

How perception affects participation: The case of Adult Learning and Continued Vocational Education and Training in Europe

Analysis for 30 countries in Europe based on Cedefop's second opinion survey

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Background

- As European populations are ageing, the expected labor force shortage and the sustainability of pension systems are widely discussed
- Extending working lives equally and inclusively has become a common goal of EU member states
- To extend working lives equally and inclusively, equal access to learning and training activities should be safeguarded

Why perceptions?

- Relationship between socioeconomic factors (e.g. age, gender, education, ...) and participation in adult learning have been detected in previous research
- However, socioeconomic factors usually cannot be influenced so easily
- The perceived importance of adult learning and continued vocational education and training (CVET) could be changed more easily and is also less researched

Aim of this study

- To investigate the relationship between the perceived importance of adult learning and CVET and actual participation in them
- Specifically, how the perceived importance of adult learning and CVET relates to participation in four different kinds of adult learning and CVET in Europe in the previous 12 months

Adult learning and CVET

- Adult learning and continued vocational education and training (CVET) is defined as:
 - “any learning activities undertaken by adults (whether employed or not) with the intention of improving knowledge or skills”(Cedefop, 2021)
- Participation in adult learning and CVET here refers only to activities after entry in the labour market (excludes formal education prior to entering the labour market)

Cedefop. (2021). *More perceptions, opinion survey on adult learning and continuing vocational education and training in Europe . Volume 2, Views of adults in Europe.*

Data

- Cedefop's (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) second opinion survey, which investigated people's perception of adult learning and CVET
- 40,466 telephone interviews with adults aged 25 and over living in the European Union, Iceland and Norway (30 countries in total)
- Interviews conducted May-July 2019
- Among others, the dataset includes:
 - Information about the perceived importance of adult learning and CVET
 - Information about participation in different kinds of adult learning and CVET
 - Sociodemographic and socioeconomic indicators

Variables

- **Dependent variable:** Participation in 4 kinds of adult learning and CVET in the previous 12 months
 - Formal (leading to a degree recognized by the state)
 - Non-formal work-related (organised activity, related to work)
 - Non-formal not-work-related (organised activity, not related to work)
 - Informal (learning on your own)
- **Main independent variable:** Perceived importance of adult learning and CVET
- **Control variables:** Age, education, occupational categories, gender, country of residence

Perceived importance of adult learning and CVET

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Adult learning and continuing training ...

- are as important as the education you receive at school or university
- are a way to obtain the equivalent of a traditional college or university degree
- are important when looking for a new job
- are important to progress in a career
- are important to have a better income
- are important for personal development
- are important to reduce unemployment

Methodology

- Model the probability of participation in adult learning and CVET
- For each of the 4 kinds of adult learning and CVET, we run:
 - Logistic regression
 - Linear probability model via ordinary least squares (OLS) regression
- Due to cross-sectional nature, we cannot imply causation, but we can have a look at relationships

Results (1/3) - Perceived importance

- **Perceived importance** has a highly significant positive relationship with participation (in all kinds of learning)
 - This holds true as a total effect and net effect, i.e. the effect is consistent even when adding the control variables to the model
- If adult learning and CVET are perceived as important, the likelihood to participate in them increases

Results (2/3) - Age, education, gender

- Increases in **age category** are negatively associated with participation in all kinds of learning
- Increases in **education levels** are positively associated with participation in all kinds of learning
- **Women** have an increased likelihood to participate compared to men in formal, non-formal not-work-related and informal learning
 - For work-related non-formal learning, this gender difference is not significant in the logistic model

Results (3/3) - Occupational categories

- **White-collar employees** are more likely to participate in all kinds of adult learning and CVET categories compared to blue-collar employees
- **Self-employed professional** have a higher likelihood to participate in non-formal work-related, non-formal not-work-related and informal learning activities compared to blue-collar employees
- **Not being in paid employment** is associated with decreased likelihood to participate in formal, non-formal work-related and informal learning activities compared to being a blue-collar employee

Conclusion

- Perception has a positive relationship with participation in all kinds of learning, even when controlling for known impact factors such as age, gender, education, etc.
- If adult learning and CVET are perceived as important, the likelihood to participate in them increases
- Image management or awareness campaigns can emphasize various benefits of adult learning and CVET and hence improve perceptions. Improved perceptions, in turn, should contribute to increased participation rates.
- These campaigns should be targeted at groups that are known to engage less in adult learning and CVET. Thereby, inequalities in participation could be mitigated.

Thank you for your attention!

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