

# Chapter 3

## Continuing Vocational Education and Training in Spain: Current Organization and Challenges



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**Abstract** Traditionally, in Spain, continuing vocational education and training (hereinafter CVET) is conceived as an educational process aimed at the workforce as a whole, including initiatives aimed at both active workers and those seeking employment. Therefore, it refers to what is known in Spain as *Vocational Training for Employment* (in Spanish, *Formación para el Empleo*, FPE), which differs from initial vocational training (*Formación Profesional Inicial*), which is taught in ordinary professional and secondary schools in cooperation with companies. In this chapter we will analyse partway the FPE system in Spain, focusing especially on CVET aimed to employees. Previously, in order to contextualize this reality, a synthetic socio-economic approach of the Spanish labour market is introduced. In this way, it will be clearer and easier to understand the main characteristics of the CVET in the territory we are highlighting. It's intended to introduce CVET in Spain from a double perspective, legal organization and management on the one hand and results of different investigations and statistical approaches on another, to obtain a more realistic picture of the situation.

Finally, the new challenges for CVET in Spain are explained, paying special attention, among other issues, to social responsibility, to development and to the population at risk.

**Keywords** Lifelong learning · Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) · Labour market · Spain

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### 3.1 Introduction

In Spain there is a system aimed at training the active population as a whole, including actions designed for both the employed and the unemployed. This system is known as *Vocational Training for Employment* (in Spanish, *Formación para el Empleo*, FPE), and it differs from the initial vocational education and training established within the education system, which is generally developed in vocational and secondary schools in collaboration with companies.

In this chapter we will try to approach CVET in Spain from a double perspective: a theoretical-legislative and a practical one, with the aim of introducing this specific reality and its implications in relation to socio-economic and human development. First of all, we will briefly present some of the elements that characterize the Spanish labour market and how such factors are affecting CVET reality. Later, we will analyse more specifically and from a structural point of view how this training is organized—norms and regulations that build the official framework for the development of training inside companies. Next, we will try to make explicit the results of different studies on the subject that show, in practice, how this structural and normative dimension is translated into daily training actions. More specifically, we will mention the different conceptions and modalities of continuing education and training in Spain and the satisfaction level of workers with it (Aragón et al. 2003; Barreira Cerqueiras 2015; García Ruiz 2006), among other interesting data.

Finally, we will address some of the needs of the Spanish CVET model that represent challenges that make their role problematic in relation to, and among other issues, corporate social responsibility, the so-called Sustainable Development Goals—hereinafter SDG—proposed by the United Nations (UN 2015) or its answer to the growing social inequalities that riddle Spanish society nowadays.

### 3.2 A Concise Socio-economic Approach to the Spanish Labour Market: Factors That Contextualize and Have Influence on CVET

The specific socio-economic situation in Spain strongly determines how companies understand training actions aimed at their workers, the importance of the qualification of human resources and even their role in society as agents that must contribute to generate wealth and social welfare through remunerated employment and professional development of the active population.

The unemployment rate in Spain is currently (3Q17) at 16.38% (Statistics National Institute 2017a), confirming a downward trend in this figure since it peaked at 26.09% in 2013. However, the number of unemployed people in Spain is close to four million (Idem), although there are big differences between autonomous

communities.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it is worth mentioning that the most vulnerable groups in relation to unemployment (Statistics National Institute 2017a) are women (19.04%) and young people under 25 (39.53%). The latter are usually harmed *by the importance given by employers in their hiring decisions to work experience* (García 2011, p. 3), beyond the education level achieved by individuals.

In relation to this analysis, the secondary qualification rate—professional or academic—among the Spain’s adult population (25–64 years old) is also very low compared to other European countries.<sup>2</sup> In sociological terms, this means that either part of the population can’t achieve such qualifications or that they don’t consider it as an essential step when it comes to entering the labour market. Probably because vocational education and training in Spain has been traditionally considered as a type of training aimed, almost exclusively, to those students with low qualifications, therefore the reputation of this training was affected. In addition, there is a tendency, even today, within the Spanish business community to value more the professional experience of the future worker than their certified professional qualification in terms of access to employment. This happens mainly in those positions that do not require a high qualification. From this situation, it is possible to expect that participation in CVET is also lower than in other European countries that value more IVET, although, as we will see later, this is not exactly the case.

Other peculiar phenomena to the Spanish labour market affecting the continuing training system have to do, for instance, with the high rate of university graduates—well above the EU average—which contributes in part to the coexistence in the Spanish labour market of situations such as *overqualification* (Villar 2014; Ramos 2017) and *underemployment* (Acosta-Ballesteros et al. 2016), as well as the migration of the most qualified population to other contexts, what is known as *brain drain* (Santos Ortega 2013). The high proportion of people with university qualifications in the country can be related to a high rate of participation in CVET because, as a research within European adults from 25 to 64 years old (CEDEFOP 2014, p. 19) has recently shown, *the highly qualified (those that have completed tertiary education) participate far more in lifelong learning than the low qualified (those that have at most lower secondary education)*.

On the other hand, another of the key characteristics of the Spanish labour market is the trend to the temporary nature of the new contracts. A reality probably related to the predominant economic activities (Statistics National Institute 2016a): commercial activities—retail and wholesale trade—and automotive, manufacturing, hospitality and social and health services. As we see, it concerns professional sec-

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<sup>1</sup>Although Andalusia, Extremadura and the autonomous city of Melilla have unemployment rates of more than 24%, in the autonomous community of Navarre and the Basque Country, they do not reach 12% in this same period (Statistics National Institute 2017a).

<sup>2</sup>According to the OECD, proportion of the Spanish adult population (25–64 years old) with an upper secondary degree (academic or vocational) stands at 23%. This situation differs from the EU-28 average in which 42% of the adult population has finished an upper secondary programme. These figures place Spain behind countries such as Greece and Ireland, among others, and show an even greater distance with countries such as Italy, Austria, Germany and Denmark, where more than 40% of the adult population has achieved an upper secondary vocational programme.

tors that, because of their characteristics, make a broad use of part-time hiring.<sup>3</sup> Another of the specific features of the Spanish market is the large share of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which make up the majority of the labour market. According to the Statistics National Institute (2017b), 95.5% of companies are micro-companies (with fewer than 10 employees), and 55.5% of these are self-employed workers without employees. This reality will also influence the participation of workers in CVET because those who work for a large company are more likely to participate in continuing education, to the detriment of those who work in a micro-company or are self-employed. As indicated by CEDEFOP (2014), there is a general trend across the EU-28 that the attendance of employees at CVET increases with the size of the company and this is applied both to courses and to other forms of continuing education and training.

Finally, it is important to mention that the underground economy represents in Spain, according to some estimates (Mauleón and Sardá 2014, cited in Mauleón 2014), almost a quarter of the volume of the official economy (23% in the year 2012). This situation is not uncommon in other southern European countries but extremely different to the main economic situation in the north of Europe (Idem). Mauleón (2014) also indicates that this situation may be due to a confluence of several factors: the predominant type of activity in the economy, a high tax pressure, high unemployment rates, excessive bureaucratic regulation and also other elements such as *the level of general morality, showed for example in the degree of corruption* (Idem., p. 56).

### 3.3 What About CVET in Spain? Different Conceptions in Theory and in Practice

At present in Spain, Vocational Training for Employment is undergoing significant changes in its structure and organization. Since 2013, Labour Authorities have begun to change the composition of this training system and also its regulations, so we will present the organizational reality of CVET, explaining some of the recent changes.

The constant overlapping of new regulations is also one of the elements that we should consider as defining the training initiatives aimed at workers in Spain. Such a confusing legal habit is making managing the system in a stable and predictable way difficult, as well as making more difficult the social perception of its real usefulness. Since the publication of the Law of Qualifications and Vocational

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Public Employment Service (SEPE 2017), only 8.52% of all new contracts made in 2016 in Spain had an indefinite duration. That implies that the rest (91.48%) were temporary contracts. These figures on new hiring remain relatively stable since 2007, when temporary hiring reached 88.8% of new contracts (Idem). In 2013 it reached 92.33% and currently (2016) stands at 91.42% (Idem). In relation to the total employed population, more than a quarter (26.1%) are related to their employer under a temporary contract (Statistics National Institute 2016b).

Education and Training in 2002, new regulations on CVET have regularly appeared.<sup>4</sup> This cascade of new regulations on CVET means that the companies' training managers must be constantly updated. Although the legal changes aim to reduce the bureaucracy of training management, in some investigations (Pineda and Sarramona 2006; Vega Estrella 2015) companies point out that management is complex and this may hinder companies' involvement in CVET, especially SMEs. In fact, some of these SMEs indicate that the bureaucratic management of the training is entrusted to other companies (Pineda and Sarramona 2006), because they do not know about the legal norms and they fear not being able to comply with all the requirements legally established.

The Public Employment Service and the National Foundation for Training and Employment identified several deficiencies and difficulties in the development of training, which policymakers used to justify some of the legislative changes. For example, these institutions mention the poor coordination of the training system; deficiencies in strategic planning and in the information system; limitations in the assessment, monitoring and control plans; lack of generalization and accessibility of the training on offer; or the limited development of specific training programmes, among other needs. Under these premises, three new law provisions<sup>5</sup> have been passed with the aim of creating a new configuration of the CVET.

In the same way, as in all educational systems, the structural dimension that the legislation envisions has a huge influence on the practical context through the combination of the relational, cultural, procedural and contextual dimensions (González 2003). This implies that attention must also be paid to the real configuration of continuing education and training, based on different studies and research reports that aspire to approach and explain their development and social representation.

### ***3.3.1 CVET in Spain Through Recent Legislative Changes and Their Organizational Consequences***

One of the essential principles of Spain's CVET model is that the training actions within the FPE system are aimed at workers, to enable them to improve their skills and professional qualifications and even to acquire new ones (Art. 3, Royal Decree 694/2017). In this way, the concept of *lifelong learning* prevailing in the European

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<sup>4</sup>We can highlight the Royal Decree 1046/2003 that regulates the CVET system; Employment Law 56/2003; the IV National Continuing Education and Training Agreement (Resolution of March 3rd, 2006); the Royal Decree 395/2007 that regulates the FPE system; the Royal Decree-Law 4/2015 for the urgent reform of the FPE system; Law 30/2015 that regulates the FPE System; or the Royal Decree 694/2017 by which Law 30/2015 is developed.

<sup>5</sup>In chronological order, we are referring to Royal Decree-Law 4/2015, of March 22nd, for the urgent reform of Training System for Employment (BOE, No. 70, 03/23/2015); Law 30/2015, of September 9th, which regulates Training System for Employment (BOE, No. 217, 09/10/2015); and Royal Decree 694/2017, of July 3rd, that develops Law 30/2015, of September 9th, which regulates Training System for Employment (BOE, No. 159, 07/05/2017).

labour market and training policies is materialized. The current legislation denominates *training initiatives* to each of the training modalities aimed at attending both individual needs and productive system goals (Art. 8.1, Law 30/2015). All these so-called training initiatives make up the entire FPE system in Spain and refer, among others, to the training actions programmed by companies for their workers, the training activities offered by public administrations aimed at both employed and unemployed workers and other actions such as those known as *Individual Training Leave* (ITL, in Spanish, *Permisos Individuales de Formación, PIF*<sup>6</sup>) and apprentice processes and other training programmes not financed by public funds, but developed by private agencies and aimed at achieving *professional qualification certificates*.

To clarify who the agents responsible for providing CVET in Spain are, it is necessary to indicate that there is great diversity. In addition to the companies or private training agencies registered at the so-called State Register of Training Agencies (in Spanish, *Registro Estatal de Entidades de Formación* or *Red de Entidades de Formación*), training can also be organized by Public Administrations through their own Public Vocational Schools, National Reference Schools, and Integrated Vocational Training Schools—the National Employment System or even public universities.

The planning of the CVET takes place over a multi-year scenario, which means that government institutions open a space for the strategic planning of the future training actions with the goal of responding to the previously expressed training needs of workers. In this planning process, the Administration—assuming the direction of the entire process—collaborates with different social agents such as employers' associations, trade unions and, more recently, training companies, the Freelance Workers' Association and the Social Economy.

In essence, the Labour Authorities draw up a training programme based on the analysis of all relevant aspects of the Spanish productive and educational processes and the economy trends and evolution. At the same time, close attention is paid to the sectors that are undergoing key changes or that are creating new jobs and economic growth, to the cross-cutting professional skills that deserve priority attention, to the goals and indicators for the assessment of the correct development of the training process and, last but not least, to the estimation of financial resources needed to keep the system up and running. However, the ability of the aforementioned social agents to participate in the decision-making process has greatly decreased over the last few years, being therefore safe to assume that they are nowadays simply consultative stakeholders. This situation has occurred since the publication of Law 30/2015, due to its introduction which states that *social agents stop participating in the management of funds and in the training management as they did to date, leaving this role to the organizations that provide vocational training [...]*.

However, when the system of CVET in Spain first regulated in 1992 with the signing of the first National Continuing Training Agreements (in Spanish, *Acuerdos*

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<sup>6</sup>As stated in Art. 21 of the TAS Order 2307/2007, of July 27th, *Individual Training Leaves* (ITLs) are authorizations given by the company to an employee to carry out a paid training action aimed at achieving an officially recognized degree.

*Nacionales de Formación Continua, ANFC*), the Public Administration—the agency that today determines how CVET funds are managed—was not a signatory part (Hernández Carrera 2013). The first *ANFC* was an agreement reached between trade unions and employers' associations, and until the year 2000 and the signature of the third *ANFC*, the Administration was not incorporated into the decision-making process to manage the financial resources that fund CVET programmes. Along with these new agreements was created the so-called Tripartite Foundation for Training and Employment (in Spanish, *Fundación Tripartita para la Formación y el Empleo, FTFE*), which included the former Continuing Education and Training Foundation (*Fundación para la Formación Continua, FORCEM*) created by the first *ANFC*. This Foundation is responsible, with the Public Employment Service, for the management of the training and also for their assessment, monitoring and control. Another of its functions has to do with the development of research, prospection and dissemination activities, as well as organizing national and international events related to training.

While the *FORCEM* board was composed of the most representative business and trade union organizations (CEOE, CEPYME, UGT, CCOO and CIG), the *FTFE*'s board of trustees is comprised of the aforementioned union and business organizations and also of the representatives of the National Public Administration—through the Secretary of State for Employment—and of the autonomous communities. The current National Foundation for Training and Employment (in Spanish, *Fundación Estatal para la Formación y el Empleo, FUNDAE*) has a board made up of these same agencies already mentioned and also by representatives of the Public Employment Service, under the Ministry of Employment and Social Security. For some researchers, such as Hernández Carrera (2013), all these changes in the composition of the Foundation have been implemented to ensure the government's control of the funds allocated to training programmes, but also with an interventionist view to promoting greater liberalization in the training sector.

In relation to that, another aspect of the Spanish model of CVET that must be highlighted is defined in the regulations as *reinforcement of the ability to control and penalize* (Article 18, Law 30/2015), and it is related to the need, detected by the Labour Authorities, to reinforce the instruments and resources designed to penalize the infractions of the regulations that may be committed by the agents involved in the training. This provision is materialized by the establishment of a Special Unit dependent on the Labour Inspectorate, which annually runs an inspection programmes and updates the specific penalties. This increase in the government monitoring and control of public resources for in-company training is accompanied by measures to centralize to a further extent the management of the entire FPE system. This type of policy is considered by the European Commission (2016) as a significant reduction in the role that the associations of companies and unions have been playing in the ongoing training process up to now. The more their role decreases, the more that of the government increases.

The desire of Labour Authorities to control this process may correspond partly to the fact that CVET in recent years has been a context in which fraudulent or corrupt practices have regularly occurred. Various social agents such as companies and pub-

lic authorities have been involved in these scandals, affairs that have been the subject of huge attention by mass media. However, some authors (Hernández Carrera 2013; Vega Estrella 2015) warn that the fraudulent use of state funding for training in companies—especially in relation to what was previously known as *on-demand training*<sup>7</sup>—seems to describe the Spanish reality only partially. They argue that these situations are exaggerated as a strategy to bring an end to the social agents' involvement in the management of training initiatives for employed and unemployed workers (Hernández Carrera 2013).

Trade unions and employers' associations are therefore the agents in charge of the management of the training programmes; planning, execution and diffusion of the CVET actions being some of their main tasks. However, in light of the recent legislation, private training agencies have also become agents to be considered—at the same level as trade unions and business associations—with a voice in the designing and planning of training actions. This situation has been identified as an attempt to *privatize* training for employed (CVET) and unemployed workers (Manzanares Núñez and López Romito 2014), because these training companies, with this new legal framework, are in a position to act as a lobby against the Public Administration. This new arena would allow them to influence in a certain way the planning of training actions and guide it towards those sectors, contents or specific programmes that allow them to obtain higher profit margins, regardless of the real needs or deficiencies manifested by workers and companies. As we mentioned before, those new regulations open the door for the Freelance Associations and Social Economy Associations to be involved in the planning and design of the training programmes. These groups had not yet been included in the process and undoubtedly, they should have been considered sooner as official negotiators regarding continuing education and training, given the characteristics of the Spanish labour market.

On the other hand, the current legislation addresses the need to create an *integrated information system* that can act as a centralized space where data and relevant information of all training activities in the country can be collected. With the aim of organizing this informational system, several transparency and control bodies have been created, such as the *Training Account*, the *State Record of Training Agencies* and the *Catalogue of Training Qualifications*. Between these bodies, one of the most interesting is the *Training Account*, associated with the Social Security affiliation number of every worker. It is a body that shows the training and profes-

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<sup>7</sup>In a previous Spanish legislation, *on-demand training* used to be explained as training actions linked to the specific needs of companies and employees (it included training actions developed within companies and the *Individual Training Leaves*). Therefore, companies themselves were responsible for its planning and management. This *on-demand training* was financed through tax exemptions in the companies' contributions to social security. On the other hand, the so-called offered training referred to those training actions that were planned and developed by the Public Administration, diverse social agents or private training companies. They were aimed at both employed and unemployed workers and they were financed through public grants. Currently, this difference between *on-demand training* and *offered training* is no longer reflected in the new regulations. However, the specific training actions included in each of these categories are still being developed under other names.



sional profile of the person and in which it is possible to check his or her educational record and the professional skills acquired during the training processes the worker has participated in. However, currently this *Training Account* has not yet been launched.

The *Catalogue of Training Qualifications*—called Index of Training specializations in the Royal Decree 395/2007 and in Art. 7 of TAS Order 718/2008—includes the training offer developed in the FPE system, the requirements that both trainers and trainees should meet, as well as the equipment and facilities required for each qualification programme. However, companies do not have the obligation of including training actions carried out by their workers in this Catalogue, which limits in a certain way, the consulting and integrating purpose of all the training actions that, in principle, is what this body intended to achieve. Anyway, this Catalogue must be updated periodically with new specialties and include changes that may have some impact on the labour market or on training actions. Finally, the *State Record of Training Agencies* intends, at least initially, to include all organizations that provide training aimed at offering qualification certificates associated with the Training Catalogue—these organizations being known as *accredited agencies*—as well as those that provide training not associated to the Catalogue—*registered agencies*. This last group includes the companies that plan and develop the professional training. This *State Record of Training Agencies* is managed by the Labour Authorities, its responsibility being the inclusion and maintenance of the different organizations.

Regarding the financing of CVET within companies, it is worth mentioning that in the Spanish context, public and private financing coexist. However, it seems clear that the main agent in providing funds for training in companies is the public sector—specifically, through the Labour Authorities—once an extensive regulation and incentive procedures for training have been established over time. These regulations have led to the creation of different channels through which companies can either directly finance their training actions or obtain considerable tax benefits for developing such actions. Specifically, regulations mention four ways of funding CVET (Art. 7, Royal Decree-Law 4/2015 and Art. 6, Law 30/2015): bonuses for corporate contributions to Social Security; subsidies under an open and competitive basis applied to the training offered to employed and unemployed workers; public procurement for fund management of the FPE system; direct grants to people interested in carrying out training actions—transportation aid, work-life balance initiatives, etc.—and finally a state budget that funds the training carried out through the public network of training schools. More specifically, we can notice in Table 3.1 the Spanish budgets applied in 2015 to exclusively support the financing of CVET by the Labour Authorities—training for the unemployed is not included in Table 3.1, although is part of the FPE system.

On the other hand, public funds allocated to CVET are obtained from the vocational training tax system paid by both workers and companies and are completed with the contributions of the Public Employment Service, funds from the autonomous communities and other European organizations such as the European Social Fund (ESF). In Table 3.2 we can see the different contributions to maintenance of

**Table 3.1** Application of the CVET budget in 2015 (€)

Application of the CVET budget in 2015	
Ceuta and Melilla Training Subsidy	111,400,510
Training actions National Calls	188,568,860
Bonuses to companies involved in training actions (corporate contributions to Social Security) and other CVET actions in companies	605,000,000
National	31,038,690
Training actions aimed to public workers	53,421,360
Total	989,429,420

Source: FUNDAE (2016)

**Table 3.2** 2015 income to support the *FPE system* in Spain (€)

Contributions to the FPE system	2015 incomes
Vocational training tax (paid by workers and companies)	1,848,392,650
Contribution of public administrations (including national budget, public employment service budget and funds from the autonomous communities)	134,052,680
European Social Fund (ESF)	100,000,000
Total	2,082,445,330

Source: FUNDAE (2016)

the entire FPE system—including CVET and training for the unemployed—and the income obtained in 2015.

One of the most characteristic ways of public funding of the CVET system in Spain is the bonus received by companies in their Social Security contributions for having developed training actions. This modality does not have an open and competitive basis and is aimed exclusively at funding both training actions offered by companies to their workers and *Individual Training Leaves*. This includes what is known as *training credit* and *private joint financing*. *Training credit* is defined as an amount that is made available to companies from Public Administrations as a bonus in Social Security contributions, as we have already mentioned. The amount that the company can save for carrying out training actions depends on the number of workers and on the amount already paid by the company itself in the previous year in relation to the Vocational training tax. *Private joint financing* of CVET is also required depending on the size of the company (number of employees) and implies that companies contribute to the training process of their workers with their own resources. As an estimated example according to Law 48/2015 of General State Budgets for 2016, Spanish companies with between six and nine employees would have 100% of their CVET funded. The public bonus of CVET is progressively reduced in an inversely proportional way to the number of employees of the company, up to a limit of 50% of the cost of the training in those companies with 250 or more employees. In short, big companies would only have to contribute with their own resources up to 50% of the cost of continuing education and training, the other 50% being deducted from their contributions to Social Security through the *training credit*. This means that one of the main incentives for developing CVET

among Spanish companies may be the fact that they are funded by Public Administration, either completely or to a very large degree. In other words, many Spanish companies—especially SMEs—seem to invest in its human capital because of the existence of joint financing training policies (Barreira Cerqueiras 2015). This can be seen from the evolution of the participation of the Spanish companies in training since the 80s and 90s until today (FORCEM 1998 and Alba-Ramírez 1994, cited in Barreira Cerqueiras 2015), which has been progressively increased as the Labour Authorities have encouraged the CVET system with public funds. However, there are also other elements that influence the decision of companies to train workers or not, such as the size of the company, the level of internationalization, the support of human resources management or the presence of innovative processes (García Moreno et al. 2007).

At the same time, other perspectives such as that expressed by Villar (2014, p. 68) show that there is not enough evidence on the usefulness of public financing of CVET actions to improve labour productivity or that such government funded training actions *increase the employability in a statistically significant way*. Nevertheless, there is empirical evidence that the CVET of employees can be a sustainable competitive advantage for companies in relation to the investment made (García Moreno et al. 2007, p. 3694), always depending on its proper planning, financing, organization and management. As a function of that, Spanish companies could probably invest more (and better) on training actions for their workers, thus avoiding complete dependence on public financing. This would enable them to identify the training actions that suited them most, and to adapt them to their real needs—previously and rigorously detected—and not simply to carry them out to obtain tax exemptions, without deepening the analysis of their real effectiveness.

### ***3.3.2 Funding and Volumes of Spanish CVET in Recent Years***

From a theoretical point of view, it is possible to conceptualize and assess CVET under divergent approaches and socio-economic stances that would condition the aims and development of the entire system. We can establish for example, a possible classification—not strictly rigorous or composed by closed categories—of these perspectives from the point of view of the specialized literature. In the first place, there are some authors that approach CVET from an economic and strategical perspective that puts the centre of attention on the company's relation between cost and efficiency. Therefore, training is needed almost exclusively to achieve higher productivity rates (Zwick 2002; Albert et al. 2007; Mato Díaz 2010; Medina Domínguez 2011; Eichhorst et al. 2015; Elhert 2017). Another perspective, however, studies CVET from a holistic point of view and focuses on the benefits of lifelong education for the whole society. These authors conceive lifelong learning as a process whose importance goes well beyond improving business productivity and the quality of CVET as a factor that must be given pre-eminence over any restrictively economic obsession (De la Torre Prados 2000; García Ruiz 2006; Bermejo Campos 2006;

Pineda Herrero 2007; Tejada Fernández and Ferrández Lafuente 2007; López Noguero 2008; Rubio Herráez 2008; Alonso Rodríguez 2010 and, more recently, Barreira Cerqueiras 2015). Next, we intend to take both perspectives into consideration in order to analyse the impact and incidence of CVET in Spain.

As it has been indicated, the increasingly precarious Spanish labour market—and the media and social perspectives that try to show this reality as ‘normal’—has a substantial impact on the CVET attitudes inside Spanish companies, as well as on other indicators related to labour rights, that must be respected, also, by these companies. That is why we consider continuing education and training, not only as a need linked to the improvement of business productivity but also as a labour right associated with professional and individual development. However, only 22.7% of the companies registered with the Social Security Treasury in 2016 have developed FPE initiatives aimed at employees (FUNDAE 2017a) and only an amount of 7.124 *Individual Training Leaves* have been authorized across the country. Assuming that each company authorized one ITL,<sup>8</sup> this would include only 0.44% of all Spanish companies. In addition, since 2013 the number of companies that provide CVET follows a downward trend: while in year (2013) this figure stood at 30%, it dropped to 29.7% in 2014 and to 27.4% in 2015. Finally, in 2016 only 22.7% of Spanish companies had provided any training (Idem) to the people they employed. These figures enable us to see that, although a large part of the CVET initiatives—or the entire process, depending on the size of the company—is financed by the Public Administration, there is still a large number of Spanish companies that choose not to develop any training programme, and also that there exists a tendency to do so less and less according to available data on their involvement. This is strikingly different to what happens in the EU-28, where *in 2010 it is estimated that two thirds (66%) of companies provided CVET to the people they employed and this marked an increase compared to 2005 when the participation was 60%* (Eurostat 2018a, b). It is also fair to recognize that among the EU Member States, the proportion of companies that provided such training in 2010 is highly different. Eurostat’s own data show that these figures can go from 22% in Poland up to 91% in Denmark and 97% in Norway (Idem).

This reality in Spain cannot be isolated from the growing precariousness in the labour market that has been mentioned above, because when decreasing unemployment, promoting labour rights and improving the general conditions of employees is not a real social priority, it seems very difficult to show actual interest in their training or to seriously consider increasing the productivity of companies through CVET. Furthermore, despite the fact that the biggest part of the Spanish labour market is composed of self-employed workers and SMEs, in relation to CVET they have the lowest coverage rate (FUNDAE 2017a). In 2016, only 18.5% of micro-

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<sup>8</sup>According to data from the National Foundation for Training and Employment (Fundae 2016), the total number of companies registered in the Social Security Treasury and from which the percentage of involvement of continuous training is calculated as 1,620,132. Taking this fact into account, we can assume that each company authorizes one of the registered ITLs to obtain a possible estimation of the impact of these ITLs throughout the Spanish labour market.

**Table 3.3** Evolution of the participation of Spanish companies in training (financed by public administrations) (%)

Size of the companies/year	2013	2014	2015	2016
Micro-sized companies (1–9 employees)	26	25.7	23.4	18.5
Small-sized companies (10–49 employees)	58.3	58.8	55.6	51.2
Medium-sized enterprises (50–249 employees)	82	83.4	83.3	81.2
Big corporations (250 or more employees)	93.4	93.7	92.9	93

Source: Own elaboration based on FUNDAE (2017b)

sized companies (1–9 employees) had been involved in CVET actions, those figures being 51.2% for small-sized companies (10–49 employees), 81.2% for medium-sized enterprises (50–249 employees) and 93% for large corporations (250 or more employees). If we analyse the evolution suffered since 2013, we can see how the micro-sized companies are reducing their participation in CVET radically in a relatively short time (see Table 3.3): while in 2013, 26% of the Spanish micro-companies participated in the CVET, in 2016 only 18.5% of them did so. This decrease in participation in CVET also affects small companies because while in 2013 58.3% of them participated in CVET, in 2016 only 51.2% did so. However, medium and large companies remain more stable in relation to their participation in CVET, and this participation is much higher than in smaller companies. In fact, in medium and large companies, participation in CVET varies from 81.2% up to 93.7% over the years.

Regarding the economic sector, more than half of the employed workers involved in training actions in Spain are located in what is known as *other services*<sup>9</sup>—51.4% of the employed in 2016 were placed in this category—followed by industry (19.2%), trade (15.9%) and hotel industry (7.3%), as researched by FUNDAE (2017a). However, the construction and agriculture sectors obtain the lowest results in terms of number of people involved in training actions—4.9% and 1.3%, respectively, in 2016.

In relation to the number of employees involved in training actions organized by companies, the percentage in relation to the total number of employed workers in Spain stands at 30.9% in 2016 (FUNDAE 2017a), which is equivalent to a total of 3,766,997 people. This means that, despite the budgetary restrictions experienced, the number of trained employees involved in CVET actions has been increasing progressively since 2008 to the present (Idem). If we compare these figures with those obtained by Eurostat (2018b) about participants in CVET courses, we observe that in the EU-28 this number is higher (49.4%) than in Spain, but the differences are not as evident as in the case of the percentage of companies providing CVET.

With regard to the type of working individuals at whom the Spanish CVET system is aimed, Adecco (2014) shows that the biggest part of the training actions are

<sup>9</sup>As settled by the National Foundation for Training and Employment (Fundae) (2016, p. 7), the *other services* category includes professional activities such as *health and social services, education, financial consultancy, real estate activities, transport and communications and sociocultural activities*.

aimed at workers and technical personnel, followed by the middle management and administrative staff and, lastly, CEOs.

In relation to the financing of CVET, it is necessary to point out that, unlike public financing—managed on the publicity principle and, therefore, publicly known—private financing (contributions of companies to the development of CVET) is more difficult to register and, therefore, count in an exact way. However, according to FUNDAE (2017a), the Public Administration invested a total of 1.166 million euros in 2016 to finance CVET. In the same year companies invested a total of 694.6 million euros according to another FUNDAE report (2017b). By these data, Spanish companies financed 37.3% of the total cost of CVET in 2016, while the Public Administration financed the remaining 62.7%.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the national investment in CVET in the period 2008–2016, it is worth noting that that budget peaked in 2010 with a total of 1.545 billion euros aimed at the training of employed people (FUNDAE 2017a). However, that budget had decreased to 951 million euros by 2012, remaining at similar figures in 2013 and 2014 and not recovering partially until 2015 and 2016—with a public investment of 1.069 and 1.166 billion euros, respectively. This partial recovery was due to the inclusion in the budget of funds from the Youth Guarantee Programme promoted by virtue of the European Council Recommendation (2013/C 120/01).

However, if we analyse in detail the budgetary development in the period we have mentioned, we can verify that, despite the limitations experienced in public investment since 2012, the categories most badly affected have been the funding via the national and autonomous training calls and public worker training programmes. Meanwhile, the funds allocated to company bonuses have continued growing from 2008 to the present from 431.4 million euros in 2008 to 610 million euros in 2016 (Idem). In relation to this, there has also been a reduction of private investment in CVET actions for employed workers in our country: according to Adecco (2014), around 60% of Spanish companies have reduced their investment in training actions. In spite of this, the strategic importance they give to the training of their employees is high, as has been demonstrated by several studies (Aragón et al. 2003; García Ruiz 2006 and Barreira Cerqueiras 2015).

### 3.3.3 *Contents and Pedagogies of CVET in Spain*

Regarding the content of the training offered by companies, FUNDAE (2017a) also gives a general overview that agrees partially with the findings reached by other research carried out at regional level (Barreira Cerqueiras 2015). Thus, it is possible to see how most of the training activities developed in 2016 are linked to

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<sup>10</sup>At this point, it should be taken into account that the salaries of workers, who are involved in training during the working day, are recorded as part of the private financing of the CVET. We are referring to the proportion of the workers' salary equivalent to the hours of the day in which they are involved in training.

*Administration and Management* (26.1%), followed by *Safety and Environment* (20.2%) and *Trade and Marketing* (10.9%). In fourth place (9.3%) we can find those actions classified as *complementary training*, which includes, among other initiatives, language teaching or different legal processes linked to the professional sector.

In relation to the nature of the training actions in Spain, face-to-face training is the modality that stands out above other types—such as blended learning or e-learning—because, according to Randstad research (2014), 97% of all approached companies indicate this type of training as the most common. This reality is in line with the conclusions of another study (Barreira Cerqueiras 2015) focused specifically in one region of Spain (Galicia). This preference for in-person training as a predominant modality may be related to the increasing importance of monitoring and control processes carried out by the Public Administration. However, off-site training is also present in the continuing education, but to a much smaller degree.

On the other hand, Spanish companies in general say that they perceive training as a strategic tool to improve competitiveness (Adecco 2014). Although, many of them lack specialized training managers specifically responsible for training planning and management inside the company. This is evidenced by the same study when it remarks that *1 out of 3 internal training managers (within companies) does not have real training to manage talent and internal knowledge* (Idem., p. 3). This may explain in part the fact that the Spanish companies are increasing the outsourcing of training actions, *direct teaching [...] and taxes bonus management, being the most hired out services* (Idem., p. 4), especially in the industrial sector (Randstad 2014). Precisely in relation to the presence of specialized training managers inside companies, it is necessary to mention the SMEs reality, because the Spanish labour market is made up almost entirely of them. Inside these Spanish micro and small companies, 36% of employees say they offer training to their peers at least once a month, according to the results of the PIAAC study (2013, cited in European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) 2015). Similarly, 15% say that this happens on a daily basis, which matches the reality described in Europe by this study. It is confirmed that providing training to other colleagues is a common practice in the European companies, whereas it is less common to have external trainers hired by the company specifically for this purpose.

This analysis cannot overlook another issue of great importance in relation to CVET: the assessment on whether investment in training has a real impact on productivity, adaptability and quality in the company. At a general level, it has been verified that the execution of this return assessment is one of the most deficient elements of the training process developed by Spanish companies (Adecco 2014 and Barreira Cerqueiras 2015). Deficiencies are observed in several aspects, such as the methods and instruments used for this purpose, which are reduced to satisfaction surveys aimed solely at the employees involved, the issues to be assessed—trainer, instructional materials or training spaces—or the timing of the assessment process—done exclusively at the end of the training programmes. Precisely in relation to the level of satisfaction of employees with the training actions in which they have participated, it should be mentioned that Spanish employees rate training activities

organized and carried out by their companies on average at a 6 (on a scale from 0 to 10) (Ministry of Employment and Social Security (MESS) 2010). This indicates that they are moderately satisfied with it. However, if we compare it with the level of satisfaction of European employees, *only 28% of workers in Spain say they are very satisfied with the training received, compared to 94% of Europeans* (Observatorio Cegos 2013, cited in Perdiguero and García-Reche 2014, p. 104). More specifically, we can see that, for example, the percentage of satisfaction of Spanish workers with the CVET is higher for those with the higher educational achievements; therefore, university graduate employees are enjoying the highest levels of satisfaction. Taking into account the size of the company and the productive sector, the workers of the largest companies are the most satisfied, as well as those whose fields of professional activity are health and social activities sectors.

### **3.4 New Challenges for CVET in the Spanish Context: Integration, Social Responsibility, Development and At-Risk Population**

As we have seen until now, CVET in Spain is currently under a changing but stricter regulation, where social agencies no longer have the real capacity to decide on the budget, giving this responsibility up to the Labour Authorities. Social dialogue has given way to build a more technocratic perspective, but in which micro and small companies are reducing their participation in CVET year after year. Therefore, there are challenges that must be addressed from the point of view of CVET that come from the data we have analysed in the previous sections. Among these challenges, we can find the need to apply with determination what in the Spanish legislation is called the *integration principle* of the different systems of vocational and educational training; the need to link CVET with corporate social responsibility, with the aim to encourage companies to invest more and better in human resources or the urgent attention to the groups at risk in relation to employment, given the potential of CVET for them.

First of all, a specific key aspect that still needs to be addressed to a greater extent is what is known as the *integration of Vocational Training systems*. This so-called integration principle has to do with the creation of different but recognized paths to achieve a professional qualification. It is about connecting different training systems between them, so that the person can move from one training system to another—for example from the educational system to the FPE system and vice versa—throughout their life. Under this common framework all the completed training—and also their professional experience—could be considered complementary when it comes to accomplishing a professional qualification. This common national training framework should include the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), but is linked to other training systems (IVT and CVET). Nowadays it seems that it is necessary to promote in an easier way the transitions from one to another and favour achieving a professional qualification.



It was said that this is a key aspect which still needs to be approached, because CVET actions do not have the National Catalogue of Qualifications—an instrument created by the II National Vocational Training Programme (1998–2002) back in 1998—as an essential reference in their planning and management. Therefore, it does not provide employees with the *qualification certificates* that formally accredit the achievement of a certain level of skills. In other words, *qualification certificates have not yet reached the business sector, where they are still largely unheard of* (Adecco 2014, p. 6). What has hitherto been used as proof of the training received by workers inside companies is an ordinary certificate or diploma that certifies the completion of such training programmes (Barreira Cerqueiras 2015). However, this does not imply a special recognition by Educational or Labour Authorities. This situation still occurs, even though the so-called integration principle is constantly mentioned in the Spanish training regulations. Meanwhile, its effective development seems, apparently, an eternally unresolved matter.

On the other hand, the increase of the participation of companies in CVET seems a need of the Spanish labour market, especially the micro and small companies which are the vast majority. This low participation in the CVET may be associated partially with the low incidence that Corporate Social Responsibility (hereinafter CSR) also has in these companies and in the Spanish labour market in general. The development of CSR in Spain began very late, not only because of the specific labour market characteristics—with predominance of SMEs, as we have mentioned before—or because of the slow internationalization of Spanish companies, but also, and above all, *due to the lack of knowledge and information about CSR in the business context* (Aragón and Rocha 2004, in Celma et al. 2014, p. 84). In this way, the development of CVET from the CSR perspective has been insignificant and—like the CVET model as a whole—has had to be promoted by the Public Administration, usually following indications from different national and international organizations. In fact, it is the European Union itself that recommends that Spain should pay more attention to the improvement of CVET from the point of view of employers (Perdiguero and García-Reche 2014). According to Celma et al. (2014), institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN have designed nine areas of action that establish the *quality of work*, CVET programmes inside companies being among such prescribed actions.

Based on these contributions, the Spanish Labour Authorities have tried to promote CSR in public and private organizations, publishing what is known as the *Spanish Strategy 2014–2020 for Corporate Social Responsibility* (MESS 2014). This document justifies the need for CSR and proposes ten lines of action with specific measures aimed at companies, organizations and public administrations. One of the most interesting such lines is undoubtedly that which focuses on *the responsible management of human resources and the promotion of employment* (MESS 2014, p. 40). Among the measures proposed, it highlights the need to train employees in the fields of human and labour rights. However, according to Celma et al. (2014), there is no solid empirical evidence that enables us to analyse training actions from the CSR approach in Spanish companies, because most studies spot-

light only the company's perspective, ignoring how the employees understand this reality. Given this situation, it seems that big companies are the only ones that carry out programmes for the management of workers from the CSR approach (MESS 2014; Perdiguero and García-Reche 2014), although the main managers of SMEs, according to Murillo Bonvehí (2008), answer affirmatively to the question of whether they carry out CSR actions in their companies. However, according to the Forética Report (2011, cited in Silos et al. 2015, p. 22), *only 4% of Spanish SMEs have advanced policies and tools in relation to CSR, compared to 54% of the medium and large companies*. Nonetheless, there are certain signs of optimism despite everything, regarding the SME progress in relation to CSR, since *out of the 105 companies certified in Spain by the SGE 21 Social Responsibility Standard, more than half (58) are SMEs* (Idem).

On the one hand, it is possible to use CSR actions as a framework to study CVET in the companies by making reference to the paradigm of sustainable human development (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2016). This paradigm aspires to redefine our societies and obviously that includes a requirement to companies to get involved in the construction of a fairer and more equitable reality for everyone. Under this definition of development (Remacha 2017, p. 6) companies are urged to *adopt their own social responsibility practices, related to decent employment, empowerment of women, investment in research and development, environmental protection, transparency and responsibility*. All these issues are modern-day challenges that must be collectively addressed with the goal of achieving *the future we want* and that is presented in the UN Resolution approved in July 2012.

However, these institutional perspectives on development and its consequences are currently being questioned nowadays, especially in relation to the importance given to economic growth, which for some authors is the root of the problem (Linz et al. 2007; Taibo 2009; Latouche 2012) while for others must be an element necessarily conditioned to scrupulous respect for the human and environmental rights from companies (Martínez Rodríguez 2013; Rodríguez Fernández 2014 and Felber 2015, among others). Accommodating CVET in this reality is complex, even if we analyse the matter from an institutional perspective in relation to development. It seems necessary to introduce substantial changes in the way Spanish companies understand the training of employees as a whole and, above all, how they understand their role in society as a source not only of economic benefits but also of social welfare opportunities.

CVET planned from the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (UN 2015) implies, therefore, the need to develop training processes within companies from a triple perspective: environmental, social and economic. This can be translated, for example, into specific training actions designed to reduce the environmental impact of production—waste treatment, development of sustainable ways of production, etc.—gender equality training and equality plans, safer research and more efficient production processes.<sup>11</sup> Particularly with regard to women, the

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<sup>11</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals Fund (SDGF) (2016) analyses cases of companies oriented towards the SDGs that launch training actions that precisely have to do with the examples previously shown.

public debate on the adoption of special measures aimed at them from CVET, has been relatively heated since the 1970s in several European countries, including France and Spain (Mazur 2001). However, CVET has yet to be considered as an important tool to try and reduce the wage gap or gender-based discrimination, among other marginalizing realities. In fact, the training reality in any of its modalities reflects the discrimination suffered by women in the labour market (Mariño Fernández 2009; Rial Sánchez et al. 2011) and CVET is not an exception. As can be seen from the recent figures of CVET activities involvement showed by FUNDAE (2017a, p. 5), *the percentage of women who participate in CVET actions is still below the actual role they represent in the whole salaried population (44% vs. 46%) and men are comparatively more involved in training actions in relation to their specific representation in the entire labour market (56% vs. 54%).*

On the other hand, among at-risk population groups in relation to access to employment, nowadays in Spain, we must mention young people. The connection between this dramatic situation with the CVET is complex, given that in a situation of high rate of global unemployment in the national context, companies can choose workers from a large cohort of available candidates with more experience—and, therefore, necessarily belonging to another age group. This shows that, both in a Galician (Rego-Agraso 2013) and Spanish (García 2011) context, companies prefer accumulated experience to any official qualification achieved by the candidate when applying for a job in their company. Therefore, considering the high rate of youth unemployment—39.53% according to the Statistics National Institute (2017a)—the access of this segment of population to CVET is also greatly hampered. This can be seen in the data gathered by FUNDAE (2017a), which indicates that only 5.2% of the people who carried out a CVET action in 2016 were between 16 and 25 years old.

In this sense, international organizations such as the ILO (2004) and the UN (2011) emphasize the need to raise awareness among employers, about the essentiality of their contribution to the improvement of social welfare through various channels, underscoring the environmental field and the labour conditions. More specifically, companies must adjust their contractual relationships with their employees to a rigorous respect of labour rights, as well as promoting decent and non-discriminatory working conditions. The Spanish labour market, however, seems to be a reality that moves in the opposite direction to the UN proposals in relation to SDGs. In fact, regarding job insecurity (see Sect. 3.2), there is a high rate of temporary employment in the new contracts carried out annually, which shows that many employers probably use the different temporary contract modalities—for example, contracts limited to a specific project, contracts due to production circumstances or even training contract modality—in an irregular way. They ignore the fact that the contract modality that regulates labour relations in Spain is the indefinite contract. Temporary contracts must be reserved for very specific situations, and it is doubtful that those situations can actually account for more than 90% of the new contracts signed each year.

This situation leads to a high non-voluntary labour turnover rate that has serious consequences for employees and also for the entire labour market. Among other consequences, union trade representation is difficult to achieve in companies with

high worker turnover rate (Fernández Rodríguez et al. 2015) because there is no stable workforce in the company. In fact, according to Serrano Pascual and Waddington (2000, p. 33), *young workers in precarious employment with high rates of labour turnover do not join trade unions because they do not think that trade unions can make a difference at their workplace*. Training of employees in this context remains a reality highly conditioned by the predominant business culture in our country, which tends to prioritize the increase of profit margins in the short term.

Therefore, the challenges that CVET faces in Spain could be classified according to their operational range: the management of the CVET system itself and the effective development of the rights of workers to lifelong learning and specific training actions in the companies associated with the SDGs. Among them, we can include equity and non-discrimination, improvement of working conditions, employees' involvement in the business decision-making process (Longoni et al. 2014) or the need to improve communication and coordination between companies and employees regarding training actions.

### 3.5 Conclusion

According to Bauman (2000), the functioning of postmodern society can be explained as a liquid that changes shape with each slight movement of its container. The situation of many individuals is reduced, therefore, to a vital uncertainty that limits their opportunities for development in an ever-increasingly changing world. It is possible to link this analysis to the *risk society* described by Beck (2008). The solid constructions of the past when work was a permanent and stable reality in the western world are changing towards a concept of employment as a delocalized good, mostly temporary and associated with precariousness (Standing 2011). Spain represents one of the examples of this reality. This tendency to increasing precarity in the labour market has been mentioned in recent studies (e.g. Candil Moreno, 2016 and Echaves and Echaves 2017), and it must be closely linked to *the progressive deregulation of the vocational training system*, according to Marhuenda et al. (2016, p. 57).

CVET seeks, in the first place, to promote employees' adaptability to the technological and social changes that influence business productivity nowadays. This implies that the workforce must be understood as an important corporative asset that must be valued and recognized. From the current holistic paradigms that defend the need and effectiveness of CVET, it does not seem possible to understand human resources only as *resources*—interchangeable and dispensable. Conversely, business organizations must necessarily consider workforce as a basic element for their economic development, and also as one of the ways to materialize their responsibility with society.

However, the situation of CVET in Spain presents several special features that condition the perspective we have been elaborating on and tends to associate training with activities that companies carry out fundamentally motivated by tax exemp-

tions. As it has been mentioned, the investment of the average Spanish company on training is usually highly conditioned by the public funding policies of training (Barreira Cerqueiras 2015). This situation, where private investment in training is relatively low, differs from the European average, standing Spain well below it in the number of companies involved in training actions and in private investment in training (Clemente et al. 2013). However, this is not the case regarding the number of employees who are trained each year and also regarding the number of training hours, whose figures are closer to European averages (Idem). On the other hand, Spanish policies are encouraging CVET in SMEs—that make up the majority of the Spanish labour market. However, large companies are still the ones that care more about the training of their employees, also because they have greater *access* to the public funding system, especially those belonging to the industrial and service sectors, as we have previously mentioned.

On the other hand, after the 2015 FPE system reform, the influence of trade unions and business associations on the decision-making and management of training has been considerably reduced, being effectively the planning and development of continuing and occupational training initiatives in government hands (European Commission 2016). Having said this, it is worth mentioning that the participation of different social agents in the management of training is today a topic of discussion in Europe. However, it seems a reality with a certain tradition in other countries such as Germany (Hensen-Reifgens and Hippach-Schneider 2014) and Finland (Koukku et al. 2014) and also positively valued by part of the specialized literature (Hernández Carrera 2013; Vega Estrella 2015 and Barreira Cerqueiras 2015). In this way, reducing the involvement of social agents in this process can only be seen as a step back in the management and planning of CVET, even more so if the target is to promote the participation of trade unions and business associations in these actions. However, increasing governmental control of training actions is also associated with the detection of fraud practices committed by certain organizations in relation to training, a reality that is probably emphasized in a biased way (Hernández Carrera 2013) but that has yet to be properly analysed. All this leads in the end to the impossibility of assessing the real impact of CVET on the labour market as a whole.

As we saw, companies that specialize in CVET Training are considered in Spain as social agents that can be involved in the design and planning of continuing education. This situation does not happen in other countries that surround Spain, despite this outsourcing being even more frequent than in Spain—as is the case in Germany, for example (National Foundation for Training in Employment 2011). The inclusion of this lobby as an interested party in relation to training policies may cause some distortions in training planning, given that the promotion of some contents and specific programmes may be associated with the commercial interests of companies and not so much with the real needs verified by employers and trade unions. Similarly, the Public Employment Service reroutes a large part of the training offered to unemployed people to these companies with explicit for-profit aims, thus benefiting from liberalization processes in the training sector. It would be important, therefore, to pay attention to the evolution of CVET in light of this new situation and to study more specifically the role that these companies play in the functioning of the entire system.

Regarding employees, after this analysis we can see that factors such as age, sex or the position occupied in the company can condition their access to CVET. This means that training opportunities are not available to the same extent to certain groups that are more vulnerable in relation to the labour market—women, young people, non-stable or low-skilled workers—which makes professional updating and development more difficult for them. At the same time, Spanish companies should be more focused on the development of their social responsibility, not only from the point of view of its verification through strategic action plans, but also by promoting the effective development of SDGs. Facing the current labour market situation, companies should give much more importance to qualifications and training processes and consider them strategies to improve productivity and efficiency.

In view of all the issues presented above, Veira's (1992) perspective is still valid when he states that training inside companies must be a process characterized by continuity, standardization and progressiveness when it comes to determining the goals to be achieved. This implies that the interests of both workers and corporations must be taken into account and made complementary and compatible. This is what Aragón et al. (2003) have shown recently, stating that it is necessary to combine the personal and professional development of workers with business success. Each of these facts constitutes an essential part of the integration of companies in society as organizations that are socially responsible and involved in the construction of a reality not only more prosperous, but also fairer and more equitable.

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