

Ph.D. in Regional Institutions, Administration and Regional Policies (IAPR)

Doctoral thesis research project

Ph.D. student	Marco Zamboni (marco.zamboni2@tin.it)
Ph.D cycle	XXIV
Thesis title	The reform of the initial vocational education and training system (IVET) in Lombardy
Thesis advisor	Prof. Bruno Dente (Polytechnic of Milan, bdente@irsonline.it)
Research area	Public policy
Regional institution involved	D.G. Education, Training and Employment Regional Agency for Education, Training and Employment (ARIFL)
Area of investigation	<p>Vocational training is an area of regional competence, which recently has undergone an interesting change process. Over the last decade the Lombardy Region has introduced several innovations that have covered the areas of planning, organization and financing of the system. The experimental phase started in 2002 came to the end in 2007 with the approval of the Regional Law 19/2007 "<i>Regulations on the education and training system of the Lombardy Region</i>", which - among the other things - contains the following innovations in education and training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the building of a person-centered system, based on principles of freedom, subsidiarity and accountability;• the introduction of three-year vocational training courses for young pupils leaving the lower secondary education, suitable for fulfilling the right-duty to participate in education and vocational training;• the mechanism for accreditation of operators that provide vocational training courses and are funded with public resources;• the tool of 'Dote' Education & Training, a mix of financial resources and services assigned to the citizen through a targeted voucher system, which gives the individual a direct voice in choosing the services offered by accredited operators;• the certification of skills in accordance with European standards;• the monitoring and performance assessment of services provided through the action of the independent evaluator.
Research objectives	<p>The aim of the research project is to combine the theoretical perspective of public policy with the action of regional governing bodies. In particular the research intends to achieve the following objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Describe the policy dynamics and the process of change that occurred during the last 10 years, focusing on the actors, interactions, established

ideas, objectives, tools, strategies and implementation structures (how does this system work today, in comparison with 10 years ago?).

- 2) Explain why the policy has changed in a certain way, with particular intensity and timing (the change has been incremental or radical? There was a linear, or there were specific moments that have interrupted the continuity?). To analyze the type of change there will be considered causal mechanisms contained in the main theoretical frameworks on policy change, among which we can indicate:
 - a. the *three-order change model* (Hall);
 - b. the *path-dependency* approach (Pierson);
 - c. the *multiple stream approach* (Kingdon);
 - d. the *punctuated-equilibrium framework* (Baumgartner and Jones);
 - e. the *advocacy-coalition framework* (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith).

The application of these models will help to understand the variables affecting the policy change and to identify the theoretical approach that best explains the type of change occurred; doing so it will be possible to contribute to the debate in the literature about the relationship between structural/individual variables and internal/external factors in policy change.

- 3) Discuss the effects of major changes that have occurred in order to provide political-administrative decision makers with scientific knowledge in order to confirm or correct past decisions. As an example, consider the following research questions:
 - a. Has it been possible to change the mix of training courses? How and why?
 - b. Has there been an increase in the number of participants? Has there been a decrease in the number of dropouts?
 - c. Does the tool of 'Dote' change the policy-making (e.g. how to frame problem, the governance system, the dynamic between stakeholders, the operating logic...)?

Research methodology

In order to describe the process of policy change it is expected to do an analysis of official documents (laws, resolutions, acts of address ...) and some interviews with major policy actors (regional directors, provincial officials of vocational training, representatives of institutions training...). Instead, to analyze the effects of changes it is expected to do a quantitative analysis of user-data, to be conducted in collaboration with the regional department involved (i.e. D.G. and ARIFL).