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the challenges of policy transfer in vocational skills development

national qualifications frameworks
and the dual model of vocational training
in international cooperation

markus maurer &
philipp gonon (eds.)

peter lang

In the context of renewed global interest in the development of vocational skills, policy makers in many countries as well as representatives of technical organisations often hope to reform existing training systems by borrowing models and policies that seem to work elsewhere. One of these prominent models is that of 'National Qualifications Frameworks', the use of which now spans the entire globe. On a much smaller scale, the 'Dual Model' of vocational training – a systematic combination of school and workplace-based learning that is common in a number of countries in Western Europe – has also gained attention in international cooperation.

Bringing together contributions from authors involved in both the theory and practice of vocational skills training development, this volume analyses the challenges that are tied to the transfer of these two dominant models in the context of international cooperation, sheds light on how they are being implemented, and discusses alternatives to the standard approaches to policy transfer.

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philipp gonon & anja heikkinen



peter lang

bern · berlin · bruxelles · frankfurt am main · new york · oxford · wien

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Part One

*Reflecting on policy transfer in
vocational skills development*

MARKUS MAURER & PHILIPP GONON

The challenges of policy transfer in vocational skills development: An introduction¹

Recently, after some years in which *general education* was accorded the most importance in development policy and research, the role of *vocational education and training* (nowadays often referred to as “vocational skills development” in the literature) has been given a greater degree of importance. Parallel to this re-emerging interest in vocational skills is the widespread practice of transferring VSD policies and models to developing countries, particularly as part of development cooperation. It is the main objective of this book to analyse this practice of VSD model transfer, with a particular focus on two specific models: the *Dual Model of Vocational Training*, and *National Qualifications Frameworks*.

In order to provide a theoretical context to the book, we first, discuss key terms and relevant debates in comparative education, and make some brief notes on the history of policy transfer in vocational skills development. This is followed by an overview of all the chapters in the book.

1. The re-emergence of TVET and the role of policy transfer

The development of vocational and technical skills and competencies has clearly become more important in the international arena during the last couple of years. On the one hand, the economic crisis and its

1 The content of this volume was discussed at a conference on policy transfer in vocational skills development, held at the University of Zurich on 13 and 14 September 2012; many of the contributions herein are based on presentations held at this conference.

consequences for labour markets have forced governments to launch programmes that strengthen labour market-oriented skills, either among those leaving the education and training system, or among those affected by unemployment. On the other hand, skills development has become more important in international cooperation, a trend that is clearly documented in the rising number of global reports on vocational skills and their role in economic growth and social inclusion (King 2013). The latter is mainly a consequence of the fact that the international community's approach to development cooperation had focused strongly on promoting basic education since the 1990s, but has now become more concerned about the delicate transition process through which young, educated individuals are supposed to move into labour markets. In the context of this re-emerging interest in the development of vocational and technical skills, there has also been a shift in terminology, particularly in the world of international cooperation: whereas, previously, policy makers and experts alike talked about "Technical Vocational Education and Training" (TVET) or, depending on the context, on "Technical Vocational Education" (TVE), the current discourse centres more around "Vocational Skills Development" (VSD) (King & Palmer 2007). This term suggests that it is important to look at the entire range of education and training processes, be they formal, non-formal or informal, that lead to vocational skills. This notion stands in contrast, particularly, to TVE, a concept mainly focused on the formal provision of technical and vocational competencies and skills, i. e. on those programmes that lead to nationally recognised qualifications. VSD is, thus, supposed to be more open, particularly to what is often called the "skill needs" of the poor and of informal labour markets.

In today's highly globalised world it would be surprising if governments and their experts, whether operating in economically highly or less highly developed contexts, tried to resolve the challenges of technical and vocational education by developing context-specific solutions from scratch. Rather, they virtually always try – as in most other domains of public policy – not to "re-invent the wheel", and therefore look for models and best practices that have worked elsewhere. Similar to individuals who copy the behaviour of others in everyday life, organisations or political entities (e. g. nation states)

often propose changes or reforms that are built on models developed by other organisations or political entities. Policy transfer today is, thus, a very common phenomenon in the world of education and skills development, and certainly not a new one: during the late 19th century, for instance, when competition between the industrialising states in Europe was moving towards a dangerous climax, countries were eagerly observing not only each other's technological advances but also the innovations of others in the domain of education and training, with many such observations leading to reforms and political initiatives in the field of what later was to be termed TVET or VSD (Gonon 2009, 2011).

Today, policy transfer in TVET is particularly being driven by international organisations, such as the Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) (whose suggestions are mainly directed to its mostly wealthy member states) or the International Labour Office (ILO) and the European Training Foundation (ETF), which are in the position to influence global discourse and implement a wide range of projects, also (though not exclusively) in developing and transition countries (European Training Foundation 2010; Field, Hoeckel, Kis & Kuczera 2009; ILO 2012). What is interesting, here, is that the World Bank, the world's most important donor in development cooperation and, from the 1960s until the 1980s, an important proponent and funder of TVET programmes, is largely absent from this discourse, mainly because its strategy still emphasises the crucial importance of key competencies in literacy, numeracy, science and technology (Collins & Wiseman 2012; World Bank 2010, 2011).

As we are of the view that policy transfer can only be analysed by focusing on specific models that are subject to transfer, as well as by re-examining the concept itself, the book consists mostly of chapters dedicated to national qualifications frameworks and to the dual model of vocational education and training. These two models are particularly relevant for their own specific reasons: the first has undergone a tremendous world-wide diffusion; whilst the second is perceived by many governments to be an important means to more actively involve the world of work in skills development.

2. Policy transfer and diffusion in the comparative education literature

Policy transfer is, as we have noted above, a very common phenomenon in the fields of TVET or VSD respectively. In line with Dolowitz and Marsh (1996, p. 344), we look at it as “a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions etc. in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place”. The focus here, then, is on knowledge of two concepts or models, both of which have originated in a particular set of countries and are then being used in other countries.

In comparative education, reflections on policy transfer, i. e. on the extent to which policies and models from specific contexts can be used in other contexts, have a long tradition (Schriewer, 2000). However, some of the more recent body of comparative education literature on policy transfer has been clearly inspired by the neo-institutionalist perspectives that analyse the global expansion of formal schooling as a diffusion process (Meyer & Ramirez 2009; Meyer, Ramirez & Nuhoglu Soysal 1992). Neo-institutionalist studies, like other analyses of policy diffusion processes, are mainly concerned with the paths of these processes and aim at explaining variations in terms of scope and speed among different diffusion processes (Lütz 2007, p. 133). In contrast to this approach, analyses of educational transfer focus on the process of transfer itself, which is considered to be driven by countries or individual actors who have very specific motives to engage in borrowing and lending of policy models. Steiner-Khamsi (2003), for instance, argues that, on the one hand, borrowing policies or models from other contexts can be a strategy for policy makers to legitimise potentially contested educational reforms, whilst on the other hand, lending countries benefit from educational policy transfer through increased international as well as domestic legitimacy of their own education and training policies and models.²

2 See also the important contributions by Phillips and Ochs (Phillips & Ochs 2003, 2004) on policy borrowing.

A further focus of debates in comparative education is on the fact that straightforward transfer of policies and models as such is generally not possible, mainly as implementation contexts differ in terms of political organisation, culture, economy and many other domains from those contexts where the “original models” have evolved. Thus, transfer processes often result in hybrid or indigenised education and training models that may only partly resemble the originals, and whose social consequences may strongly differ from the ones that policy makers originally had in mind (Schriewer 2000, 2012). This argument is particularly important for the transfer of models in the field of TVET, as the different ways in which vocational skills and competencies are acquired in specific geographical contexts are strongly interrelated, not only with the education and training systems, but also with the structure of labour markets and with the formal and informal regulations that underlie the functioning of these markets.

Considering such aspects of policy implementation, some contributors to comparative political and educational science have also pointed to processes of policy design and implementation that feature characteristics of learning processes (Fleckenstein 2011; Jakobi 2012; King 2012; McGrath & Lugg 2012; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993; Solow 1997; Zito & Schout 2009). In such cases of policy learning, decision makers, in the process of crafting policies or regulations for different domains of society, see the need for adapting foreign models to local contexts and are conscious not only of factors that could influence the implementation process but also of the success factors that supported the development of the model in the original context. Furthermore, processes of policy learning are characterised by flexible approaches to policy implementation. Such approaches include constant reflections on how to improve the match between policies and local contexts, be it in reaction to implementation difficulties, or to signs that the original policy design may not lead to the intended results. For development cooperation, approaches that value the role of policy are particularly relevant, as, far too often, local actors who are familiar with the respective context are not the key drivers of policy design and implementation – a fact that clearly hinders local ownership of development efforts.

3. Development of a global toolkit for vocational skills development

Undoubtedly, one of the key lessons of the comparative education literature on policy transfer is that the structures of today's education systems the world over have, since the beginning of their expansion, been strongly affected by policy borrowing (Meyer & Ramirez 2009; Schriewer & Martinez 2004). Though many authors argue that TVET systems, particularly in Western Europe, are very country-specific, the structure of many of these systems today has been shaped by models that were developed in other geographical contexts. The development of Swiss vocational education and training in the late 19th century, for instance, was strongly influenced by developments not only in Germany but also in France, which strengthened more school-based forms of vocational education (Gonon 2011).

While in European and other traditionally economically highly developed countries the implementation of other countries' models in the field of vocational education and training has mainly been promoted by local actors, many other countries have experienced a more dominant role of external stakeholders. This is true for some countries that, today, are lauded for their VSD systems, e. g. South Korea and Singapore. In the early decades after World War II, these countries developed their VSD systems under the aegis of Western governments that politically dominated them (Ashton, Green, James & Sung 1999). Today, however, South Korea is a strong promoter of school-based forms of vocational education and training in Asian developing countries (Park 2012), whereas the Singaporean skills development fund has become a reference model for the involvement of the private sector in financing of training (Kuruvillea, Erikson & Hwang, 2002).

Clearly different is the situation of those developing countries in which development cooperation is still strongly involved in expanding and improving education and training; where current TVET systems have been mainly established on the basis of structures that were established during the colonial era, e. g. by the British or the

French. In many parts of South Asia, for instance, the British established technical training centres catering to specific industries or to public works departments or allowed missionaries to establish vocational training centres for the poor. This strategy clearly reflected the British approach to vocational education and training at home (Deisinger 1992; Green 1995). As the colonisers, however, generally did not put much emphasis on expanding TVET, such structures and programmes were mainly developed after political independence, and were often crafted along the lines of the established systems in the homelands of their former colonisers. In countries of former French West Africa, for instance, programmes of technical education were copied from France, including curricula and denominations of certificates (Kaboré, Kobiané, Pilon, Sanou & Sanou 2001).

Today, with most developing countries having established structures and programmes to develop vocational skills among students and the labour force, the question is not about building TVET systems from scratch. But as the challenges of VSD systems are, at least on the surface, comparable across countries, policy makers and experts alike have started to refer to models and policy approaches that promise to serve as remedies for these difficulties. McGrath (2012), for instance, argues that the new emergence of VSD at the global level has led to the adoption of a global toolkit which spreads across the globe. Such tools are available for virtually any aspect of VSD systems, be it for curriculum development, financing and governance of TVET, approaches to instruction and learning, or teacher and instructor training, just to name a few.

As in other domains of public policy, many tools are widely discussed and implemented only during a limited number of years and then disappear again. One such early element of the emerging global toolkit for VSD was (until the late 1970s) that of manpower planning and forecasting, which was supposed to link the development of human resources in specific economic sectors to the anticipated growth in these sectors (Edwards 1983; Psacharopoulos 1991). Today, only a few governments make explicit reference to this tool, but the approach still influences planning of TVET in many countries, particularly those that rely on school-based forms of training (see e.g. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission 2006).

The key challenge of the global toolkit for VSD is that many of its elements are resistant to straightforward transfer, as they require a number of preconditions that are often absent in the contexts to which these models are being transferred. For this reason, the effects produced by using elements of the toolkit are often not in line with political aspirations. It would, therefore, be important, particularly in development cooperation, to focus more strongly on policy learning that also includes critical reflection on the limited transferability of policy models in VSD (e. g. Chakroun 2010; Nielsen 2010).

4. The politics of transferring policy models in VSD

Any analysis of policy transfer in VSD must be based on an understanding of why the different actors get involved in borrowing and lending policies and models. In many ways, the causes here are the same as the ones in economically more developed countries: when, for whatever reasons, reforms in the field of VSD become a priority of education and training policies, something needs to be done, and often quite quickly. The focus of policy making is then on key challenges of VSD systems, namely, on problems related to the transition of young people into the labour market, the lack of relevance of their skills to employers, and also the heterogeneity of VSD systems, in which often a large number of uncoordinated training providers offer even less coordinated skill development programmes. As many other countries are facing similar challenges and are launching reforms to cope with them, it is obvious to policy makers that they need to look for solutions that seem to have worked elsewhere. This strategy is particularly relevant for countries with highly centralised TVET systems that leave little room for autonomous developments that could be scaled up.

However, in developing countries with access to funds from multi- and bilateral aid, the dynamics of development cooperation play a key role in the transfer process, too. All development agencies (be they development banks or bilateral donors) have their own aid priorities that make funds available for specific policy areas. Thus,

just to take an example, though Bangladesh and Sri Lanka decided to strengthen vocational education and training in the mid-1990s, there were virtually no funds available to implement this strategy, and the reforms initiated were criticised by observing donor agencies. A decade later, with donor interest in VSD on the rise again, funds were available, and were, unsurprisingly, used for reforms in line with these donors' policy strategies (Maurer 2012b).

Particularly in the case of bilateral donors with funds originating from one single country, policy priorities in VSD can reflect the VSD models of those donor countries. This was the case with the vocational education and training projects funded by Germany for several decades, based mainly on the German dual model (Greinert, Heitmann, Stockmann & Vest 1997; Stockmann & Silvestrini 2013). Such a strategy is certainly based on ideological motives, i. e. on the conviction that a model that is considered successful in the lending country and represents some of its central values will also help to improve VSD systems in other countries. However, as is the case with Germany and Switzerland today, there is also the political ambition to export a model in order to reduce pressure from within the country and from abroad to adapt the model to other policy models (Maurer 2012a; Maurer & Gonon 2013; Niediek 2013). Another, quite pragmatic motive for donors to export a model from their country of origin is a more economic one – their domestic service providers, as experts in VSD design and implementation (mainly consultants), will be placed in an advantageous position vis-à-vis service providers of the recipient country, which are not similarly familiar with the policy model (Gibson, Andersson, Ostrom & Shivakumar, 2005).

Some donors, however, operate in a similar manner to recipient countries; when faced with the challenges of VSD implementation in their partner developing countries, their experts also resort to looking around the globe for promising policy models that could help to resolve these challenges. This is particularly the case with multi-lateral donors, e. g. with the Asian Development Bank, which was in need of thematic priorities for vocational education and training after it had decided to provide increasing funds to this field of policy, and then started, at first only sceptically, to promote national quali-

fications frameworks. This is in contrast to the World Bank, which is still reluctant to support NQFs development for lack of evidence of their impact (see e. g. Asian Development Bank 2004).

5. The two models at the core of this book

The models at the core of this book – national qualifications frameworks and the dual model of vocational skills development – have both been subject to international transfer, particularly (though not only) in the context of development cooperation. However, the models differ in a number of important aspects, which shall briefly be discussed here:

Firstly, they differ in terms of their conceptual clarity: most would probably agree that qualifications frameworks define a hierarchical sequence of skill levels on the basis of which existing VSD programmes can be classified. The way such frameworks are implemented may strongly differ between countries, but at the national level, qualifications frameworks, even of countries with very different TVET systems, often look surprisingly similar. When it comes to the dual model of vocational skills development, however, there is less common ground: while (particularly German) development aid for many years focused on establishing dual systems at a national level, many of today's programmes are much less ambitious and mainly aim at ensuring that a part of training is imparted in the workplace, making it unclear whether classical school-based vocational education combined with an internship prior to certification is also a dual mode of training (Maurer 2011).

Secondly, the models differ in terms of their global outreach: national qualifications frameworks, despite their relatively recent origins, have reached the majority of countries in the world (Allais 2010). It is clearly possible to trace a global diffusion process, the pace of which even increased once a critical mass of countries had adopted the concept (Chisholm 2007; Lütz 2007, p. 134). In the case of the dual model, diffusion at such a large scale is lacking. TVET systems where workplace-based practical training is systematically

combined with school-based theoretical learning can mainly be found in Germany and in a number of its neighbouring countries (Greinert 2005). It is therefore these countries (Germany and particularly Switzerland and Austria) that advocate dual forms of training in vocational skills development in a number of their partner countries (see e.g. iMove 2013; State Secretariat for Education 2013).

Thirdly, the two models differ in terms of the scope that respective reforms are likely to have: National qualifications frameworks are designed to cover entire TVET systems and provide incentives to re-arrange existing or create new VSD programmes. These super-macro curriculum reforms (see Maurer's contribution in this volume) thus have the potential to affect not only instruction and testing, but also investments in infrastructure and equipment, training of trainers as well as issues of governance and financing of TVET. In contrast, the implementation of dual forms of VSD often follows a more experimental mode, starting at a local level with a focus on specific trades. If these experiments are considered to be successful, they are expanded to other parts of systems.

Fourthly, the models differ in terms of their modes of transfer. As already mentioned above, national qualifications have spread very rapidly across the globe during the last two decades, making it difficult to clearly distinguish lenders and borrowers. An important role is certainly being played by multilateral (e.g. Asian Development Bank) and bilateral donors (e.g. the European Union) that have backed the development of NQFs in a number of countries.³ Additionally, this very fact of large-scale global diffusion of the NQF model increased pressure on those countries that had not yet adopted it. In contrast, the dual model of VSD has mainly been promoted by a small number of lending countries that underline the value-added of an approach that is considered to be very effective for their own TVET systems. As the recent experience of Germany and Switzerland shows, there is interest from many countries (including economically

3 See e.g. the comprehensive projects by the ADB and the European Union in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh respectively (Asian Development Bank 2008; Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh, 2006).

highly developed ones) to implement dual forms of VSD (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung 2013; Schneeberger 2013). However, the implementation of such forms always depends on the willingness of employers to get formally involved in training. As this willingness is often absent (e. g. because TVET has been dominated by school-based forms of training), it is a very complex and often protracted endeavour to develop dual forms of training on a large scale.

6. Aim and overview of the book

The present volume reflects the broad range of perspectives related to the policy transfer and diffusion issue in the field of VSD. The contributions thus shed light on different aspects of the process and the results of implementation, based on the dual model projects and programmes and the national qualifications frameworks in different parts of the world, with a focus on developing and transition countries. Many of the articles reflect aspects of planning and implementation; others take a more evaluative perspective.

The book is structured in two main parts – the first is dedicated to NQF; the second to the dual model. These two parts are preceded by two articles that, like this introduction, delve into the theme of policy transfer from a general perspective. In his contribution, *Kenneth King* (University of Edinburgh) points to the complexities of skills development and its interrelatedness with different cultural and economic aspects of societies, and to the fundamental challenges for policy transfer that have always resulted from such complexities. He makes references to colonial attempts at policy transfer in VSD, and the World Bank's strategy to promote diversified secondary education, and then also sheds light on the difficulties of transferring the models and concepts at the core of this book, i. e. qualifications frameworks and the dual model of VSD. *Michel Carton* (Graduate Institute, Geneva) then analyses the ways in which research could play a more prominent role in VSD, particularly in view of the lack of evidence of the impact of policy transfer at the level of implementation.

The part of the book dedicated to qualifications frameworks starts with a contribution by *Stephanie Allais* (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg), who compares the impact of qualifications frameworks with the objectives for which they are often developed, based on evidence from the author's research on the implementation of such frameworks (some of which had been published by the International Labour Organization (ILO)). *Madhu Singh* (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg) then looks at NQF from the perspective of an international governmental organisation that has been strongly promoting educational equality and access to education for many decades. She argues that, although there are challenges in the implementation of NQF in many countries, qualifications frameworks are an important means to promote the status of VSD as well as upwards social mobility through education and training systems. *Poorna Adhikary* (Institute for Conflict Management, Peace and Development, Kathmandu) then shows in his article on Nepal, how VSD is considered to be one of the most important means to increase political stability in a country that has been affected by a protracted civil war. He also argues that a qualifications framework has an important role to play in the entire reform of Nepal's education and training system. In his article, *Markus Maurer* (Zurich University of Teacher Education) discusses the reasons why NQFs have diffused so rapidly over the entire globe within a very short period of time. He argues that the considerable scope of these frameworks makes them attractive potential means to resolve key challenges of education and training systems in developing and transition countries. Looking at the example of Sri Lanka, he then shows that meeting the high expectations of policy makers of NQFs can be difficult. A much more fundamental critique of the NQF development is offered by *Salim Akojee* (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg), who analyses the NQF design and implementation process in South Africa, an example that has gotten a lot of attention as post-Apartheid governments have all strongly promoted VSD in order to create a more equal society. The author argues that precisely because of these very high policy expectations, the design of the framework could never be adequately adjusted to challenges that came up during implementation. In her article, *Rashmi Agrawal* (Institute of Applied

Manpower Research, New Delhi) provides us with an overview of the Indian government's approach to VSD. What is particularly noteworthy in her contribution is the fact that India seems to be comparatively cautious with implementing a NQF, while at the same time having a clear vision for necessary reforms to the training and certification system in India. This part of the book then closes with an article by *Matthias Jäger* (Swisscontact, Albania), who provides us with an overview of recent VSD developments in Albania that also includes an analysis of the role of the Albanian qualifications frameworks. Again, the stark contrast between intended objectives and the impact at the level of implementation is portrayed as a key challenge.

The next part of the book, dedicated to the transfer of the dual model of VSD, starts with a contribution by *Philipp Gonon* (University of Zurich), in which he analyses the underlying reasons why the dual model emerged in a few countries, and theorises about the prospects of exporting the model to other countries. *Reinhard Stockmann* (University of Saarbrücken) then provides an analysis of the German approach to exporting the dual model in the context of development cooperation. Based on results from two sector evaluations (one from the 1990s and one from 2011), he argues that transfer, though it is a challenging venture, is certainly possible, but that its success is always linked to a number of factors. One finding that comes out very clearly is that implementation needs to be sufficiently flexible to react to difficulties resulting from the original design. The need to be flexible enough to adapt the model to local realities is also emphasised in the article by *Rudolf Batliner* (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich), who provides evidence from projects in Nicaragua, the Philippines, Bolivia und Burkina Faso. In particular, he argues that projects with a focus on promoting apprenticeship training need to reflect aspects of economic competition between firms and workshops that are supposed to invest in skills of future participants in the production market. With a focus on very recent developments in Egypt, *Stefan Wolf* (Technical University, Berlin) then looks at German support to strengthening the country's VSD system. Against the backdrop of a comparative analysis of two different approaches to curriculum development in vocational education and training, he comes to the conclusion that a strong involvement

of representatives from the private sector in curriculum development is a core element of successful apprenticeship projects with dual elements. This part of the book then concludes with a contribution by *Siroco Messerli* (cooperation office of the Swiss Development Cooperation, Dhaka) who provides rich insights into the implementation of an Employment Fund in Nepal. Though the focus of this article is not on the dual model, we found that its careful analysis of the transfer of a financing model made it particularly pertinent to this book – especially its emphasis of the need to strongly reflect local context conditions in the process of implementation.

The volume concludes with an epilogue by *Christopher Winch* (King's College, London). Bringing both parts of the book together, Winch argues that the two policy models discussed in this book are, in fact, more compatible with each other than is often emphasised (particularly by the proponents of the dual model approach). In a world where policy transfer seems to be more of a rule than an exception, this, to us as editors, seems to be a very realistic analysis of current trends in VSD.

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Skills, competencies, and knowledge in international translation and cooperation

Introduction

This book is about policy transfer and policy learning in international education and training. But it is worth noting at the outset of this short chapter that the focus is not just on institutional borrowings, but on the cultures, languages and meanings associated with the transfer. It is notable, for example, that of the 15 authors of chapters in this book, only two have English as their mother tongue. This is mentioned here because language and meaning are at the heart of our topic ‘Policy transfer’. This concept is not solely about the transfer of systems, but the transfer of ways of describing things – concepts and meanings. Thus, the key examples of dual systems derive from German-speaking countries: Austria, Germany and Switzerland; hence, the local meanings of the cultures of learning, training and of vocation in those countries would be critical to understand for any potential borrowers. The same would be true of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). But these have principally emerged from Anglophone settings in England, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia. Even the most basic building blocks of terms such as ‘skills’, ‘competence’ and ‘vocational education and training’ (VET) translate with difficulty in Europe, let alone further afield. This chapter will review some of these transfer challenges, including some reference to earlier examples.

1 A first draft of this chapter was presented at the Conference on *Policy transfer in vocational skills development revisited*, organised by the University of Zurich, 13–14 September 2012. See also King in Oelkers (2003) for a fuller discussion of the role of the World Bank in skills development.