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# The Implementation of Dual Vocational Education and Training in Spain: Analysis of Company Tutors in the Tourism Sector

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## Absract

**Context:** Vocational education and training (VET) has become a key issue in today's highly dynamic business, technological and economic environment, with a complex diversity of systems within the European Union. This paper aims to study the implementation of dual VET in Spain, focusing on the working conditions of company tutors in the tourism sector of Andalusia and the Canary Islands.

**Approach:** Dual VET has been implemented in different ways, both between the different autonomous regions and professional areas since it was launched in 2012. In order to analyse these differences, interviews with teachers, head teachers, students and company tutors were carried out, between 2020 and 2021, in centres that had implemented dual vocational education training and centres that had not. The educational programme in dual VET implies a closer collaboration between schools and companies, as both are active training areas; the training objectives are shared between the school and the company. In this study, the company tutor is studied in his or her facet as trainer and assessor; but special emphasis is placed on the characteristics of the tourism sector, given its relevance in understanding the educational processes involved. Three dimensions underpin the analysis: the characteristics of the company tutor, the training and assessment processes implemented and the link that both maintain with the dynamics of tourism companies.

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**Findings:** In general terms, the initial assumptions put forward are confirmed. Firstly, the educational centre leads the process, taking the initiative yet without having the conditions of governance and negotiation typical of the Germanic countries from which these vocational education training systems originate. Secondly, the main characteristics of the company tutor are heterogeneity and informality. Thirdly, the contents and methodology are conditioned by the characteristics of the tourism sector. And finally, assessment also follows informal and changing procedures, generating tensions between the educational centre and company.

**Conclusions:** These results give rise to some theoretical reflections. If the education system is an institution based on the principle of equality, it is worth asking to what extent dual VET can alter this principle, as the company adapts some of the contents and learning outcomes to its specific needs. In addition, an important differentiating factor that marks the learning dynamics has been detected: the size of the company. The difference in size may also influence the future prospects of trainees joining the workforce after completion of VET studies.

**Keywords:** Vocational Education and Training, VET, Dual VET, Spain, Company Tutors, Tourism Sector

## 1 Introduction

Vocational education and training (VET) has become a key issue in today's highly dynamic business, technological and economic environment, with a complex diversity of systems within the European Union. In some cases, training is acquired on the job, in others in the education system. These differences have inspired a fruitful academic debate, ranging from international comparisons to governance analyses. Moreover, the success of the VET systems of Germany, Austria and Switzerland have triggered an interesting additional discussion about whether institutional isomorphism could appear because of the imitation effect between EU institutions (Martín Artiles et al., 2019).

This paper aims to study the implementation of dual VET in Spain, focusing on the working conditions of company tutors in the tourism sector of Andalusia and the Canary Islands. Dual VET has been implemented in different ways, both between the different autonomous regions and professional areas since it was launched in 2012. In order to analyse these differences, interviews with teachers, head teachers, students and company tutors were carried out, between 2020 and 2021, in centres that had implemented dual VET and centres that had not. Dual VET was launched in Spain by Royal Decree 1529/2012 (8 November, BOE no. 270, 9/11/12).

The approach to be developed is as follows. The educational programme in dual VET implies a closer collaboration between schools and companies, as both are active training areas; the training objectives are shared between the school and the company. This is a clear difference with respect to the VET developed so far in Spain. In this study, the company tutor is considered in his or her facet as trainer and assessor; but special emphasis is placed on the characteristics of the tourism sector, given its relevance in understanding the educational processes involved.

For this reason, the structure of this paper is as follows. First, some relevant academic discussions on VET are addressed, taking into account the recent process of implementation of dual VET in Spain and the characteristics of the tourism sector. Next, the objectives, hypotheses and methodology are defined. Finally, the results and conclusions are presented. Three dimensions underpin the analysis: The characteristics of the company tutor, the training and assessment procedures implemented and the link that both maintain with the dynamics of tourism companies. Based on the academic literature, the tourism sector is a particular case to study the relationships between the tendencies of the public education system and the approach given by the private sector. Also, it's interesting to study the introduction of dual vocational training in Spain; because its strongly academic tradition.

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

It has been argued that the literature on VET is insufficient (Echeverría Samanes & Martínez Clares, 2019, 2021). However, over the last few decades, research and academic debate on VET has intensified. This has to do with accelerated changes in the organisational and technological processes of companies, and with changing dynamics in geographical terms, both towards greater globalisation and the workplace changes arising from COVID19. It is also due to the existence of international data sources that allow the comparison of academic and business performance between countries with different education systems. In Europe, this is the case of the European Research Network on Vocational Education and Training (Vetnet) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop).

According to Hager (2019), VET was born in the 20th century to alleviate quickly the needs of the labour market by shifting from on-the-job learning (apprenticeship) to a more academic (student) approach. With globalisation, the trend has partially reversed, as VET attempts to meet the needs of the labour market in line with the needs of companies. Thus, these two trends come into conflict, which is likely to continue throughout the following decades. Deissinger and Hellwig (2005) summarise the philosophy of VET in two historically affirmed principles: The dualism of learning places (company-school) and the vocational principle. The latter refers to the characteristics of occupations, relatively independent of jobs, and to the standardised certification of qualifications. For Guile and Unwin (2019),

VET is a broad and complex field, not least because it is a relational concept: Learning as a social process is linked to the work process and organisations. Precisely for this reason, it is difficult to organise the collective construction of competences, as it involves different actors (Šćepanović & Martín Artiles, 2020).

The analysis of vocational education training can be carried out from an individual and/or institutional point of view. Therefore, in the characteristics of the skills to be learned, it is convenient to differentiate between the individual dimension (knowledge, capacity, judgement, ability to be autonomous) and the collective dimension (teams, relationships, co-production, occupations). Moreover, the application of knowledge to solve problems depends on a combination of elements -technical, community of practice, interpersonal and embodied- (Gog, 2019; Oliver et al., 2019).

Several academic discussions have been taking place around VET, some of which are relevant to this paper (general or specific competences, the relationship between VET and occupations, the different vocational education systems and the Spanish one, and the role of the company tutor).

The first concerns the preference for general or specific competences. Thus, companies often prefer specific competences, but it is common for the state to promote education systems oriented towards general competences. For Stuart (2019), employers have no incentive to train for fear that trained employees will leave to the competition; therefore, the state must intervene to finance and engage companies. For Oliver et al. (2019), the problem of financing training is at the heart of this discussion. For Busemeyer and Trampusch (2019), the types of skills depend on the training systems and their embeddedness in the labour and state structures of a country. They, therefore, propose a typology of skills training based on two dimensions: the initial investment of the company and the commitment of the state to finance VET. For Muehleman (2019), although it is important to know the costs and benefits of training by companies, this is not so simple given the intervention of several variables.

On the other hand, while the rapid adaptation of specific skills to the job is highlighted, some authors consider that they do not adequately enable the development of innovation processes. For Carabaña (2011), school-based VET is universalist and work-based VET is particularist. The latter is not well adapted to technological changes, as it is coupled to the immediate needs of companies. Furthermore, it is not clear how social objectives can be met, the main one being that education should serve as a mechanism for social integration. See also Bentolila et al. (2020).

A separate but no lesser consideration concerns the relationship between VET and occupations. For authors such as Fuller (2019), learning also implies being part of an occupation. Although the growing weakness of occupations in the context of post-Fordist and informational capitalism has been raised, learning still involves content and know-how and with the regulation and culture of the occupational group (this is the German case). Competence-

based learning moves away from this traditional dynamic, as it is no longer so closely linked to integration into an occupational community. Without wishing to shift the focus of this paper, it is important to consider what is the priority in VET, whether it is the job, the individual, the company or the occupational group. Depending on the centrality of one or the other, training should be planned for each case (Oliver et al., 2019).

An additional topic of interest concerns the multiple classifications of VET systems, as they provide insights into national specificities, and in some cases, their strengths and weaknesses. For Deissinger (2019), VET is considered a system of collective training for qualifications, linked to the "Continental European variety of coordinated capitalism, associated with conservative-corporatist education and training" (Busemeyer & Schlicht-Schmälzle, 2014, p. 56), which differs from what occurs in countries where institutions are weak in the process of coordinating employment and training. These qualifications are considered dual because they combine an occupational approach with an educational strategy, and therefore have an educational and an occupational/employment orientation. This model starts from a corporatist tradition of company-linked training, which was later influenced by the importance of the education system in skills training. In short, the trainee has a dual status, student and apprentice. And training is not strictly linked to the job, but to occupational groups, but are subject to regulation by coordinating institutions such as chambers of commerce.

Thus, according to the relative importance of dimensions such as the presence of state, market or corporatist governance, the different vocational education systems can be classified. In each country, each of these dimensions is usually present to a greater or lesser extent. In this sense, the German model itself, a reference for the implementation of dual VET in Spain, has been undergoing a process of transformation since the second half of the 20th century. Baethge and Wolter (2015) focus on the crisis factors of the German educational model, on its scarcely liberal corporatist origin and subsequently its difficult adaptation to a context of neoliberal globalisation. In the Spanish case, corporate actors such as trade unions and chambers of commerce are practically absent in the organisation and implementation of dual VET (Martín Artiles et al., 2019). See also Oliver et al. (2019) who posits five forms of skills provisioning (state, corporatist networks, local networks, institutional companies, market).

The German model has been the reference in the implementation of Spanish VET, because it is considered a success story with the capacity to be exported to other places (Alemán Falcón, 2015; Euler, 2013; Flisi, 2020; Sotomayor Vázquez, 2017). In Spain, VET is linked to the Ministry of Education though some of the responsibility for its implementation and the issuing of diplomas has been transferred to the Spanish autonomous regions. Regarding vocational education training for employment, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security oversees issuing certification (García Morata, 2015) and providing training to employed and unemployed people.

Work experience in companies was regulated in Spain in 1974 and was first implemented in 1983-1984 as a voluntary module -then called alternance training. In 1990, work experience became compulsory for all VET students, when it received the name of Formación en Centros de Trabajo, or Workplace Training (WT), (Marhuenda et al., 2016; Marhuenda-Fluixá et al., 2019). For some authors, the initiative to implement VET does not come from the education system itself but instead has been sponsored by the European Union and other bodies such as the German chambers of commerce (Marhuenda-Fluixá et al., 2017). VET involves more actors in the training, in a way that requires greater coordination and collaboration between companies and the education system. However, it should be noted that as the number of actors involved and the contextual elements increase so does the complexity of the system and implementation times (Eichhorst et al., 2015).

The new VET model was regulated by a Royal Decree (1529/2012), a legal regulation approved by the executive branch of government. This RD addresses both the training activity inherent in training and apprenticeship contracts (the formalisation and monitoring of which are the responsibility of the Public Employment Service, which in turn reports to the Ministry of Employment), and the VET carried out within the education system (the responsibility for which lies with the Ministry of Education). Thus, we have a situation in which two administrative bodies at state level have legislative and monitoring powers in VET. In practice, the involvement of the two Ministries has enshrined a model that differentiates between two profiles: One of students in initial training (under the Ministry of Education), and the other of the "apprentice" who can be hired under a training and apprenticeship contract, subject to labour legislation (under the Ministry of Labour) (Sanz de Miguel, 2017). Some authors address the difficulties in incorporating apprenticeship contracts in VET (Mol-des Farelo, 2020). Therefore, in the Spanish model, the figure of the apprentice is regulated through training and apprenticeship contracts; but what predominates is the figure of the student who, on occasions, receives a scholarship (Sanz de Miguel, 2017).

In March 2022, the Spanish Parliament passed a new law reordering Vocational Education and Training (Law 3/2022, of 31 March, on the organisation and integration of Vocational Education and Training), taking into account some of the conflicting issues in the implementation of dual VET highlighted in this article.

Royal Decree 1529/2012 regulates a dual vocational education training system that gives greater weight to in-company training. It establishes that at least 33% of the training must take place in a company, compared to the 20% stipulated in the traditional model (Sanz de Miguel, 2017). Hence, the insistence in the academic literature on the importance of governance, since, as Sanz de Miguel (2017) states, "complexity is a common feature of VET systems, especially dual systems, due to the variety of actors involved in decision-making, management and implementation" (p. 63). See also Bentolila and Jansen (2019) and Pozo-Llorrente et al. (2020).



With the implementation of VET in Spain, a significant part of the literature has focused on teachers and the education system, and much less on the companies that have become central to this new system (Marhuenda et al. 2016; Pineda-Herrero et al., 2019; Pozo-Llorente et al., 2020). Thus, teachers' opinions on dual VET and its requirements have been analysed (Marhuenda et al., 2016). The strength of some ideas is important, such as the need to adapt VET to companies' needs, and the centrality of the problem of youth employment. Another part of the literature has focused on specific sectors (Bentolila & Jansen, 2019; Domingo Cebrián, 2018; Pérez Salguero & Gómez Cervantes, 2019; Pineda Herrero et al., 2018; Roure-Niubó & Boudjaoui, 2016). Several authors have put forward proposals for improvements to VET. This is the case of Echeverría Samanes and Martínez Clares (2018) and Echeverría and Martínez-Clares (2020).

Although there is still a long way to go, there is no shortage of research on *Training Companies* and on the processes of implementation and development of dual VET in Spain. In addition, some foundations are leaving their mark on this knowledge. This is the case of the Bankia Foundation for Dual Training (FBxTD) and the Bertelsmann Foundation (Amor García, 2019; Echeverría Samanes & Martínez Clares, 2019). From an international perspective, Orr (2019) highlights the limited research on tutors outside the education system.

In the work by Bentolila et al. (2020), companies participating in VET tend to be established longer, larger and more profitable. They find that size positively affects participation up to a degree, beyond which the trend is reversed. Furthermore, there is a wide variation in VET programmes depending on the company's sector. They indicate that "in any case value added, investment and rate of return are significantly associated with a higher likelihood to participate in dual VET once participating in VET" (p. 2). They also propose that "the differential importance of the sector suggests that it is probably better not to regulate VET in different sectors in the same way" (p. 2) following the suggestions of Muehlemann and Wolter (2019).

As far as the role of the company tutor is concerned, the work of Ros-Garrido and Marhuenda-Fluixá (2019) reconstructs the characteristics of teachers and trainers and highlights the inadequacy of studies focusing on company tutors. On the other hand, studying the dual system, Leidner (2003) considers the contrast between the pedagogical qualifications required of formal trainers and the absence of these in company tutors (secondary trainers), who are in charge of apprentices. Analysing the work process within the company and its relation to apprenticeship training, Filliettaz (2011) focuses on the pedagogical perspective and possible characteristics of supervision, with special attention to tutor-apprentice communication and learning environments. Finally, not only the individual characteristics of company tutors and tutor-trainee interactions have been investigated, but also models of tutoring (Billet, 2009; Filliettaz, 2011) and studies on the learning environment or learning communities in companies (Fuller & Unwin, 1998).



Finally, it should be noted that in Spain, the growth of intermediate and tertiary VET in recent decades has been significant. Even so, Spain still has lower rates of VET than the rest of Europe (Echeverría Samanes & Martínez Clares, 2019; López Rouco, 2018).

Research in the tourism has highlighted the internal heterogeneity of the sector, the relative importance of small businesses, the frequent fluctuations in demand throughout the year but also during a week or a day in some sub-sectors (Baum, 2015; Ladkin, 2006; 2011; Lucas, 2004). This gives rise to different jobs, qualifications and employee profiles. Many of these jobs have long working hours and unbalanced work rhythms (Lillo-Bañuls & Casado-Díaz, 2011; Lucas, 2004; Park et al., 2016).

Moreover, it should be stressed that working with clients includes tangible and intangible elements (technical, emotional and aesthetic dimensions). Indeed, in tourism many important skills involve soft and non-formal competences (Korczynski, 2005; Veijola, 2009). All these components affect human resources policies (Marco-Lajara & Úbeda-García, 2013; Lucas, 2004), which must combine the presence of formal qualifications and on-the-job learning (Marhuenda et al., 2004). Thus, some authors have rethought the definitions of employment, qualification and competences for tourism and other service activities (Korczynski, 2005).

This varied presence of skills leads to problems in linking the skills offered by the education system to those demanded by the tourism sector, resulting in a certain historical mutual indifference between the two spheres (Marhuenda et al., 2004; Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring, 2005; Viktorovna & Avtandilovna, 2014; Vogelsang et al., 2021).

As can be seen, we have presented some of the most relevant discussions to define our approach. First of all, we agree with the idea that VET is an educational field subject to tensions and contradictory dynamics (Carabaña, 2011; Martínez García, 2016). In general, we consider the complexity to organise the collective construction of competences, as it involves different actors; specially in Spanish context, with a strong "academic" tradition of learning. On the other hand, the precarious balance between specific and general skills is essential, since in the tourism sector the experience acquired in the position is traditionally significant.

So, focusing on the working conditions of company tutors and on the learning process in the company, this paper aims to study the particular implementation of VET in the tourism sector, in Spain. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To analyse the interrelationships between the educational centre and the tourism company.
2. To study the figure of the company tutor.
3. To analyse the contents and methodology of training.
4. To study the evaluation process followed by the company tutor.

The initial assumptions are as follows:

1. The educational centre leads the training process, while the company's behaviour is reactive.
2. Regarding the characteristics of company tutors, heterogeneity and informality are predominant.
3. The contents, methodology and assessment system are conditioned by the characteristics of the tourism sector, specially their heterogeneity, the employee profiles, the work rhythms and the skills required.
4. The methodology and the evaluation system used by the company tutor are informal, diverse and changing.

### **3 Methodology**

The methodology is triangular, although mainly qualitative. The methodological reference for field work is the usage of comparative case studies, following the proposal of Bartlett and Vavrus (2017). These authors suggest three axes to establish this comparison: The horizontal, the vertical and the transversal. The horizontal helps us to compare similar policies in disparate locations that are socially produced. The vertical invites us to pay attention to different scales and through them. Finally, the transversal suggests us to historically situate the processes or relationships under study.

After carrying out a study of current legislation and secondary data, considering the Spanish context and VET literature, the school centre has been selected as the basic unit of analysis, the contact point to reach companies and tutors. The criteria to choose a school centre has been the provision of VET (dual or not) in the tourism sector. So, the selection of the sample has been based on the educational centres that provide professional training in tourism: from this unit of analysis (case) the relevant actors have been interviewed: Teachers, students, company tutors and company managers. In particular, for the selection of tutors, the size and type of company (hotel, restaurant, others) have been considered.

The fieldwork took place between 2020 and 2021; 11 educational centres have been studied: Six in Andalucía and five in Canary Islands, five of them providing non dual VET and six providing dual VET. 40 in-depth interviews were carried out: The interviewees were teachers/head teachers (21), students (8), company tutors/employers (7), managers/experts (4).

The interview scripts covered the following dimensions: history of the centre; steps of VET implementation; profile, motivations and selection of participant students; particularities of

training in hospitality and tourism; characteristics of companies involved; mechanisms for contacting companies; relations and coordination between school centre and company tutor; characteristics of the company tutor; teaching and evaluation of the company tutor.

After a thorough reading of all the interviews, we proceeded to select those sections mainly related to the following categories:

- The characteristics of company tutors.
- The delivery of the training and assessments.
- The characteristics of the business sector and company-centre relations that affect the two previous dimensions.

The information has been organised by category, also considering the point of view of the informant (teacher, student, company tutor, expert). A specific file for relevant verbatim citations has been created. The analysis of narrative information has been carried out following the dimensions presented in the theoretical framework with the addition of specific references and contributions related to findings.

## 4 Results

The results are presented according to the four specific objectives proposed: The interrelations between the educational centre and company, the figure of the company tutor, the contents and methodology of training and the evaluation process.

### 4.1 The Interrelations Between the Educational Centre and Tourism Company

The educational centres lead the training process in both conventional VET and dual VET. They organise the teaching, make the contacts with companies, select the students for each of them and monitor their progress. Although VET places the company in a more central position in the training-learning process, leadership is exercised by the education system. The initiative comes from regional Ministries of Education and progressively, since the publication of Royal Decree RD 1529/2012, they have been encouraging educational centres to set up VET projects with information days and courses. First, there is in an experimental phase, then more systematically through the presentation of projects based on explicit requirements. One of these requirements is to already have conventional VET courses. This will sometimes lead to groups where conventional and dual VET students coexist. Other authors have also highlighted this situation (Euler, 2013; Flisi, 2020; Marhuenda et al., 2016;

Marhuenda-Fluixá et al., 2019; Pozo-Llorente et al., 2020). The implementation of VET is based on conventional vocational training, where the point of contact between the centre and company is through Workplace Training (WT).

The implementation of the dual VET, still under the auspices of the regional education departments, is led by enthusiastic teachers, who look for companies and then organise the distribution of content and learning outcomes between the latter and the school.

In the implementation stage of VET, the commitment of the teaching staff has been the mainstay of the (experimental) operation of the system in the tourism sector in Andalusia and the Canary Islands. In this case, leadership based on the voluntarism of the centre's management teams or even on the individual initiatives of teaching staff creates notable differences between centres. In the relationship between educational centre and company, what is clear is that the basic connections are always activated from the centre, a result that is in line with teachers' opinions on dual VET, which are always worse regarding the involvement of the administration and with respect to attracting companies (Pineda-Herrero et al., 2019).

*"Forty companies are told exactly the same thing. There is not even a standardised dossier to take to companies. We have to make our own publicity dossiers as if we were a private company looking for... in short. I don't think that they should start something as important as a dual education system, because I have my point of view and I'm going to put my point of view in the company's documentation and how I consider dual education to be, which may not be the best. My point of view does not necessarily have to be the right one. And maybe a colleague in Seville has a totally different point of view, who is promoting the same Dual system." (Interview 13, p. 12, Teacher - VET Coordinator)*

Previous experience with VET is vital to start up dual education, both in a positive and negative sense. The existence of a good network of contacts in the business world is a necessary condition for enthusiastic teachers to promote VET projects. The years of organising work experience placements (WT) have consolidated relations between educational centres and companies, creating shared knowledge of the characteristics and *modus operandi* of each actor. In this sense, good or bad experiences in WT clearly influence the decisions of the centre, promoter (or not) on dual VET projects.

*"We think that dual VET is indeed the future, but in the field of hospitality and tourism, we have or consider that there are few companies that are capable of training our students throughout the school year. It is a very special sector." (Interview 11, p. 2, School Director)*

The positive or negative experiences in WT also show that relations between educational centres and the business context often exist and have both strengths and weaknesses. The characteristics of the business world emerge as one of the reasons for not implementing dual VET. This explanation refers to the complicated experience of WT in relation to the type of company in the region that can receive students. According to this interpretation, the

difficulties encountered in organising WT are due precisely to the business context, which is fragmented into different small companies. In addition, the influence of certain structural characteristics of tourism and hospitality companies, such as working hours, holiday shifts and seasonality (in Andalusia), make it difficult for apprentices to find work. This tends to put a brake on dual vocational education training projects.

In almost all the centres studied, the unit of collaboration is always the company, i.e., there is no other structured level that coordinates the agreements, such as a Chamber of Commerce or business associations in the sector. This atomisation of collaboration adds heterogeneity to the training experiences. This is one of the most evident results of dual VET in the tourism sector in the regions studied: The absence of an intermediate level of coordination between the public actor and the educational centres, as well as the scant role played by collective actors (chambers of commerce, business or trade union federations). Only in one school is there an incipient collaboration with the local Chamber of Commerce in order to establish connections with tourist companies.

If, on the one hand, the prevalence of the societal effect explained by Martín Artiles et al. (2019) is confirmed, on the other hand, it is worth questioning the specific weight of the structural characteristics of the tourism sector, added to the general lack of dialogue between social agents (Sanz de Miguel, 2107), which distances Spain from the German corporatist model. When considering the relationship between training and tourism, in addition to the historical indifference based on the mismatch between the demand for and supply of skills already pointed out (Marhuenda et al, 2004; Strietska-Ilina & Tessaring, 2005; Viktorovna & Avtandilovna, 2014), we should add at least two dimensions that emerge as difficulties in the implementation of VET in this sector: Organisational (evidenced by the model of relations between educational centres and companies described) and pedagogical-work-related (which will be dealt with in the following sections).

## 4.2 The Company Tutor

The complexity of the figure of the company tutor, a central actor in dual vocational education and training, leads us to investigate the profile of the person in charge of training students. The first relevant result is, once again, heterogeneity. The diversity of tutor profiles is added to the diverse models of collective tutoring (Filliettaz, 2011) as well as to secondary trainers: Employees who intervene in the training, without having the formal recognition of tutor (Leidner, 2003)

When considering tutors' profiles, there are notable differences according to the size of the company. In large chains of companies, tutoring is carried out by the training department. However, most companies that accept students (both in WT and dual VET) are medium-

sized or small. In this case, the tutor in the company is usually the person in charge of the department that takes on the students, for example the kitchen manager.

*"It's not the same for a student to go to a hotel where there will be a trained chef, a purchasing department and so on, and then go to a mediocre restaurant and the chef is so overworked, so understaffed that he/she can't dedicate time to it. So that's the biggest problem I see." (Interview 23, p. 3, Entrepreneur)*

The heterogeneity of the tourism sector is not only related to the diversity of occupations and positions but also to the differences between large companies and family businesses, which offer similar services but operate with very unequal structures, organisation and dynamics. It is therefore important to consider the business context in which the company tutor is located. Companies participating in dual VET must be convincing in terms of their involvement and commitment to training, and this gives rise to complex and contradictory discourses about their role in training. Company size is key to understanding how this role is performed, whether there is the possibility of using a work team as a collective tutor, or the presence of standardised procedures, specific training departments or trainee rotation plans.

Within the variety of tutor characteristics, a common point can be detected: informality. There is no formal standardised recognition or set requirements to be the person in charge of training in a company. In general, the interviewees spoke of their tutors' commitment to the work or their vocation for training. This is a recurrent issue in many interviews and for all actors (teachers, students and tutors). The lack of specific and regulated training for tutors is highlighted as one of the main obstacles to the teaching-learning process in the company, and there is a call for a broader training plan for companies participating in VET. Moreover, the temporary nature and high turnover of staff in tourism companies can be considered a handicap in terms of training or potential investment in the training of tutors by companies. Although a more incisive intervention of the public administration is called for, only in one case is the active role of a Chamber of Commerce in the training of tutors identified.

*"I think that there are times, not in my case, but in those of other companies, that the chefs and the people who are inside are not trained and are not sufficiently trained to be able to train a student. There are people who, yes, it is true that everyone knows that the hotel and catering business has always been a passing profession, i.e., I don't have a job, I don't have one, so I go into the hotel and catering business, or I go into construction much earlier. And in the end, there are people who have been trained, let's say, in that restaurant, they know what the restaurant is, yet I don't think they can train anyone else." (Interview 23, p. 3, Entrepreneur)*

### 4.3 Training Content and Methodology

Experiences have been uneven when analysing how training is delivered. The action of the tutors is very different depending on the case, and it ranges from the simple provision of prior basic information to carrying out tasks to a more individualised dedication with continuous accompaniment of the trainee. This diversity opens the door to varied solutions that we can analyse through the categorisation proposed by Filliettaz (2011). Thus, depending on the cases, we find examples of spontaneous, required, denied and distributed tutoring.

Additionally, there is a lack of formal planning of students' work and learning. In very few cases, reference is made to a training programme, either in WT or VET experiences. This lack of planning cannot be explained by the novelty of the process, since the training plan is one of the elements present from the beginning in workplace training (see, for example, the document *Manual de Formación en Centros de Trabajo del Consejo Superior de Cámaras*, 2000). Through this informal (spontaneous) mentoring, the encounter between the trainee or apprentice and the typical work process in the hospitality industry becomes specific.

In fact, time is probably the most salient element, in the words of the tutors providing the training. Often, teaching trainees (both in WT and dual VET) is incompatible with other tasks to be carried out in the company. The pressure of workloads, especially in small companies, where there are no training departments, prevents them from devoting the necessary time to training. The concerns of tutors are evident; they come to consider explanations to learners, the meetings with the centre and the documentation to be filled in and submitted as wastes of time. This "lost" time is sometimes compensated by the help that the trainees provide in the productive process; because of their ambivalent condition they are in training, but also part of the workforce.

*"It's true that of course we waste time explaining things to the trainees in practice, but it's also true that in the end they are a help." (Interview 4, p. 1, Company tutor)*

*"They do try to help us. What happens is that with all the work we have, it's impossible. Since a colleague at work says 'Look, we're going to explain such and such, come here for a moment and I'll explain it to you'. They don't have time and they try, but it's very vague." (Interview 2, p. 9, Student)*

*"Anyone could tell you that having trainees is a waste of time and it's true. You have to fill in documentation about being a tutor for trainees... Because it's true that you must spend time depending on where the trainees come from, there are also tutors who come periodically, you have to meet with them for that, to tell them how they are going to follow up." (Interview 2, p. 4, Company tutor)*

Considering the low level of formalisation of learning processes, the solution to the contradiction inherent in the condition of being a trainee, i.e., learning and working, is "being part



of the team". Some basic notions open the way to insertion in the work unit with all that this may entail (minus the salary): Work rhythm, working hours, polyvalence. Only in a few cases is there a reasoned limitation of the apprentices' functions. Thus, on the one hand, tutoring distributed among the team creates the learning communities that Fuller and Unwin (1998) talk about, but on the other hand, it raises doubts about the real consequences of this attachment to the team in terms of the trainee's rights and duties and his or her contribution to the creation of value in the work process.

Another point that emerged from the stakeholder interviews concerns the polyvalence of trainees. Their rotation between departments, and the variety of tasks they have to perform is one of the issues present since the implementation of the WT, practically in all sectors. In the tourism sector, the diversity of the jobs and the scarce formalisation of the required competences open a range of possibilities on the contents taught in companies. More generally, this situation can be dealt with by inserting it into the debate on the preferences and priority of generic or specific competences in vocational education training, as presented in the theoretical framework of this paper. Schematically, in the actors' discourse, the points of view and interests are different and there is a tension:

- the demands of the education centres, which insist on the rotation of students in several departments.
- the ultra-specific nature of some experiences.
- the general interest of companies in filling vacancies in the workforce.

In terms of incidents or bad practices (tutoring required/denied) in the delivery of in-company training, we find non-compliance with the centre's training agreements (or plans, if they exist), little rotation between departments and single tasks that have no impact on a trainee's training. Excessive specialisation of the trainee in procedures, non-regulatory models and working styles of certain companies is another undesirable effect of workplace training experiences.

In addition, in the tourism sector, social and emotional competences are important (Korczynski, 2005; Veijola, 2009), so learning these must be added to the technical components of the training and linked to the (informal) pedagogical skills of company tutors. If soft skills are identified as indispensable abilities for future hospitality professionals, it is less clear who must teach these skills and whether the company tutor has sufficient didactic tools to train in this area. The heterogeneity of profiles and tutoring models is a factor that widens the inequalities in training experiences in companies.

Finally, the effects of training on the company itself and its employees are considered, a subject that has been little studied in the tourism sector. The most direct and obvious consequence is the possibility of having a partially trained (or in any case, immersed in a training process) workforce available to "help" the staff. In addition to this primary effect, the presence of trainees in the company can have a positive impact on employee motivation. Moreover, collaboration with education centres can offer companies marketing opportunities. On the other hand, the dual status of trainee and employee and the low formal recognition of the tutor's "teaching" work can have negative effects on the workforce and is in general an element to be considered in the delicate balances of industrial relations.

#### 4.4 Assessment

Parallel to the semi-formal process of observed learning, assessment is based on informal and changing procedures. In this case, the collaboration between the company tutor and educational tutor is somewhat forced; the former is the one who must assess the actual learning through work, and the latter is the one who is formally in charge of supervising the assessment. Regarding assessment, there are several levels of communication between centre and company. All of them highlight the basic differences between educational and business systems: For example, it is impossible to directly transfer the semantic field of the academic world, articulated in learning outcomes and assessment criteria, to the business context.

Experimental solutions are varied and non-standardised. Some tutors talk of templates, others of worksheets, of assigning tasks, which are then supervised, sometimes accompanied by personal diaries and self-assessment. However, it is often the case that the learner carries out certain tasks alone; some tutors admit that the worst part is the monitoring of the learner's performance in the company.

However, far from having found a homogeneous solution, there is a clash between the formal procedures of the education system and the informal ones of the company, where learning is based on the repetitive execution of tasks. Taking a broader view, it makes sense to reflect on the contradiction, created in WT and reinforced by the implementation of dual VET, between assessment within educational centres, which is increasingly standardised and evidence-based, quantifiable, metric and subject to parameters of supposed quality, and assessment outside, in the company, which is left to the informality of the process and to the specific criteria of the tutor. The question arises as to what extent this situation derives from previous management of the WT, also informal.

*"Unfortunately, we have not yet arrived at a well-done assessment. We are patching it up as best we can, on the understanding that we don't do a final exam and the student has a hard time with a lot of things, or the teacher ends up calling the company tutor and says look at what the student has done and how he/she has done it. We rely a lot on what the students put in their personal*

*diaries. But to go from there to putting down on paper what learning outcomes the student has achieved, how he or she has achieved them, what degree of achievement, what mark that learning outcome entails- that's let's say- is rather irregular. And we have tried ten different systems." (Interview 13, p. 12, Teacher - VET Coordinator)*

Interviewees from the VET implementation cases share concerns about assessment, as there are substantial differences in terms of hours, competences and expected learning outcomes. Educational centres with more experience in dual training have experimented with various alternative assessment systems, without finding a satisfactory result, yet.

## 5 Conclusions

In general terms, the initial assumptions put forward are confirmed. Firstly, regarding initial assumptions 1, the educational centre leads the process, taking the initiative yet without having the conditions of governance and negotiation typical of the Germanic countries from which these vocational education training systems originate. This leads it to rely on its own educational tradition to undertake this experiment. To a large extent, it can be seen that dual VET is based on individual initiatives for its development, never collective or institutional ones. The educational administration urges teachers, centres and departments to set up such systems, but the contacts and relations are between specific teachers and specific companies. At no time are chambers of commerce, business federations or specific administrative bodies involved. The unit of collaboration is always the company; there is no other structured level of coordination of agreements. The importance of small companies in the tourism sector accentuates the leading role of the educational centre and provides a better understanding of the organisational strengths that it must demonstrate.

Secondly, initial assumptions 2, the main characteristics of the company tutor are heterogeneity and informality. In terms of heterogeneity, the size of the company and the diversity within the tourism sector leads to different situations, ranging from those in which the company tutor is linked to the training department of a hotel chain to others in which a head of department is appointed as such. In terms of informality, the absence of formal accreditation in this group is a common feature.

Thirdly concerning initial assumptions 3, it is confirmed that the contents and methodology are conditioned by the characteristics of the tourism sector. The strategies used by company tutors are informal and diverse. Uneven experiences have been found when analysing how training is delivered, as examples of spontaneous and distributed tutoring are observed above all, and to a lesser extent, required and denied tutoring. In the case of spontaneous and distributed tutoring, it is always the urgency of the work process that triggers it. In this context, the tension between generic and specific competences emerges. It is the education system that pushes towards the former, while it is the company that partially orients towards

the latter. This in turn connects with a new tension, between conceptualising the trainee as a learner or as a student. The analysis of the interviews has shown that contents and methodology have been influenced mainly by the dimensions of heterogeneity of working conditions, employee profiles, work rhythms and skills required.

Finally, initial assumptions 4, in parallel to the above, assessment also follows informal and changing procedures, generating tensions between the educational centre and company.

These results give rise to some theoretical reflections. If we consider the education system as an institution based on the principle of equality, it is worth asking to what extent dual vocational education training can alter this principle, as the company adapts some of the contents and learning outcomes to its specific needs. This takes place by substituting generic contents by more specific ones. Depending on the company where the WT or dual VET takes place, different contents will be learned. Not all companies can provide all the contents, due to the specialisation of each one of them. The centres offer more generic and global training, but not the companies.

In addition, an important differentiating factor that marks the learning dynamics in both dual VET and WT has been detected: the size of the company. In general, large hotel chains are more prepared to take on trainees and may have specific internal training departments to support company tutors or directly take on trainees. By contrast, small and medium-sized companies operate in a less structured and more informal way. The difference in size may also influence the future prospects of trainees joining the workforce after completion of VET studies. As small companies seem to focus on the present benefit of "helping" trainees, while larger company chains link (not always) VET to possible long-term employment.

It can be concluded from the above that, at least in these initial phases of the implementation of dual VET in Spain, there is no 'induced effect' but rather a 'societal' one. Thus, VET is mainly implemented based on its own institutional traditions.

This research has some limitations that future empirical approaches can overcome. On the one hand, comparative analysis with training programmes in sectors other than tourism is needed, in order to know the relative importance and the influence of each activity area in the learning process. On the other hand, a quantitative approximation of the processes described is also necessary and complementary. Finally, given the last changes in dual VET regulation in Spain, a continuous monitoring of VET transformations must be carried out.

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## Ethics statement

The authors declare that they have implemented the ethical principles of IJRVT during all the research process. The participants in our research have given an informed consent about the aims, funding, overall purpose, methods, and implications of the research; as well as they obtained all the necessary details about their rights and privacy.

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## **Biographical Notes**

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