Globalisation, technological advances and the role of social actors in the enactment of skills policy through practice

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What?
examine the skills
challenges faced by
firms at the subnational
level and their response;

Why?
to understand the
systemic capacity
required to deliver an
agile and demand driven
skills policy objective

How?
Examines the dynamic between
multinationals (MNEs), national and
local government actors, and social
partners (e.g. employers skills bodies,
universities) in collaborative skills
enhancement activities.

Data – England and Asturias
Larger project - 261 interviews, 2 sub-
national regions in Ireland, Spain,
Canada, Germany and the UK.
Global changes are impacting on the nature of work and the skills required by individuals and businesses.

**Change**
- Technology driving cross-disciplinary skills hybridization
- globally networked talent pool

**Challenge**
- a skills vacuum as formal training lags behind R&D advances
- potential to enhance competition for available jobs; and how MNCs resource skill needs.
Skills Partnership Rhetoric

• The attraction of foreign investment to developed countries and the development of an agile and sustainable skills arena at the national level has led to calls by policy makers for partnerships between the beneficiaries of skills (OECD, 2011).

• Skills partnerships needed to:
  • elevate the burden of skill costs to governments;
  • stimulate a demand-led skills market; and
  • create delivery mechanisms that are flexible (content, mode and cost) to widen participation and thus improve the financial wealth and health of the individual and society.
Formal Architecture of the skills networks

English region –
Issue driven,
financial resources significant,
political interests – RDA change via skills,
policy career structures.

Asturias –
Entrepreneurial action
Universities strong partners
Public funds limited
Private sector social capital critical

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>English R1</th>
<th>Asturias</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Architecture:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Central brokers - SNA</td>
<td>Policy - regional development agency and multinationals</td>
<td>Policy – University, Employer Association, and Regional Development Agency</td>
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<td><strong>Overall Network Centrality</strong></td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination capacity</strong></td>
<td>low</td>
<td>Medium-high</td>
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Network maps

Asturias

English Region
Social Agenda

Policy actors pushing forward a public well-being agenda.

‘To my mind our job is to help [firms] position what they need and want, that draws down the maximum funding that they can, while getting the benefit for the individual as well...employers often don’t, they are not bothered about their employee moving on.....so you have to always balance those tensions’

RDA, Skills (English Region)
Industrial citizenship

Many of them, and particularly their sons, trained in prestigious universities abroad, started turning around the businesses of their parents and a new business class appeared. They are the ones that would create [the association] with other new businesses that had arrived to invest taking advantage of the plans of industrial reconversion, and they created a newly competitive industrial base, they created that new spirit in Asturias”.

(Director of the Regional Development Agency)
Implications

• The capability at the individual level of key actors to:
  • bridge boundaries between private and public interests
    • Technical/policy knowledge
    • Business knowledge
    • Networks to enable action

• Need a clearer understanding of what these bridging actors do.
• Need to consider the implications for recruitment strategies and roles for those within skills networks.
• Isomorphism in policy ideas; but divergent enactment strategies seem to remain.