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When politics gets in the way: domestic coalitions and the making of skill systems

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ABSTRACT

Examining the recent evolution of public skill institutions and the diverging trajectories of institutional change, this paper focuses on skill certification systems, empirically drawing from two middle-income countries (MICs), Mexico and Turkey. Building on the argument that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) prefer public skill systems to generate a technically skilled workforce more than large firms do, it puts forward that governments supporting and being supported by SMEs will be more willing to endorse skill certification systems for their distributional consequences. It argues that public skill institutions are embraced to varying degrees based on cost-benefit calculations of domestic elites; and only adopted effectively if they are in concord with key actors' interests. Therefore, this paper contributes to the emerging literature on skill politics in the MICs by examining the dynamics of domestic political coalitions that support or prevent the development of skill institutions based on extensive empirical analysis, and it agrees with the arguments emphasizing the importance of SMEs' presence in political coalitions for skill reforms. Furthermore, it provides important evidence against the arguments on institutional convergence in the age of globalization by showing the varying outcomes of similar external pressures in the MICs.

KEYWORDS Skills; middle-income countries; globalization; institutional change; business; SMEs

1. Introduction

Many middle-income countries (hereafter, MICs) are clustered at a fragile equilibrium of limited skills, low productivity, and low value-added production. The 'low-skill equilibrium' that these countries suffer from obstructs their competitive leverage in global markets, feeding into numerous vicious cycles and generating the infamous 'middle-income trap' (Agénor, Canuto, & Jelenic, 2012). Thus, improving skills has become key for these countries' upgrading to higher value-added production and ultimately graduating from the middle-income category (Eichengreen, Park, & Shin, 2013; Gill & Kharas, 2007). Despite such vital importance of skills, skill institutions are still inadequate in the MICs, since they involve high costs and necessitate political commitment as well as coordination among diverse groups of actors (Doner & Schneider, 2016).

Albeit of a limited nature, there has been a recent drive particularly in the upper MICs to adopt new skill policies and institutions. Among these recent initiatives, however, only a few have given rise to effective skill institutions. Examining the recent

development of public skill institutions, this paper specifically focuses on skill standardization and certification systems (hereafter, skill certification systems), which have been promoted in a number of MICs since the 1990s. It undertakes an in-depth contextualized comparison at an inter-regional level, scarcely conducted in the respective literature, and draws from the cases of Mexico and Turkey, pointing out substantial similarities as to the making of public skill certification systems and puzzling variations in outcomes. Trapped in upper middle income and low-skill equilibrium for quite some time, these two countries share a historical legacy of highly limited and fragmented skill policies, yet they have embarked on new trajectories to build public skill institutions. Skill certification systems have been established almost simultaneously in Mexico and Turkey, leading to the formation of national skill standards and qualifications frameworks as well as public agencies with respective mandates, namely the National Skills Standards Board in Mexico (*El Consejo Nacional de Normalización y Certificación de Competencias Laborales*, CONOCER) and the Vocational Qualifications Authority in Turkey (*Mesleki Yeterlilik Kurumu*, MYK). Nevertheless, the outcomes of these developments vary significantly across the two cases. In Turkey, the introduction of a skill certification system has engendered effective use of occupational standards and certificates of qualification. In Mexico, however, the skill certification system has failed to operate effectively.

What accounts for such variation across the two similar cases marked by ongoing low-skill equilibrium and a dearth of public skill institutions in the past? Why does the skill certification system function effectively in some MICs, but not in the others? Using Mill's method of difference as a framework for comparison, this paper traces the processes by which the respective skill certification systems in Mexico and Turkey came into existence (George & Bennett, 2005). It scrutinizes the roles played by different actors and the evolution of the respective skill certification systems.

The paper aims to contribute to the literature on the politics of skill systems, which mostly draws from advanced countries and recently from MICs. First, it offers a theoretical inference generalizable to upper MICs, that public skill certification systems will be more likely to flourish where governments are coalesced with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the main beneficiaries of public skill systems. Such governments will be more willing to adopt skill certification systems due to their political-distributional consequences. This finding concords with the arguments emphasizing the role of the SMEs' presence in 'upgrading coalitions' for education and skill reforms in MICs (Doner & Schneider, 2016). Second, it tests the previous theoretical claims based on advanced capitalist countries through an empirical analysis of two MICs that have been rarely studied and generates implications for the debates on institutional change, particularly with respect to institutional convergence or persisting divergence in the age of globalization. The cases of Mexican and Turkish skill certification systems, which were promoted by external actors but yielded different outcomes, make good examples for divergence. In line with Thelen (2014), this paper demonstrates that against the backdrop of pressures of global and regional integration, there have been different trajectories of change shaped by domestic institutions and political coalitions.

Domestic political dynamics and distributional coalitions play important roles in shaping the development and change of skill systems in both advanced and MICs (Crouch, Fingold, & Sako, 1999; Schneider & Karcher, 2010; Streeck, 2009, 2012; Thelen, 2004 and 2014). Considering the differential incentives generated by skill institutions based on firm size, this paper builds on the argument that SMEs tend to prefer

public skill systems for technical skills and skill certification systems constitute an important component in this regard (Culpepper, 2003). Large firms, however, opt for firm-based training, hence they may be indifferent to skill certification built into public skill systems, relying on their capacity of finding ‘private solutions’ to skill deficiencies (Thelen & Busemeyer, 2012). Therefore, the paper hypothesizes that those governments supporting and being endorsed by the SMEs will be more willing to adopt such systems, backing the institutions steering the systems based on political-distributional consequences.

An alternative hypothesis to the role of domestic coalitions might stem from the sheer variation in the nature of external pressures, i.e. diverging development of certification systems as a result of promotion by different external actors. This hypothesis would posit that the intensity of external pressures and the institutional capacity of external actors would shape the outcomes, determining the degrees of effective implementation. Accordingly, greater intensity of pressures and higher institutional capacity of external actors would lead to higher likelihood of effective establishment of skill certification systems. In fact, initiatives to establish such systems in both Mexico and Turkey were launched in the 1990s by the influence of the same external actor, the World Bank. Nonetheless, the respective World Bank projects failed to generate tangible results in both counties. In the 2000s, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the European Union (EU) became the main external actors in promoting such systems in Mexico and Turkey respectively. Therefore, one might infer that the EU’s higher institutional capacity to transform domestic institutions and the greater intensity of pressure, given Turkey’s candidacy for the EU membership, might have led to a more effective implementation of skill certification.

This hypothesis would seem relevant, given the major differences between the sources of external pressures in Mexico and Turkey—especially in the later phases. Undeniably, the EU’s transformative impact on the domestic policy space, often dubbed ‘Europeanization’ and conceptualized as rule transfer and institutional adaptation at the domestic level, has been greater than that of international organizations (IOs) (Börzel & Risse, 2012; Buller & Gamble, 2002; Olsen 2002). Yet, there are two important caveats at this point. The first one is the uneven nature of ‘Europeanization’ across policy areas and countries—even in the case of the members, let alone the accession countries. Literature on the EU’s diverse influences in different national settings underlines that domestic interests and institutions filter the ways in which Europeanization takes place (Hix and Goetz 2000; Özel, 2013; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). More specifically, the EU’s capacity to affect skill institutions even in member states has been limited compared to other policy areas due to this issue’s politically sensitive nature, leading to management of skill policies through an ‘open method of coordination’ (Humburg, 2008).

The second caveat about the EU’s greater capacity to foster institutional change is the almost-stalled (protracted, at best) nature of Turkey’s accession process. A number of institutions that were established through the EU’s impact in the context of this troubled accession have already been reversed in a process coined as ‘de-Europeanization’ (Aydin-Düzgit & Kaliber, 2016). The state’s commitment to skill certification, however, has been sustained, despite Turkey’s diminishing commitment to the EU accession and the prevalence of open coordination at the EU level regarding skill policies. Therefore, in a context of myriad reversals of EU impact, the sustainability of the skill certification

system in Turkey is somewhat of a puzzle, given that the EU's influence has long gone, but the system has taken on a life of its own.

Indeed, when the sequences of evolving trajectories are traced, it can be observed that the pro-SME policies (with their variations in degree and content) of consecutive governments in Turkey preceded the EU impact. Furthermore, the involvement of different external actors in the development of certification systems has shown significant similarities between the two cases: the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) was set as a benchmark for Turkey while the British Qualifications System (BQS) was adopted in Mexico. Even the amount of financial support for the establishment of skill certification systems from the IDB and the EU was almost identical.¹

In order to identify causal sequences and mechanisms in the development of skill certification systems in Mexico and Turkey, the following sources have been explored: legal documents, development plans and policy papers of public authorities; publications and proposals of business organizations; and projects and assessments of the respective IOs and the EU. Twenty-eight face-to-face semi-structured interviews (twelve for Mexico, sixteen for Turkey) were conducted, as well as a phone interview (hence twenty-nine in total) with bureaucrats, experts specializing in vocational education and training (VET) and skill certification, along with the officials of IOs, business organizations, and firm representatives from both countries, between September 2014 and October 2017.

Although the empirical evidence is based on two cases, the findings will have potential external validity for other MICs, particularly for the upper MICs, where the rifts between big business and SMEs have intensified in the process of globalization. It offers generalizable inferences for upper MICs based on a rather un-common but important in-depth comparison of two cases. The respective literature tends to make comparisons based on intra-regional focus in which comparisons across Latin America appear much more common than those entailing other cases. Despite the striking similarities across the trajectories in Turkey and Latin American countries, comparative analyses are scarce (Aytaç & Öniş, 2014; Dorlach, 2015; Özel, 2014; Sancak, *forthcoming*). Mexico and Turkey, treated as 'the most-similar cases' in this study, are apposite for comparison, as they present considerable variation in the values of both the independent and dependent variables (i.e. domestic ruling coalitions between the state and businesses; and the effectiveness of recently established skill certification systems). Situated on the fringes of major markets, namely Europe and the United States (and highly integrated with—and dependent on—they), and with almost identical levels of income per capita hovering under the high-income threshold, these two markets are articulated into global markets based on limited skills and low-to-medium technology production (OECD-WTO 2016).² Like in most MICs, 'segmented labor markets' have persisted in both cases (Schneider & Karcher, 2010). Within the last two decades, a partial technological upgrading has taken place in both, giving rise to a higher demand for better technical skills (Sancak, *forthcoming*).

Turkey shares some of the major characteristics of most Latin American countries regarding historical trajectories of development strategies. After having pursued statist (yet still capitalist) development strategies based on an import substituting industrialization (ISI) strategy, Mexico and Turkey became the forerunners of market liberalization within MICs in the early 1980s. Previous development strategies implemented in both cases had helped to create giant multi-sectoral conglomerates, which have dominated the respective markets with high levels of capital concentration, later becoming

‘multilatinas’ and ‘multiturks’ as they have increasingly multinationalized (Özel, 2014). These large firms, prioritized in the ISI-era through access to selective incentives and oligopolistic profits in large domestic markets, formed sturdy coalitions with the incumbents steering the ISI (Buğra, 1999; Luna, 2004; Thacker, 2000). Hence, they became the pinnacles of ‘hierarchical capitalism’ whose very components and vicious cycles have obstructed an upgrade from middle-income and low-skill equilibria.³

In both countries, market openings were initiated in the early 1980s marked by the close monitoring of IOs such as the IMF and the World Bank; and the global and regional integration accelerated in the 1990s and 2000s. Turkey became part of the Customs Union in 1996 and launched membership negotiations in 2005, whereas Mexico’s North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect in 1995, bolstering the integration of the Mexican market into that of North America. Incorporation in global and regional markets has increased competitive pressures, as a result of which investing in technical skills has gained utmost importance. In both cases, big businesses, multi-sectoral conglomerates that could move their assets across sectors and borders, have benefited more from regional and global integration by means of ample incentives. A striking divergence in the process of internationalization in these two countries has been the shifts in ruling coalitions in the domain of state–business relations. Large firms in Mexico, increasingly dominated by multinationals, expanded their power and maintained their place in the ruling coalition, a process extended through the NAFTA integration, while those in Turkey have been increasingly rivaled by the larger SMEs—some of which have recently become big businesses and been incorporated into the ruling coalition (Bizberg & Théret, 2015; Özel, 2014).

A seemingly paradoxical trend, against the backdrop of internationalization, has been Turkey’s adoption of policy instruments and institutions tailored for SMEs, a process intensified by the AKP governments known for their Islamist credentials. Therefore, many SMEs have undergone relative economic empowerment and acquired political clout, whereas Mexican SMEs have increasingly lost their power and been discarded from ruling coalitions (Shadlen, 2004). Such empowerment engendered a notable political dynamic in Turkey whereby a shared religious identity became an important layer of the SME–AKP coalition, congruent with the prevalence of Islamist identities within the SMEs and organizations representing them.⁴

Predominantly focusing on advanced countries, the extant literature on skills has thus far identified distinct systems and linked them to broader institutional constellations embedded in varying forms of capitalist markets (Finegold & Soskice, 1988; Hall and Soskice 2001; Streeck, 1989, 1992; Thelen, 2004). The literature highlights the role of coalitions between the incumbent parties and certain stakeholders in the formation, continuity, and/or erosion of skill systems, underscoring the power-distributional consequences of these institutions (Bussemeyer, 2009; Bussemeyer and Trampusch 2012; Streeck, 2009; Thelen & Kume, 2006). While some studies emphasize the impact of power balance between employers and workers, and their respective organizations, others point out the role of cooperation among employers and the crucial role played by encompassing employers’ associations in the formation of collective skill systems, especially those agglomerating the SMEs (Bussemeyer and Trampusch 2012; Martin, 2012; Thelen, 2004).

Firm size is considered a key parameter explaining divergent preferences of businesses as to generating technical skills. For large firms, the cost of generating skills from within is lower than that of recruiting skilled workers, hence they mostly offer in-

house skill training. In contrast, smaller firms prefer either recruiting skilled workers or having their workers acquire skills through public retraining programs due to their limited resources to provide in-house training as well as their high worker-turnover rates (Blatter, Muehleemann, & Schenker, 2012, 2016; Muehleemann and Pfeifer 2016). Furthermore, given that certified skills diminish the cost of external recruitment, skill certification is considered more beneficial for smaller firms that seek to redistribute risks. Differing preferences across firms along with their political power at critical junctures have shaped the politics of VET systems in advanced economies (Busemeyer, 2015; Culpepper, 2003, 2007). For instance, the political clout of German SMEs is considered key to the development of the apprenticeship system based on standardized and certified skills, whereas the dominance of large firms in Japan resulted in firm-based training without standardization or certification (Estévez-Abe, 2008; Estévez-Abe, Iversen, & Soskice, 2001; Thelen, 2004).

Later studies accentuate that skill systems are not static formations, but get transformed or dissolve altogether. Such changes take place in response to ongoing challenges such as technological advancements, demise of manufacturing, and the forces of globalization (Busemeyer & Vossiek, 2016; Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2012; Streeck, 2012; Trampusch, 2009, 2010). While a number of studies underline the inevitable convergence of domestic institutions, others argue for sustained diversity (Crouch and Streeck, 1997; Powell & Trampusch, 2012; Soederberg et al., 2005; Thelen, 2014). Nonetheless, this strand of the literature almost exclusively focuses on the advanced economies and the mediation of the pressures on their capitalist models.

Despite the vital importance of skills for the MICs, literature on the politics of skill systems in these countries is scant, notwithstanding some recent studies (Becker, 2013; Flechtner & Panther, 2016; Kohli, 2004; Sancak, 2017; Schneider & Karcher, 2010; Schneider & Soskice, 2009). Coining the term ‘hierarchical market economies’, Schneider (2009, 2013) points out the presence of entrenched interests as the main factor obstructing skill improvement in the segmented labor markets of Latin America. Rifts within businesses have been underlined as key parameters explaining low-skill traps. Doner and Schneider (2016, p. 536) indicate how conflicting interests within small and large firms, and the latter’s prevalence in respective markets, curtail skill development in MICs. Delineating skill improvement as an essential component of upgrading from middle income and underlining the difficulty of adopting VET systems due to high costs, they emphasize the critical role played by domestic coalitions in developing institutional arrangements in that regard. Although these studies provide invaluable analysis as to why MICs have not invested in skills, they do not account for endogenous and exogenous pressures that would trigger changes in skill systems, engendering new skill institutions that might facilitate economic upgrading. Doner and Schneider (2016, p. 619) state that they ‘only speculate about what such an upgrading coalition might look like in the future’, without discussing how those coalitions might appear.

2. The evolution of the skill certification systems and domestic interests in Mexico and Turkey

Certification constitutes a central component of skill systems, especially regarding life-long learning. Development of skill certification systems in MICs has been promoted by various IOs such as UNESCO, OECD, IDB, and the World Bank as well as the EU.

Following a Policy Report in 1991, the World Bank initiated projects for improving VET systems in a number of MICs including Mexico and Turkey, where it emphasized lifelong learning, setting up National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs), creation of skill certification systems, and establishing an authority to supervise these systems (Middleton, Ziderman, & Van Adams, 1991). Later, the influence of the World Bank in promoting skill certification systems was replaced by that of the IDB in Mexico, and the EU in Turkey (Barabasch & Petrick, 2012).

Mexican and Turkish markets seem strikingly similar regarding the domination of big firms, which make up 58% and 56% of the total value added respectively, even though 99.8% and 99.9% of firms are SMEs. Nonetheless, the SMEs vary between the two markets in several aspects.⁵ While the SMEs' relative position in the Mexican market has not changed much, the successive governments' pro-SME policies have led to significant improvements in Turkey (OECD 2016a, 2016b). A striking difference has become the level of internationalization of SMEs: exports realized by Turkish SMEs constituted 59.2% of the country's overall exports in 2013; whereas the Mexican SMEs' share of total exports is less than 6% in 2016 (INEGI 2016; OECD 2016c; TSI 2016b). Furthermore, according to World Bank Enterprise Surveys, 37% of the SMEs in Turkey engaged directly in exportation in 2013, while the rate was 17% for the Mexican SMEs in 2010 (World Bank, 2010, 2013). The exporting SMEs have become more likely candidates to demand skill certification, and hence the chief proponents of the state's commitment to the skill certification systems.⁶

2.1. SMEs' leverage and a strong state commitment in Turkey

The process to develop a skill certification system and Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) was initiated through a project in partnership with the World Bank in 1995–2000, which gave rise to the development of 250 occupational standards and a draft law (Law #5544) on Vocational Qualifications Authority, MYK (Official Gazette 2006). Yet, implementation fell short and no significant development took place until the 2000s. The MYK could not be established until 2006 due to disagreements among different government bodies regarding its status and the ministry it would be affiliated with (MYK 2014).

Development of the skill certification system and TQF gained a new momentum in the 2000s following the AKP's coming to power in 2002. Implemented in 2002–2007, the project 'Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System in Turkey' has fostered a number of reforms in the VET and skill certification systems, such as the establishment of the MYK, introduction of modular curricula, and promotion of lifelong learning (Official Gazette 2006). Designed as an autonomous public institution with respect to its finances and management, yet attached to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the MYK has been authorized to establish the TQF, steer the preparation of occupational standards and issue skill certificates (MYK 2016; Official Gazette 2015). Since its foundation, the MYK has launched a number of programs in collaboration with other public agencies to develop the certification system along with the TQF (MYK 2014).

The skill certification system administered by the MYK has gone through a noteworthy expansion within the last decade, which has led to the effective implementation of the certification system and its rigorous adoption by firms, workers, as well as other state agencies. The MYK has worked closely with business organizations as well as the

associations, federations pertaining to a broad range of occupational groups in the formulation of occupational standards. In line with the demand arising from those entities to get involved in the system, the MYK signs protocols with them to delegate the preparation of such standards.⁷ As of 2017, a total of 739 occupational standards (consisting of those in force upon publication in the Official Gazette) have been formulated, and 245,600 certificates have been issued to 249,157 people in 230 distinct occupations.⁸

Closely monitored by the MYK, exams have been conducted and certificates have been issued for five years by 93 distinct certification centers, accredited by the Turkish Accreditation Agency.⁹ The cost of the exams per worker is subsidized by the state, conditioned on successful results attained. According to MYK officials, further expansion of the skill certification system is foreseen based on the increasing demand by sectoral players, as ‘many associations and chambers demand to be included in the certification system in a wide range of sectors between natural gas and cosmetics, as they would like their occupations to be certified’.¹⁰

In a way, the MYK has undertaken a selective adoption of the rules, regulations, and principles which are set forth by the EU standards. Amongst the eight levels of occupational standards indicated by the EU, it has only adopted standards for levels between two and five, coinciding with the occupations which entail the technical skills demanded by the SMEs. The mismatch between the EU standards and the partial adoption of those by the MYK is also underlined by the successive European Commission (EC) Progress Reports (EC, 2013, p. 69; EC, 2014, p. 28; EC, 2015, p. 36).

The skill certification system in Turkey has embarked on a distinct trajectory, shaped by the active involvement (hence preferences) of the key stakeholders and their links with the government. This indicates that external actors’ involvement was evidently important for the initial design of the certification system, yet it cannot possibly explain the outcomes. These actors offered a framework which has been embraced and later expanded by the public agencies, which have effectively acquired the support of domestic business organizations, especially those representing the SMEs. Despite the loosening of the EU anchor in line with the stalling of Turkey’s accession process, the state’s and business organizations’ commitment to standardization and certification has been sustained—expanding even further. Launching of the second phase of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy, underscoring skill certification, exemplifies such commitment.¹¹ The strategy was launched in 2016 after the prospects of EU membership had already become dim, and thus adoption of the EU-proposed framework had lost its appeal.

2.1.1. Shifting ruling coalitions

In Turkey, SMEs and business organizations predominantly representing the SMEs (some with Islamist credentials) have acquired considerable power. Since the early 2000s, they have been incorporated into ruling coalitions and have influenced public policy. Based on the political-distributional outcomes of pro-SME policies associated with skill institutions, the AKP governments have espoused the skill certification system, embedded its development in a number of policy areas, and actively involved business organizations to expand the reach of skill certification and VET in general. A pro-SME stance in policy-and institution-making has, in turn, been an outcome of the recent shift in ruling coalitions.

Successive AKP governments, endorsed by the organizations representing the SMEs, whose owners constituted a major electoral base for the AKP, offered multifarious

incentives for the SMEs to enhance their capabilities for reaping the benefits of internationalization, and established new agencies to support them. Religious conservatism, a.k.a. ‘Islamism’, has become an important identity marker in this coalition between the SMEs and the AKP, entwined with notable economic incentives (Buğra & Savaşkan, 2014; Gümüştü, 2010; Öniş, 2007, 2012). The increasing power of these enterprises has spawned new claims to political power in a country whose twentieth-century history was marked by a strong coalition between big business and the state that caused conflicts over the distribution of public resources, aggravated by the strong secular(ist) component of this coalition (Özel, 2010).

Starting with the Motherland Party governments in the 1980s, successive incumbents sought to create new coalitions with the SMEs and their organizations, whenever they encountered resistance from big business. Since the 1990s, this dynamic has taken on an ideologically layered overtone. Business actors who shared a predominantly Muslim identity and a sense of marginalization, along with a history of limited access to public resources, began to mobilize in the early 1990s and supported the fledgling Islamist parties such as the Welfare Party and its successor AKP (Buğra, 1999; Öniş, 2007, 2012; Özel, 2014). They established organizations representing religiously conservative SMEs, such as the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association (MÜSİAD), currently the leading partner of the AKP government in its ruling coalition, and the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (TUSKON) became influential, forming a new cluster against the secular(ist) big businesses (and their organizations), especially the powerful Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD).¹²

Since 2002, the AKP governments have used these layers of fragmentation entrenched against secular big business; and have held a proactive stance toward SMEs that, in fact, played an important role in carrying the party to re-election (Öniş, 2007). In turn, pro-SME policies combined with clientelistic networks intensified by the AKP governments engendered upward mobility within the SMEs, and a number of medium-sized enterprises have become large conglomerates in this process (Buğra & Savaşkan, 2014). Whereas, the AKP governments have gone through serious clashes with TÜSİAD which represents—mostly, if not exclusively secular—big businesses.

Yet, it would be misleading to reduce the commitment of the AKP to pro-SME policies, and public skill institutions to Islam and its probable value system, as the AKP’s move in that regard has been rather instrumental, shaped through historical political cleavages (Çarkoğlu, 2014). In fact, differing from the previous incumbents supported by religious constituencies, the AKP has closely addressed its supporters’ economic—as well as cultural—concerns (Öniş, 2012). On one hand, the rapid growth of some of the SMEs, hence their evolution to large conglomerates, which have formed close alliances with the successive AKP governments, exemplifies that the AKP, known for its Islamist credentials, is not necessarily entrenched against big firms as a mere ideological stance. On the other hand, AKP governments’ pro-SME policies have helped sustain their constituency, easing their electoral success.

2.1.2. Participation of business in the skill certification system

Business organizations in Turkey, particularly those dominated by the SMEs, have played active roles in both campaigning for and the operation of the certification system, and have acquired new incentives at the organizational level. Some semi-public chambers and peak organizations have become agencies accredited to carry out exams

for specific occupations, offered training programs to prepare workers for those exams and thereby, carving out new sources of both revenue and authority. They established designated companies to undertake such activities, such as the ‘Vocational Qualifications and Certification Centers Inc.’ (MEYBEM) affiliated with the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), the peak semi-public business organization.

Besides the TOBB, both semi-public chambers and voluntary business organizations have been active in lobbying for and the operation of the certification system. They conducted surveys to analyse their members’ expectations regarding skill deficiencies, informed the members about skill certification and its benefits, organized workshops and meetings and collaborated with the MYK in some of these activities (ITO, 2006). For instance, MÜSİAD, a voluntary Islamist business association and a leading coalitional partner of the AKP governments, organized a number of informative events on the skill certification system and TQF, hosted workshops in collaboration with the MYK championing the central importance of skill standardization and certification for the SMEs, and published various reports on VET and skill certification system (MÜSİAD, 2011; Şencan, 2008). Such activities facilitated a synergy between the state actors and business organizations to build a certification system. Besides the MYK, ministries and other public agencies also took part in these initiatives. The Ministry of Science, Industry, and Technology (BSTB) organized ‘Target Group Workshops’ throughout Turkey bringing together business organizations and individual businesses to explore the expectations of businesses and compatibility of the skill certification system (BSTB, 2013).

Differing from the enthusiastic engagement of organizations representing the SMEs, organizations representing big business have been mostly indifferent regarding the skill certification system. Although TÜSİAD had previously launched campaigns on VET, it began to focus more on academic education in the 2000s, emphasizing the importance of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education to provide general skills (Şimşek, 1999; TÜSİAD, 2011).

Engagement of business representatives in skill certification has been sustained through their participation in its operation. According to Law 5544, which delineates the MYK’s structure and areas of responsibility, representatives of the state, business and labor constitute the MYK’s Executive Board (Official Gazette, 2006). Designed to provide equal weight for the tripartite structure, the Board is comprised of two representatives from the ministries (of Labor and Social Security, and National Education); two from business organizations (Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations, TİSK and the Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen, TESK); and two labor confederations (Türk-İş and Hak-İş).¹³ Participation of business representatives in this body has been highly institutionalized and implemented *de facto* in accordance with its *de jure* structure, according to the interviews.¹⁴ This tripartite design facilitating equal representation of stakeholders, and its *de facto* implementation, appears as a puzzling occurrence in the Turkish case where a historical legacy regarding effective tripartite dialog is lacking and state representation usually overwhelms that of the non-state actors in the existing platforms (Özel, 2014).

The MYK has 26 sector committees, which are also designed based on a tripartite structure and are in charge of developing national skill standards for distinct occupations in respective sectors.¹⁵ Each of those committees incorporates representatives of TOBB, TİSK, and TESK from the business side and two labor confederations, namely

Türk-İş and Hak-İş, along with the representatives of related ministries, one representative from the Higher Education Council and a MYK expert. Participation of business representatives in these committees is materialized regularly and effectively, and mainly through senior executives.¹⁶ The committees are the decision-making organs for defining national qualifications in their respective sectors.¹⁷ TOBB has been particularly active in the certification process. It is the peak business organization with nation-wide SME representation through its chambers, and has distributed the highest number of certificates in 2017.¹⁸

2.1.3. Rigorous implementation of the skill certification system

As a result of the aforementioned dynamics, the skill certification system in Turkey has been adopted through domestic coalitional dynamics and incorporated into a number of policy areas, which has not been the case in Mexico. Higher policy documents, including the 9th and 10th Development Plans (for the periods 2007–2013 and 2014–2018, respectively), directly address lifelong learning and the establishment of the TQF (DPT, 2006, 2014). The 9th Plan envisages the improvement of standardization and certification of vocational qualifications, and completion of the establishment of the TQF in the chapter ‘Increasing the Sensitivity of Education to Labor Demand’ (DPT, 2006). The 10th Plan underscores the improvement of the TQF within the scope of its program on ‘Basic and Occupational Skills Development’ (DPT, 2014).

A number of policy documents pertinent to education, employment, and industrial development include various sections about the skill certification system. For instance, the Strategic Plan for Education Policy (2010–2014) proposed by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) entails strategies for developing a skill certification system and establishing the TQF to be compatible with EU standards (MEB, 2009). ‘Turkey’s Vocational and Technical Education Strategy Document and Action Plan (2014–2018)’, which is the first comprehensive strategy document on skills, identifies the objectives and actors in charge of developing a lifelong learning strategy and improving the TQF in accordance with EU standards (MEB, 2014). The instruments and procedures framed by this document have now been implemented and TOBB has taken substantial responsibility in this implementation. Furthermore, the Strategy Document for Industrial Policy (2011–2014) prioritizes human capital development and highlights the objective of ‘strengthening the national qualifications framework and generating occupational standards in strategic sectors’ (BSTB, 2010). These constitute important mechanisms to coordinate the skill certification system with the needs of the country.

An important step that increased the significance of skill certification, and augmented the power of the MYK, was the introduction of the Law #6645 on Occupational Health and Safety, which requires employees to hold valid certificates issued by the MYK for ‘dangerous’ and ‘very dangerous’ jobs.¹⁹ Affecting many sectors, this law not only raised the number of certificates issued for these occupations, but also increased in the skill certification system participation of employers’ and workers’ representatives from these sectors.²⁰ Both the Turkish Employers’ Association of Metal Industries (MESS) and the Turkish Metal, Steel, Ammunition, Machinery, Metal Products and Auto, Assembly, and Allied Workers Union (Türk-Metal) prepared drafts for occupational standards, and participated in sector committees that discussed and approved those standards.²¹ They established accredited centers for skill examination and

certification for occupations in their respective sectors as well as forming training centers to develop those skills.²²

Consequently, skill certification has been adopted by the key sectors in the Turkish economy. A total of 37 standards have been developed in the automotive sector and 62 standards in the textile sector, comprising 14% of the standards developed so far (MYK 2017). Furthermore, a significant share of certificates has been granted to workers in the key sectors, such as construction (34.4% of all certificates), automotive (15.2%), metal (21.6%), and energy (17.3%).²³ Furthermore, Sancak (forthcoming) shows that all workers in manufacturing firms in the automotive production chain in Turkey hold an occupational certificate.

Although the Turkish skill certification system is far from complete, it forms an exceptional case for skill systems in MICs. While the mandatory nature of certificates may reduce the effectiveness of the system in certain sectors dominated by big businesses,²⁴ the eagerness of SMEs to include relevant occupations in the system helps to maintain the system's rigorous adoption.²⁵ Furthermore, the occupations with mandatory certification already comprise a significant share of workers in the labor markets of the respective sectors, indicating high levels of adoption of the system in those sectors. As a result, Turkish firms have made a greater use of certified workforce compared to their Mexican counterparts.

2.2. Big business' leverage and weak state commitment in Mexico

The Mexican skill certification system was launched by a World Bank project, as in Turkey. Partially implemented between 1994 and 2003, the 'Technical Education and Training Modernization Project' (PMETyC) aimed to establish a National Skills System (SNC) based on the benchmark provided by the British system. Although it led to the foundation of CONOCER in 1995, the PMETyC largely failed to fulfill its targets due to its rigid bureaucratic structure, limited interest on the part of both business and state actors, and contestations of CONOCER's administrative status (Ricart, Morán, & Kappaz, 2014). Skill standards and certification procedures were not applied; employers sustained their earlier practices; and CONOCER was nearly shut down following the end of PMETyC in 2003 (IDB 2004).

The second phase began in 2005 with the launching of the 'Multiphase Skills-Based Human Resources Development Program' in collaboration with the IDB. This program aimed to restructure CONOCER and improve the SNC in two stages, namely in 2006–2009 and 2009–2013 (IDB 2013). CONOCER was reformed in 2008, diminishing the bureaucratic procedures regarding occupational standards, certification, and accreditation of institutions (Ricart et al., 2014). Stakeholders' *de jure* involvement expanded and CONOCER's links with firms improved to foster demand-oriented standards (de Anda, 2011).

In 2014, the IDB initiated a new project aiming to set the Mexican Certifications Framework (MMC) and strengthen CONOCER as well as the SNC (IDB, 2013, 2014). CONOCER acquired a new legal status and greater capacity through the adoption of this project (IDB 2014). Currently, skill certification is regulated via the 2005 Law entitled 'General Regulations and Criteria for the Integration and Operation of the National Qualifications System' which define the objectives, structure and mandate of CONOCER; and address the standards, accreditations and certificates to be issued (DOF 2009).

2.2.1. *The dominance of big business*

In Mexico, the prevalence of big business in ruling coalitions has been solidified in the context of regional and global integration since the 1990s. In contrast, SMEs and the organizations representing them, such as the National Chamber of Transformation Industries (CANACINTRA), have lost their power and been demoted from the respective coalitions (Alba, 2005; Bizberg & Th  ret, 2015; Shadlen, 2004). SMEs' power has dwindled, as the policies of successive governments, along with the process of increasing internationalization, have incentivized large firms, especially multinationals (Luna, 2004, 2010). The abolition of compulsory membership in chambers in 1996 further constrained the capacity of semi-public business organizations like CANACINTRA and the Confederation of Industrial Chambers of the United States of Mexico (CONCAMIN), a peak organization representing manufacturing interests. This paper suggests that the exclusion of the SMEs and their organizations from ruling coalitions curtailed their potential influence on skill certification.

In an opposite trend, big businesses and their organizations have enhanced their influences in Mexican politics, and hence maintained their privileged positions regarding skilled workers. The Coordinating Council of Business (CCE), the peak business organization which is comprised of seven semi-public confederations and voluntary organizations including the Mexican Council of Business (representing the largest firms), is dominated by big businesses despite its alleged claim of representing all business interests (Alba, 2005; Luna, 2010; Thacker, 2000). CANACINTRA, the confederation hosting the SMEs, has been excluded from membership in the CCE where it is only incorporated as an invitee.²⁶ Indeed, even some of the CCE's member organizations, like CONCAMIN, are de facto excluded from a number of platforms dominated by other organizations or large firms (  zel, 2014). 'Monopolized by Mexico's largest firms', the CCE has played a central role in the design of a number of policies, in the context of internationalization and regionalization, particularly in important junctures like the signing of the NAFTA (Shadlen, 2004, p. 93). Apart from the peak association's monopolization, large firms have had increasingly greater personalistic access to both the government and the legislators, particularly since the late 1970s in line with the political and institutional changes. Despite the major changes in Mexican politics, most importantly the end of the dominant-party regime in 2000, hence the transfer of incumbency from the PRI to PAN, ruling coalitions between the governments and big business have been more or less stable (Luna, 2010).

Notwithstanding the overall prioritization of big business in ruling coalitions through direct or indirect mechanisms, successive governments have employed new policies to strengthen the SMEs. Given the sheer number, and hence electoral importance of the SMEs, successive governments have employed a rhetoric to implement pro-SME policies and have designed policy instruments accordingly. '*Changarrizaci  n* of the economy' was a motto of the first PAN government (2000–2006), which aimed to enhance the capabilities and resilience of SMEs and their reach to financing as well as internationalization.²⁷ Additionally, an SME Observatory was established in 2003 to promote SMEs' competitiveness and a sub-secretariat within the Ministry of Economy was established to specialize in SME policies. A number of other initiatives have been designed during the second PAN government (2006–2012) and the PRI government since 2012. Despite these initiatives, the scope and impact of these instruments have remained limited in the absence of a push by the potential beneficiaries of the certificate system, such as a business organization which would represent the SMEs and be

incorporated into policymaking processes, as was the case in Turkey. Therefore, pressing issues around SMEs persist and most of these enterprises remain small and local, without adequate access to finance and engagement in internationalized transactions (INEGI 2011; OECD 2016a, p. 133).

2.2.2. *Participation of business in the skill certification system*

Businesses in Mexico have not actively taken part in the development and operation of the skill certification system, a fact which is often criticized and highlighted by the IDB as a central factor behind the weakness of the Mexican system (IDB, 2004; Székely, 2013). In fact, firms in major sectors, both small and large, are not well informed about the skill certification system and CONOCER, and many firms, especially the smaller ones, are unaware of its existence and functions (Sancak, *forthcoming*). Big businesses, with de facto access to policymaking, generally remain indifferent with respect to the public skill certification system and its designated agency, CONOCER (Lagarda, 2016). Although the CCE (as well as the organizations that it represents) has often emphasized the importance of improving skills to move up the global value chains, and although it is one of the partners assigned in CONOCER's tripartite structure, it has maintained a passive stance regarding certification. Large firms have sustained their existing practice of within-firm skill training and certification, a practice which lacks transitivity even across large firms since it ties respective skills to a specific firm, as pronounced by a human resources manager of one large firm:

We employ workers with secondary education, and we train them ourselves. We make contracts with some training institutions...and we generate technicians. But they become [X-firm]-technicians. We certify them. They cannot use that certificate elsewhere and work at [Y-firm], for instance. It won't work that way.²⁸

On the other hand, the SMEs in Mexico—those businesses potentially in need of public skill systems and skill certification—lack the organizational power to push for changes. Their exclusion from the ruling coalitions and the prioritization of big businesses has shaped the respective outcomes. As a result of limited push from the business' side, the governments in Mexico have not shown as much commitment as in Turkey regarding the skill certification system, rendering its development and implementation highly limited.

The 2005 Law in Mexico envisages a tripartite structure for CONOCER's Board and its sector committees, which are the bodies responsible for developing occupational standards. The Board, housed within the Ministry of Public Education, comprises representatives of the CCE, the Mexican Employers' Confederation (COPARMEX), the Confederation of Industrial Chambers of the United States of Mexico (CONCAMIN) on the business side; the representatives of the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC), the Mexican Confederation of Workers (CTM), and the Labor Congress on the labor side; along with representatives of the Ministries of Labor, Economy, Agriculture, Finance, and the National Institute for the Education of Adults. While the associations representing big business are part of the Board, those representing SMEs are not included.

Nonetheless, CONOCER's *de jure* tripartite framework does not function effectively in practice due to indifference and limited voice of business representatives (Székely 2013). Business' participation in the boards of *strategic sectors*²⁹ and committees has been limited and materialized at the level of representatives from human resource

departments rather than top-level executives (de Anda, 2010).³⁰ Likewise, the participation of labor representatives on CONOCER's board and the sector committees is also limited, which in turn hinders the functioning of the tripartite structure. Overall, the de facto operation of the system has significantly diverged from its *de jure* framework.³¹

2.2.3. Limited implementation of the skill certification system

According to a Vice-President of the IDB, the establishment and functioning of the respective system and CONOCER in Mexico constitute 'an example of how it should not be done' in other MICs.³² The skill certification system and the SNC have failed to be incorporated into broader policy frameworks and development programs in Mexico. In contrast to their systematic and clear incorporation into Turkish policy frameworks and programs, they are barely and vaguely mentioned without a systematic identification of instruments, actors and their responsibility schemes in the Mexican case. For instance, the National Development Program (2013–2018) does not address the SNC or CONOCER, and refers to the certification of informal learning for only a few cases (Presidencia de República, 2013). Such indifference also marked the previous Development Program (2007–2012), which lacked any reference to certification (Presidencia de República, 2007). Although 'certification of personnel to increase the value added by activities' was identified as an objective in the Industrial Policy Program, no further detail was provided nor was any reference made to the SNC and CONOCER (SE, 2013, p. 47).

So far, the Program for Education Policy (2013–2018) is the only policy area in the Mexican case that addresses skill certification. Improving the standardization of skills and restructuring the SNC are underscored as important strategies for strengthening the quality of upper secondary and tertiary education and its relevance for the labor market; lifelong learning is only referred to with respect to retraining teachers, especially those in basic education, whilst CONOCER is not mentioned (SEP, 2013). In the Program for Employment Policy (2013–2018), incentivizing skill certification is pinpointed as a deliberate strategy to attain the objective of 'democratizing the productivity and training of workers' (STPS, 2013). While the 'Program for Employment Policy' states the certification's importance for employment of vulnerable groups, certification procedures and CONOCER's role are not addressed. The lack of incorporation of CONOCER and SNC in the scope of certification is especially important given the multiple certification systems in Mexico.³³

As a result of business's lack of engagement, limited commitment by the state, the voluntary nature of CONOCER certificates along with the use of multiple (public and private) certification systems, skill certification in Mexico has remained highly marginal (CONOCER 2017). For instance, occupational standards developed for the automotive sector, which comprises 25% of Mexico's exports,³⁴ constitute only 2% of all standards developed in Mexico while this sector constitutes a major share in Turkey (CONOCER 2017; MYK 2017). Additionally, unused qualifications persist in Mexico: only 35% of CONOCER standards were used for certification in 2007–2011 and the IDB defined 57% of the occupational standards as 'obsolete' (de Anda, 2010; Ricart et al., 2014, p. 33).

The existence of multiple skill certification systems, including those provided by local governments and firms, coined as a 'dual system' of certification by the IDB, has weakened CONOCER's effectiveness (Álvarez–Mendiola, 2006). Currently, only a marginal share of workers at local auto parts producers possesses occupational

certificates. As a common trend in the automotive sector, Mexican firms certify their workers only when it is required by their global buyers, mostly opting for private certificates. Accordingly, most firms stating that their workers are ‘certified’ refer to certification at the firm-level rather than to a standardized certification (Sancak, *forthcoming*).

3. Conclusion

Skills have acquired crucial importance in the age of intensified global competition, reflected in the increasing complexity of skill politics. This paper studies the politics of skill institutions by drawing empirical evidence from skill certification systems in two rarely compared, yet important cases of MICs, Mexico and Turkey. The variation in the adoption of skill certification systems in these countries makes them laboratories to observe the dynamics of such diversification, which has taken place in the context of their increasing exposure to global competition and diverging domestic political coalitions. Thus, the paper addresses the debates on the effects of globalization on skill institutions as well as the politics of skill systems in the MICs.

The paper traces the sequences through which the skill certification systems have been implemented in different ways in Mexico and Turkey. Inquiring about the demand-side pressures for skill certificate systems on the part of businesses, the paper posits that firm size would shape differential preferences across firms regarding skill certification. It demonstrates that although both countries have faced similar external pressures regarding these systems, such pressures have facilitated an effective institutional change in Turkey since it coincided with the political-distributional calculations of respective governments. Close alliance between SMEs and the AKP governments engendered an eager commitment by the latter in espousing skill certification based on the incentives for the former, leading to the effective incorporation of certification into broader policy frameworks and implementation of the system for critical sectors of the Turkish economy. In contrast, such commitment has been missing in the Mexican case since the interests entrenched in the ruling coalition (representing large firms) remained indifferent to such implementation, which has impaired an effective adoption of skill certification.

By demarcating the diverse pathways of institutional evolution in two cases despite the prevalence of competitive pressures, the paper adds to the ongoing debate on the politics of skill institutions in MICs and institutional change and diversity in the age of globalization. Exploring domestic actors’ lobbying for and participation in skill certification systems, as well as external actors’ promotion of certification, the paper argues that domestic ruling coalitions are a key to explain the varying pathways of skill institutions. It indicates that skill systems in MICs are also formed through coordination between the state and SMEs, which actively take part in those systems through their organizations, akin to what happened in advanced capitalist countries with established skill institutions, such as Germany. Furthermore, it suggests that it is not possible to denote the ‘convergence’ of skill systems against the backdrop of globalization, because of the role played by (varying) domestic politics, mediating external pressures, and hence, leading to different outcomes.

Intensifying divides, and hence distributional conflicts between big business and SMEs, have been common features of most upper MICs which have been increasingly exposed to international competition. Therefore, despite the empirical evidence is based on only two cases, the proposed causal links between the nature of domestic coalitions

and the likelihood of effective adoption of skill certification systems entail external validity at least for the upper MICs, in many of which state-big business coalitions have been preponderant, contributing to inadequate development of public skill systems. Future research will shed light on other diverse trajectories regarding skill systems across the MICs, as well as in advanced countries to understand how those systems affect businesses in different sectors and sizes, and workers in different sectors and occupations.

Notes

1. Turkey received 51 million euros from the EU in 2002–2007 while Mexico obtained 50.4 million USD from the IDB 2005–2009 (ÇSGB 2007; IDB 2014).
2. The two countries have almost identical levels of GDP per capita: Mexico's is USD 9,005 and Turkey's is USD 9,126 in current prices (2015 figures: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>).
3. Although 'hierarchical capitalism' coined by Schneider (2013) mainly refers to Latin American countries, it fits the Turkish variety of capitalism as well, notwithstanding the lesser weight of multinational enterprises in Turkey historically, compared to that in Latin America.
4. For the historical conflict between the secular state establishment and religious groups, and its reflection in the business community, see Gümüşçü (2010), Öniş (2007, 2012), and Özel (2010).
5. In Turkey, the 2006 Law defines the SME as an economic entity employing less than 250 persons, and having an annual turnover or balance sheet not exceeding 40 million Turkish Lira (TL). Micro-enterprises are those employing less than 10 persons and having turnover lower than 1 million TL; small enterprises are those employing less than 50 persons and having turnover lower than 8 million TL; and medium enterprises are those employing less than 250 persons and having turnover lower than 40 million TL (OECD 2016a:430). In Mexico, the break-down of SMEs is slightly different across sectors: according to the SE's 2002 definition, in industry and services, enterprises employing up to 10 persons are classified as micro; those employing between 11 and 50 are small; and those employing between 51 and 250 persons are medium. In commerce, small firms are those employing between 11 and 30 persons; and medium firms are those employing between 31 and 100 persons (INEGI 2011). By 2016, 97.6% of SMEs were micro, 2.0% were small, and 0.4% were medium in Mexico, while in Turkey, 97% were micro, 2% were small, and 0.9% were medium-sized (INEGI 2016; SE 2013; TSI 2016a).
6. This has been an important element in exporting to Europe, particularly to countries like Germany–Turkey's largest export market, attracting 9.3% of Turkish exports (TSI 2016c).
7. Protocols are signed with organizations ranging from the Turkish Miners' Association and the Federation of Breathing Coaches which have applied in 2017 to prepare occupational standards in their own sectors/segments [MYK (2017). *Olağan Genel Kurul*. Ankara: MYK, p. 9].
8. MYK statistics as of 27 October 2017. Retrieved October 27, 2017, from https://portal.myk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_istatistik.
9. Video recordings of the exams administered by the centers of certification are compiled and monitored by the MYK based on the respective procedures. See MYK (2017) 'Sınav ve Belgelendirme Süreci Kalite Güvencesi Unsurları' [The principles of quality assurance of the exam and certification processes].
10. Interviews with E. Ö. Babaoğlu and F. Bilen, MYK experts. Ankara, 19 October 2017.
11. Retrieved November 12, 2017, from <https://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/www/hayat-boyu-ogrenmenin-geliştirilmesi-2-projesi-hayat-boyu-rehberlik-calistaylari-tamamlandi/icerik/620>.
12. TUSKON, which had close contact with the AKP governments until 2013, was closed down in 2016 following the coup attempt in which TUSKON is claimed to have been implicated.
13. Retrieved March 11, 2017, from <https://myk.gov.tr/index.php/tr/teskilat/yonetim-kurulu>.
14. Interviews with E. Ö. Babaoğlu and F. Bilen, MYK experts. Ankara, 19 October 2017. Phone interview with A. S. Baban, TOBB representative at the MYK General Council, 12 October 2017.
15. For the MYK's sector committees, see www.myk.gov.tr/index.php/tr/sector-komiteleri. Retrieved October 20, 2017.

16. Retrieved from <http://www.myk.gov.tr/index.php/tr/sector-komiteleri/97-otomatik-sektor-komitesi>. Interviews with Ms Babaoğlu and Mr Bilen.
17. Interviews with Ms Babaoğlu and Mr Bilen.
18. Phone interview with Mr Baban.
19. Law #6645 (Official Gazette, 2013).
20. Interview with I. Saraç, expert at Department of Active Labor Market Policies Services (İŞKUR), Ankara, 19 September 2015.
21. MYK's Sector Committee Representatives, Metals Industry, 3rd Period. Retrieved from <http://www.myk.gov.tr/index.php/tr/sektorkomiteleri/155-metal-sektor-komitesi>.
22. For MESS' Examination and Certification Center for Occupational Qualifications, retrieved from SİBEM: <https://www.sibem.com.tr/>.
23. MYK statistics as of 9 November 2017. 'Sektörel Göstergeler, MYK MYB Alan Kişi Sayısı'. Obtained directly by the MYK.
24. Interview with N. Kenar, Director General, MESS Education Foundation, Istanbul, 24 October 2014.
25. Interviews with Ms Babaoğlu and Mr Bilen.
26. For the CCE's membership and the profile of the invitees, see <http://www.cce.org.mx/historia/>. Retrieved October 6, 2017.
27. 'Changarrización' derives from 'changarro' which refers to small (mostly family owned) businesses in Mexico.
28. Interview with the human resources manager of a large Mexican multinational, Monterrey, 14 July 2015.
29. Automotive, construction, electric energy, food processing, information technologies, logistics, mining, oil and gas, telecommunications, tourism, and trade are considered strategic sectors.
30. Interview with L. Mertens, productivity expert, ILO-Mexico, Mexico City, 26 March 2015.
31. Interview with E. C. Cuevas, coordinator of linking and scholarships, SEP, Mexico City, 4 May 2015.
32. Personal communication with an IDB Vice-President, London, 4 October 2017.
33. Interview with I. Ahumada-Lobo, labor market and public policies expert at FLACSO, Mexico City, 19 July 2015.
34. Retrieved from http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/mex/all/show/2016/.

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