

Migration and work: the cohesive role of vocational training policies¹

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ABSTRACT: Migration and work are truly connected notions, both because one major cause of migration is the search of better working conditions, and because work is a fundamental vehicle of social cohesion, especially for the migrants. Hence, the European social model strongly connects social cohesion and employment policies, fostering sustainable growth and integration by offering increasing job opportunities, particularly concerning the weak categories. Therefore, work is a pillar of active citizenship and a fundamental step in individuals' self-construction and the development of social abilities. In such context, vocational training represents a twofold integration channel, combining both education and work paths. Hence, the European Commission (2010) fosters a cohesive growth through vocational education and training (VET) policies, promoting a modern VET system and increasing its quality and efficiency. In Italy, the role of VET is particularly important for first- and second-generation immigrants, who are more likely to attend VET courses than different education paths. However, Italy is the only European country where VET is perceived like a segregation path, rather than like a port of entry to active citizenship and true integration. In fact, Cedefop (2011) notices that high linguistic barriers and rigid teaching methods characterize the Italian vocational education, while it stresses the high flexibility of Italian vocational training, including an higher adaptability to immigrants' needs.

The present work discusses the hypothesis of "subordinate integration" of immigrants into the Italian VET system. In particular, it examines the effectiveness of Piedmont VT policies in fostering employability of weak subjects. The results of a CATI survey on a representative sample of Piedmont VT students suggest no specific discrimination to the detriment of immigrants, whose individual background and work assimilation is similar to that of Italian VT students. Moreover, the net impact evaluation suggests a positive impact of training courses on strangers, which is generally higher for communitarian immigrants. Hence, immigrants' participation to VT courses in Italy seems to denote a sort of normalization strategy of their specific differences, rather than a subordinate integration scheme.

KEYWORDS: impact evaluation, migration, vocational training, work.

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