries integrate collective elements into their skill formation systems. We argue that these at first sight contradictory developments mirror trends towards a new hybrid model of skill formation. In this model, the state provides an adequate amount of skilled labor, making firms free to opt out of training if they deem it to be too costly. However, these systems are still able to achieve considerable employer participation in VET. But in contrast to conventional collective training systems, this participation rests on a more voluntaristic logic, triggering business involvement mainly where it fits short-term cost calculations of firms. We explore these developments in the cases of Austria and Norway. We find that despite vastly different traditions of skill formation and welfare production, reforms in both countries resulted in a somewhat high resemblance of the two skill formation systems. Austria, usually considered a "collective" skill formation system, has increasingly expanded statist training measures to make up for decreasing employer participation. Norway, with a historically "statist" tradition of skill formation, has increasingly offered firms attractive ways to participate in VET. In both systems, employers can access skilled personnel from statist training measures without any additional training costs. However, both systems still provide employers the possibility to engage in training without long-term commitment, with short internship periods or by training in the last and less costly years of the apprenticeship.

Presenting Author

- **Lina Seitzl**
  - University of St. Gallen

Author

- Daniel Unterweger
  - University of St. Gallen