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INTRODUCTION

Silvia Vaccaro, Sandra D'Agostino

The introduction to the monographic section of this issue of “Economia&Lavoro” focuses on the relevance of work-based learning (WBL) for improving effective learning and for developing the operational knowledge that can foster mutual understanding and interpersonal relationships. Accordingly, it presents the five essays of the section, which analyse the most popular WBL tools: apprenticeships and traineeships. The main arguments of each article are resumed with a view to identifying the evolutionary trajectories of the two tools, as well as the opportunities and criticalities emerging from their implementation, and to advancing suggestions on policy measures that might be implemented to strengthen the quality of these forms of learning.

Keywords: apprenticeship, traineeship, youth, adults, distance learning.

APPRENTICESHIPS IN ITALY: DYNAMICS AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

Arianna Angelini, Vincenza Infante, Antonella Pittau

The article analyses the development of apprenticeships in Italy by looking into the national legal framework and the data on the evolution of employment and apprentices' participation in public-funded training activities over the period 2008-2021. For several decades, Italy has been engaged in relaunching apprenticeships, especially the so-called “first-level typology”, which is more similar to the European dual systems, with the aim of supporting the school/training-to-work transition, developing the skills in demand by businesses, and increasing young people's qualification levels. The data analysed, albeit showing some positive signs, highlight persistent difficulties in promoting apprenticeships, especially the typologies with a higher training value, and thus allow us to reflect on the measures needed to increase the quality of this tool, as well as its attractiveness for young people and businesses.

Keywords: apprenticeship, youth employment, dual system.

THE EVOLUTION OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN EUROPE

Sandra D'Agostino, Silvia Vaccaro

In recent decades, the so-called “global megatrends” have been driving changes in vocational education and training systems, including apprenticeships. The analysis of such transformations – carried out in the framework of a study on some European countries, implemented by INAPP through the analysis of the scientific literature and institutional reports – allows us to identify points of convergence in the evolutionary trajectories of these systems. The policies adopted seem to have strengthened the quality of the training offer, while keeping a high level of attractiveness of apprenticeships, but at the same time reducing their inclusive capacity. Like other countries, Italy has been engaged for some years in the construction of an “Italian pathway to the dual system”. However, the policy measures adopted so far, and reiterated in the NRRP do not seem adequate to promote the inclusion of the most vulnerable young people, whereas they increase the risk of widening the territorial gaps in relation to the access to learning opportunities and quality employment for young people.

Keywords: apprenticeship, dual system, young people, training, inclusion.

THE PROGRESSIVE EXPANSION OF APPRENTICESHIPS TO PROMOTE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT FOR ADULTS

Sandra D'Agostino, Francesco Giubileo, Silvia Vaccaro

For some years now, Europe has seen an expansion of apprenticeship beneficiaries to include adults. Under the pressure of demographic change and technological innovation, some European countries are trying to adapt their dual systems to the specific needs of adults, with particular reference to low-skilled ones, with the aim of promoting the development of basic and occupational skills required by the labour market and of strengthening the employability of this group of users. The analysis of these transformation processes – conducted as part of a study carried out by INAPP through the analysis of the scientific literature and available institutional reports – allows for the identification of the elements that favour/hinder the presence of adults in apprenticeships. Reflecting on these elements might make it possible to draw indications to extend apprenticeships to the adult population in Italy as well.

Keywords: apprenticeship, dual system, adults, training, employment.

REGIONAL MODELS AND EXPERIENCES OF DISTANCE LEARNING PROVISION IN APPRENTICESHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC PHASE

Giovanna Filosa, Debora Gentilini

The paper analyses the results of a pilot survey on the role of distance learning in so-called “professionalising apprenticeships” during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research has an interdisciplinary approach, and aims to examine the strengths and critical points of e-learning in apprenticeships as a fundamental asset of an innovative training system. The different types of distance learning were examined in order to understand the evolution of digital technologies in the professional training sector. From a methodological point of view, a legal analysis was carried out of the regional models of provision of distance learning for professionalising apprenticeships in three territorial contexts (Lombardy, Piedmont, and Lazio), and some semi-structured interviews were carried out with representatives from professional training centres located in the same regions. The results are encouraging in terms of reducing distances and costs; however, some risks have emerged linked to the impoverishment of the relational dimension during the pandemic phase. Many of the potentials linked to the use of technology enhanced learning (TEL) in the experiential learning typical of apprenticeships are still to be explored, to encourage the motivation and active participation of apprentices.

Keywords: apprenticeship, distance learning, e-learning, basic and soft skills training, young people.

EXTRACURRICULAR TRAINEESHIPS. TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES OF A COMPLEX MEASURE

Giuseppe Iuzzolino, Antonella Scatigno, Giulia Tosi

The extracurricular traineeship is an active labour market policy measure consisting of a limited period of on-the-job training, which has been the subject of debate and dispute for several years now. For some, it is an important tool for improving the employability of young people; for others, it is too often used in an unlawful way, thus engendering precariousness rather than employment.

The aim of this article is to provide an overall analysis of this tool, based, on the one hand, on a review of the evolution of the regulatory framework, and, on the other, on the analysis of the results of the implementation of the tool. Finally, some reflections are provided on the main critical issues of the Italian traineeship system.

Keywords: traineeship, on-the-job training, active labour market policies.

WORK QUALITY IN ITALIAN FIRMS: ORGANISATIONAL MODELS AND PERFORMANCE IN THE COVID-19 AFTERMATH. EVIDENCE FROM THE FIFTH INAPP SURVEY ON JOB QUALITY

Tiziana Canal, Matteo Luppi

The present essay, based on the data from the Fifth INAPP Survey on Job Quality in Italy (with specific reference to its component that concerns companies' local units), identifies organisational models regarding job quality, and relates them to companies' performance. This paper complements the traditional workers-oriented approach in the analysis of job quality by identifying, through the use of the cluster analysis technique, human resource management models starting from companies' characteristics regarding job security, job involvement, and propensity to smart working. Logistic regression models are implemented to relate the obtained clusters to companies' performance. The findings, albeit based on subjective performance indicators, indicate that companies characterised by human resource management models oriented towards investment and inclusivity better withstood the pandemic, and show performance levels clearly above the competitors in terms of productivity and corporate finances.

Keywords: job quality, companies, human resources, innovation, competitiveness, Covid-19.

EUROPEAN UNION LABOUR POLICY IN THE 30 YEARS SINCE MAASTRICHT TO DATE

Alessandro Perri

The aim of this contribution is to analyse labour policy, understood as the set of political-economic, regulatory, and case-law guidelines, adopted by the European Union (EU) over the 30-year timespan from the approval of the Maastricht Treaty to date. Additionally, it provides a descriptive analysis of the trends in employment, wages, and productivity concerning the Italian case. Reflecting the international debate, the article proposes an analysis based on a collection of documents regarding European action within the three identified guidelines. In the empirical section, Italian trends are examined concerning employment – compared with Germany and Spain as regards atypical work –, average wages, labour productivity, labour costs, and labour share. The analysis shows that, on the one hand, the EU has developed its labour policy in accordance with the concept of flexibility primarily derived from neoclassical theory, and, on the other hand, in Italy, flexibilisation has increased the incidence of atypical work, but real wages have not followed the productivity trend. Consequently, the rise in labour costs has not translated into an increase in the labour share.

Keywords: flexibility, labour market, labour policy, productivity, wages, European Union.

NEW EVIDENCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF STUDIES ON OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING IN THE USA

Lorenzo G. Luisetto

This article examines the regulatory role of occupational licensing in the USA. Although almost a quarter of jobs require some form of occupational licensing in the USA, the phenomenon has received relatively little attention. The traditional view suggests that such regulations create barriers to entry, increase wages and occupational quality, and improve the quality and safety of goods and services, while increasing prices, and reducing the employment rate. However, recent empirical evidence shows a more complex picture, characterised by heterogeneous effects within regulated occupations and by multiple externalities. Building on economic regulation theories, the article proposes a review and discussion of the recent empirical evidence in this field, and shows how further testable hypothesis might contribute to the development of new regulatory solutions. Although the focus is on the USA, the article ultimately highlights the importance of the topic also for European labour markets.

Keywords: occupational licensing, economic regulation, welfare effects, externalities.