The demand for continuing vocational training in Switzerland: 
Employees’ and employers’ motivations and constraints

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Abstract:

The importance of training for individuals as well as for firms has been widely documented. But it appears that on a European level the rate of employees attending courses is very different from one country to another. The question raised is therefore about the motivations and barriers.

The main findings from interviews conducted in Switzerland among 72 employees and 38 employers in 2008 are presented and discussed. The determinants to undertake or not vocational training are broken down by sociocultural characteristics of the employees. The analysis of motivations is based on a framework that considers four orientations to go into learning: extrinsic versus intrinsic and participative versus learning. As far as barriers to learning are concerned, the analysis is also based on a model that classifies the barriers into 3 groups: situational barriers, institutional barriers and dispositional barriers.

The possible contribution of the research findings on educational policy is finally discussed.

Keywords: Continuing Vocational Training (CVT), CVT Motivations, CVT Constraints, Management of CVT, Swiss Firms, Workplace Learning.
This article is devoted to continuing vocational training (CVT) by companies. At the present time, working life takes place over about forty years in a constantly evolving technological and economic environment. If access to a first employment depends largely on the level of training reached, the subsequent level of achievement and advancement in the world of work depends to a large extent on individuals’ capacity to keep up to date and to broaden their knowledge. For some time already, political decision-makers have accepted the need to promote learning throughout life (OCDE, 2001, 9). But what does this mean for individual people, particularly wage-earners? Are these people involved in CVT? Within the European Union, the level of participation by wage-earners in CVT in 2005 varied enormously from one country to another, but did not exceed 59% (CEDEFOP, 2010, 19). As far as Switzerland is concerned, and limiting ourselves to non-formal training, 62% of the active working population (25 to 64 years) had participated in CVT by 2011. We may add that 90% of these participants had benefited from support from their employers (financial and/or by granting time off work) (OFS, 2012, 8-9). As we have been able to observe, the political will to support learning throughout life has not yet been totally accepted by the working world. Hence, we must ask ourselves about the motivations and constraints in undertaking CVT, both from the point of view of the wage-earners and the employers.

A fresh perspective on policies and practices for continuing vocational training in the work place

After a brief overview of theories and analytical models of the motivations and constraints for vocational training in the work place, we will present and analyse the outcomes of a research project carried out in Switzerland in 2008 and 2009. This research project was carried out by the two authors of this article and by Djily Diagne (University of Fribourg) and Hans-Rudolf Schulz (Institute P/S///, Basle). The data

* Unless otherwise indicated, the terms “wage-earners”, “employees”, “staff” and “managers” refer to men and women without distinction.
† “Non-formal training (…) includes activities based on contact between pupil and teacher, but which are not provided by the formal education system” (OFS, 2012, p. 3).
have been collected during interviews conducted with human-resource (hereafter HR) managers and employees in different companies. We conducted 110 interviews in 38 companies with HR managers and employees. Considering the size of the sample, it is not statistically representative of the CVT practice in Switzerland. Nevertheless, we selected the interviewees in such a way to cover a range of characteristics including regions, company size, business sector, CVT intensity, gender and level of education.

We made a selection of companies based on data from a previous research project on expenditure on CVT by Swiss companies (Hanhart, Schulz, Perez, Diagne, 2005). These companies, which we already knew participated in the CVT of their employees, were chosen on the basis of three criteria: the language region in which they were located (German-speaking or French-speaking); the economic sector (high tech vs low tech); and the size of the company. Table 1 provides information about the thirty-eight companies that were involved in the research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional affiliation</th>
<th>German-speaking Switzerland</th>
<th>French-speaking Switzerland</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of comp.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector of economic activity</th>
<th>Banks and insurance</th>
<th>Construct.</th>
<th>Hotels and catering.</th>
<th>Chemicals, machinery &amp; precision instruments</th>
<th>Other sectors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of comp.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of companies</th>
<th>1 – 8 staff</th>
<th>9 – 49 staff</th>
<th>50 – 249 staff</th>
<th>≥ 250 staff</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of comp.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors

The employees who were interviewed were chosen by the HR managers taking account of their gender (in principle, one man and one woman) and their level of academic or vocational education (ISCED level 2, ISCED levels 3 and 4, ISCED levels 5, 6, 7
It should be stated that it was not always possible to respect these two criteria in all companies. Altogether, we carried out thirty-eight interviews with HR managers and seventy-two interviews with employees, a total of forty-three men and twenty-nine women. Table 2 shows the distribution of these people according to their level of training.

Table 2: Distribution of employees by level of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest level of education</th>
<th>ISCED level 2</th>
<th>ISCED levels 3 and 4</th>
<th>ISCED level 5</th>
<th>ISCED levels 6, 7 and 8</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No training beyond compulsory schooling</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors

The quantity of CVT expressed as the number of days of training completed during the year prior to the inquiry is shown in Figure 3.

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Figure 1: Distribution of employees according to the number of days training received during the year prior to the inquiry

It would seem that one-third of the employees did not receive any CVT during the year prior to the inquiry, whereas another third had received more than one week and up to three months CVT. We will examine below if motivation varies depending on the number of days of CVT received.

The interviews that we conducted first with the HR manager and then with the two other employees provided us with a fresh perspective of the practices and the impact of CVT within a company, particularly in the following areas:

- The determining factors in the demand for CVT, and particularly the reasons for continuing or commencing the CVT and the obstacles encountered.
- The costs and financing of the CVT.
- The impact of the CVT on the employee’s career and salary.

By comparing the words of the HR managers and the employees in the same firm, our intention was to highlight the views and the convergent and divergent expectations of
various people on continuing training policies and practices in companies. To our knowledge, few research projects have been conducted systematically in this way.

**The motivations and constraints on continuing vocational training in companies**

When looking at the theory of human capital, expenditure on training can be viewed as an investment, both from the point of view of the individual and the company. Investment in training generates costs and profits in the form of an increase in productivity. The founding texts on the theory of human capital dealt with on-the-job training (Becker, 1962; Mincer, 1962). Even though CVT covers a much broader field today than on-the-job training, the theory of human capital provides a framework for examining the behaviour of companies and employees in relation to non-formal training as previously defined. From the point of view of the company, “the contribution of firms to continuing vocational training is seen as an investment in human capital: the companies accept expenditure today with the aim of benefiting later from an increase in the productivity of their wage-earners” (Hanhart, Schulz, Perez, Diagne, 2005, 11). A similar reasoning can be applied to the wage-earners (Caspar, 1988, 114). They will invest in their own CVT to the extent that they will benefit from the rise in productivity in the form of a salary increase.

The reasoning underlying the theory of human capital is based on a similarity between material investment and investment in training. Meanwhile, Jarousse (1991, 56) observes that “the similarity of human capital to physical capital is faulty, and the former can be distinguished from the latter in a number of ways ...”. It is therefore necessary to take the specific characteristics of human capital into account when analysing the behaviours of employers and employees on the subject of CVT:

- the personalization of human capital raised by the question of financing the training. Becker (1962, 12-25) makes a distinction between general training (marginal product of labour will be identical in the firm providing the training and in any another company) and specific training (marginal product of labour will be greater in the firm providing the training); it follows that the company’s main interest is to finance specific training. Evidently, any company providing
training could oblige its employees to sign a contractual clause foreseeing financial reimbursement if the staff member who has received training leaves soon afterwards. But is such a clause ever applied, and would it be sufficient to prevent such an event happening? Furthermore, in our opinion the boundary between general and specific CVT is not as clear today as no doubt it was when the fundamental works on the theory of human capital were written. The question of financing could therefore present an impediment both for the company and for the wage-earner.

- The limitation on human capital results from the fact that this capital is linked to one person, which “limits the possibilities of individual growth by making them depend upon the physical and intellectual powers of the recipient” (Jarousse, 1991, 58-59). It should be noted that age could represent a restriction on training due to both a decline in the ability to absorb knowledge and to the limited period available to recover the costs.

- The lack of clarity in human capital is also due to its association with the individual, which makes it “difficult for other people to perceive. The resultant changes take place in a relative ambiguity which places considerable importance on the display of signals …” (Jarousse, 1991, 61). Let us state that CVT within enterprises does not usually lead to a diploma, which could make it difficult for it to be acceptable for the employee outside the company that provided the training.

- The difficulty of separating the actual outcomes from investment in training. As is emphasized by Le Boterf, Durand-Gasselin and Penchenart (1989, 37), “training investment does not exist as such and should not be considered as such. Wishing to isolate training investment, to consider it as a step independent of other decisions, leads to a dead-end …”. This observation not only makes an analysis of cost/benefits for CVT difficult, but forces the researcher to include elements in the analysis such as the company’s technological environment and the economic situation (unemployment).

The motivations and the constraints for wage-earners to initiate the process of CVT do not depend entirely on economic considerations. It is for this reason that we have
chosen analytical models that incorporate the economic motivations and constraints within a larger framework.

As far as the wage-earner’s motivations to undertake training are concerned, we have selected a analytical grid prepared by Carré (1998). This grid situates the motives for entering training according to two conditions. The first criteria distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic guidance, in other words between “motives which satisfy the need to be involved in training and those which respond to a need beyond the training itself” (Carré, 1998, 122). The second criteria separates the learning motives from those of participation; the former “aim at acquiring the training content (knowledge, skills, attitudes)”, while the latter “aim at participation, in other words at enrolment and/or being present at the training session ... ” (Carré, 1998, 122). In this way, it is possible to distribute the motives for entering training into four compartments. We will subsequently define the motives that affect the analysis of our results.

Figure 2: Choices and motives for involvement in training

Source: Carré (1998, 123)
In analysing the constraints that individuals encounter, we have been inspired by a grid put forward by Cross (1984). Cross grouped the individual barriers to CVT into three large groups of obstacles.

- "**Situational barriers are those arising from one’s situation in life at a given time**" (Cross, 1984, 98). These are principally budgetary constraints, the lack of time available for other family and vocational responsibilities, the lack of transport or even problems connected with childcare.

- "**Institutional barriers consist of all those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities**" (Cross, 1984, 98). Amongst these we may mention particularly a mismatch between the training provided and the actual needs, or courses that are not available at times when the potential clientele can attend.

- "**Dispositional barriers are those related to attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner**" (Cross, 1984, 98). Here, we may mention lack of self-confidence, the fear of failure, and also the lack of motivation and personal commitment to invest the effort required for training.

### The motivations of wage-earners to become involved in continuing vocational training

In this section we present the motivation for involvement in CVT as stated by the wage-earners in response to an open question. We have analysed the responses according to the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals and their hierarchical position, and referring to Carré’s (1998) grid mentioned above.

It should be made clear that sixty employees out of seventy-two gave several reasons for becoming involved in CVT. Almost half of them indicated two reasons and 15% gave four. This initial observation corresponds to the outcomes of other research projects in that there were several motivations. Altogether, the seventy-two wage-earners described 174 different reasons.

Figure below plots the reasons given by the interviewees following Carré’s classification.
We observe that:

- Extrinsic reasons were far more numerous than intrinsic reasons. Motivation depended far more on the anticipated outcomes than on the training itself. Motivation is therefore connected with the perceived objectives of the training.

- The learning motives are far more important than participatory motives.

- Of all motives, the vocational motive - defined by Carré (1998, 126) as follows: “it is a matter of acquiring competences … and/or the symbolic recognition necessary for obtaining employment, for retaining it, its evolution and transformation” - which is by far the most important (mentioned by 70% of people). Fundamentally, the wage-earners became involved in CVT with the idea of furthering their career, vocational prospects or seeking employment. The operational vocational motive - defined by Carré (1998, 125-126) as the wish: “to acquire competences … perceived as necessary for the achievement of specific activities in the field of work,
so as to anticipate or adapt oneself to technical changes, and to discover or master practices ...” - appears in second place; it was only mentioned, however, by one wage-earner in four. It should be stated that the economic motive (advantages, particularly concerning the salary) was only put forward by less than 20% of subjects; further on we will attempt to interpret this result by comparing it with the information communicated by the HR managers about the impact of CVT on the level of pay.

- Among the intrinsic reasons, the epistemological motive - according to Carré (1998, 123) “to learn, to understand, to improve oneself, etc., are processes that are justified ... by themselves” - were mentioned by one-third of the wage-earners in our sample.

An analysis of the results shows that the vocational motive, which for us corresponds to a practical motivation, was mentioned by the people interviewed independent of the number of days of CVT they had completed. On the other hand, we observed considerable differences, depending on the length of CVT, in epistemological motives and for extrinsic reasons connected with participation.
Table 3: Differences in motives by CVT intensity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motives to get involved in CVT</th>
<th>Days of CVT accomplished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not a single day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Compartment 1  
Extrinsic reasons linked with learning (61/72) | Most of employees | Most of employees | Most of employees | Most of employees | Most of employees |
| Compartment 2  
Intrinsic reasons linked with learning (24/72) | Seldom | Seldom | Half of employees | Half of employees | Seldom |
| Compartment 3  
Extrinsic reasons linked with participation (21/72) | Half of employees | Seldom | Seldom | A third of employees | Half of employees |
| Compartment 4  
Intrinsic reasons linked with participation (6/72) | None | None | Seldom | Seldom | Seldom |

Source: Authors

The epistemological motive, that is the pleasure of learning, was only found rarely among those who had not participated any CVT; this observation could explain why these persons had not been involved in any CVT. Moreover, among those who had been involved in long training periods (for example, for higher vocational training diplomas or university degrees such as MBAs), it would seem that the length and intensity of personal involvement had a negative impact on the pleasure of learning.

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§ Master of Business Administration.
The economic motive, in other words the expectation of direct or indirect economic advantages from CVT, is rarely mentioned by people who had been involved in short-term CVT. The reason for this is no doubt the fact that such rewards are not offered for training lasting only a few days. On the contrary, the hope, even the expectancy of future rewards resulting from CVT had motivated half of those who undertook long-term training, particularly when it was a question of CVT with a certificate.

Let us now look at the analysis of motivational groups taking into account socio-demographic characteristics and the hierarchical position of the wage-earners in our sample. The gender of the participant has no influence on the motivational groups, whatever compartment we examine in Figure 2. However, age plays a role for the extrinsic motivations; the youngest wage-earners were particularly motivated by career prospects and the possible financial outcomes connected with CVT. The analysis of the stream chosen in higher secondary education (vocational or academic stream) does display some differences: those people who began with vocational training (CFC)** were markedly more numerous in being motivated by epistemological considerations. As far as the level of training is concerned, this only has an influence on extrinsic motivation associated with participation, particularly economic motivation. Concerning the hierarchical position, this affects the motivations linked to learning: employees are far more likely to be motivated by the pleasure of learning than managers or directors.

We carried out an in-depth analysis the four specific motivations that were mentioned most frequently (in the decreasing order of vocational, epistemological, vocational mode of operation and economic motives). As far as vocational and vocational mode of operation motives were concerned, personal characteristics (age, gender, level of training and the hierarchical position) did not play any role. On the other hand, when dealing with the frequency of epistemological motives, we observed differences depending on the wage-earner’s initial training and their hierarchical position. Those

** Certificat Fédéral de Capacité (Federal proficiency certificate) awarded for an initial vocational training of three or four years at the higher secondary level.
staff members who had already completed vocational training (CFC) were more likely to be attracted by learning itself. Although they made up only 39% of our sample, they represented more than half of the respondents who stated that they were motivated by epistemological reasons. The hierarchical position also affects the presence or absence of an epistemological motivation: employees are markedly more motivated by learning for its own sake than managers. Only three managers out of twenty-two mentioned an epistemological motive, while almost half of the employees stated that learning for its own sake was sufficient stimulus to undertake CVT. In contrast, age and gender had no significant effect on epistemological reasons. The limited number of wage-earners who indicated an economic motive (13) makes it difficult to conduct any meaningful analysis, and suggests that the results should be interpreted with caution. We have nevertheless noted that the economic motive is affected by the age, the initial training, the level of training reached and the hierarchical position. Those aged less than 30 years are proportionally twice as likely to consider that purely economic motives led to them to take up CVT. Wage-earners who began with initial vocational training (CFC) are largely over-represented in the group that mentioned economic motives. They also increase with the level of training. Wage-earners who chose initial vocational training (CFC) mentioned epistemological reasons much more frequently than wage-earners who followed higher secondary studies in an academic stream. The same is true for the highest level of training: wage-earners who completed higher secondary training are twice as likely as university graduates to be motivated by epistemological and economic reasons. Finally, the hierarchical position also has an impact on epistemological and economic motives: employees are twice as likely to mention these stimuli compared to managers.

Table below sums up the outcomes of the analysis of wage-earners’ motivations.
Table 4: Nature of motivations and employees’ characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Initial training</th>
<th>Highest level of training</th>
<th>Hierarchical position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational motivation</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>No difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational mode of operation</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>No difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological motivation</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>CFC over-represented</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>Managers less numerous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic motivation</td>
<td>Young people more numerous</td>
<td>Women more numerous</td>
<td>CFC over-represented</td>
<td>University graduates more numerous</td>
<td>Managers less numerous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors

To sum up, we conclude that the initial training of the employee, as well as the highest level of training reached and the hierarchical position, have an influence on the nature of motivation. On the contrary, we observe little impact from the variables of age and gender on the nature of motivation.

The obstacles encountered by wage-earners on the way to continuing vocational training

The data presented in this section were collected with the aid of one open question and some closed questions; the latter should enable the importance of particular factors to be clarified, such as costs, the training time falling outside working hours, or even how work was organized in the company while the trainee was absent. It was our intention to find out in this way how CVT was organized within companies and to what extent being involved in it led to a greater workload or extra stress for the wage earner. The people questioned were able to mention several barriers. We identified 121 of them that have been analysed according to the system of Cross mentioned above.
Table 5: Obstacles to continuing vocational training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of obstacle</th>
<th>Number of times mentioned</th>
<th>Number of wage-earners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situational obstacles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family responsibilities</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional responsibilities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other situational impediments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispositional obstacles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation, too much effort required</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to appreciate the utility</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other attitudinal impediments</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of desire to study</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional obstacles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No suitable courses</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The course timetable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The length of training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other institutional impediments</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors

It is evident from Table 5 that situational obstacles are the most important. Two-thirds of the employees interviewed mentioned at least one situational type of obstacle and no less than sixty-nine situational impediments were mentioned. Dispositional obstacles are indicated far less frequently; they concern approximately one-third of the employees interviewed and thirty-nine responses. The institutional obstacles only concerned 20% of employees. This mainly concerns the lack of suitable CVT courses in relation to the needs.

The situational obstacles can be listed in different ways. Even though the financial obstacle was potentially the most important, it did not represent the most important impediment in the eyes of the employees concerned. The most important impediment is connected with the management of time. Let us point out that half of the wage-earners mentioned the impediments of time and cost at the same time. The third of respondents
who mentioned time as an impediment also indicated the problem connected with family responsibilities.

The importance awarded to time varied according to the length of training followed. We can separate the wage-earners into three groups: those who had been involved in no CVT; those who had been involved in less than a month of CVT; and those who had been involved in more than one month of training. It is interesting to note that the first and the third groups provided comparable replies. While only half of those who were involved in CVT for less than one month mentioned the impediments due to time, two-thirds of the participants who had received more than thirty days training and two-thirds of those who had received no training at all indicated problems connected with time. If, for example, it is logical to expect people who have undertaken more than a month of training to raise the impact of time on family life, it is not the same for staff members who have not participated in any CVT. These people intended to indicate perhaps that the time that they might have devoted to training represented a latent obstacle.

The importance given to situational obstacles varied according to the personal characteristics of the wage-earners. Women were more numerous in pointing to situational impediments, as also were people below 30 years of age and those who already had a high level of training. On the contrary, fewer wage-earners who had followed initial vocational training (CFC) indicated situational impediments compared to those who had chosen an academic path in higher secondary education.

What can we say about costs? Nearly 60% of employees stated that it represented an obstacle; it is interesting to note that half of the people who had benefited from complete financial support by their employer for their CVT were of the opinion that costs were an obstacle to CVT. This opinion, at first view surprising, could be explained by the fact that the people questioned may have been referring to training that had not been taken in charge by the employer. When asked about the conditions under which all training costs were taken in charge by the employer, 50% of employees replied that this was only true of training that was closely associated with the post occupied. In this case we find confirmation of the conclusion that Becker (1962) reached concerning the financing of specific training.
Let us recall, however, that cost does not represent the main obstacle for access to CVT. More than 80% of the employees who participated in the survey believed that other factors had a greater limiting action on participation in CVT. This refers particularly to the investment in time required by CVT; this is often seen as difficult to reconcile with the pressures of professional activity. This observation brings us back to the organization of training: when does it take place and does it mean an overload of work for the person being trained? The responses by the wage-earners indicated that companies in which CVT took place regularly during working hours are in a minority. Only CVT closely connected with the work station took place during working hours. It should be emphasized that, even in these latter cases, people undergoing training may experience an overload of work. This was the case with 60% of employees in our inquiry, who had to deal with the postponed work upon their return from training.

Institutional and dispositional barriers were also mentioned by a small number of employees. Some 25% of them referred to the lack of personal motivation and the importance of the required effort. Another 12% stated that they did not see the purpose of training. Finally, less than 10% of the wage-earners indicated a lack of self-confidence.

We did not notice any difference in the identification of dispositional barriers by the participants according to the level of training reached or type of initial training followed. It was only age that played a role in motivation for study and in self-confidence: it was the youngest wage-earners who were the most numerous in placing blame on the lack of motivation and expressing alarm at the effort involved.

As far as institutional barriers were concerned, they were mentioned more frequently by men than women. Furthermore, the type of initial training had an impact: the proportion of wage-earners who had followed initial vocational training (CFC) was two times greater than that of individuals who had taken the academic stream in higher secondary education. Wage-earners who had obtained a CFC stressed the unsuitability of courses in relation to their needs. The explanation could be that those people who underwent
initial vocational training were more demanding or had clearer expectations about the appropriateness of continuing training to their needs.

Let us not forget that institutional impediments to CVT - particularly time and cost - were the principal obstacles facing the wage-earners. A dispositional impediment - the lack of motivation and the size of the effort involved - came in third place. We will return to these facts in the conclusion, when we discuss the possible contributions of our research in defining policies encouraging CVT.

**Motivation for continuing vocational training from the point of view of companies**

A total of thirty-seven companies out of thirty-eight in our sample supported various levels of CVT and in two different forms: payment of the fees and/or making working time available to follow courses. It would also be interesting to find out the reasons why firms support CVT for their staff.

The HR managers were asked to give one or several reasons that tended to favour support for CVT. Among the thirty-eight HR managers interviewed, thirty-six gave at least one argument in favour of supporting CVT. The majority of them put forward two different reasons and sometimes more. Altogether, the HR managers provided seventy-five reasons why their companies supported CVT. We present these reasons in Table 6 indicating the frequency with which they were mentioned by the HR managers.
Table 6: The classification of reasons given by HR managers for supporting continuing vocational training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguments in favour of CVT</th>
<th>As first argument</th>
<th>As second argument</th>
<th>As third argument</th>
<th>Number of times mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel policy, renewal, encouraging loyalty and increasing motivation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honing skills, adapting to the market, competitiveness</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical evolution, keeping up to date</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increasing performance, quality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bringing ideas in from outside, networking</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>CVT required by legislation, supplier</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>On principle Par conviction</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of reasons given</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Total number of companies</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
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Source: Authors

If we look at all the reasons given, the five reasons that were mentioned most frequently are, in decreasing order of importance: (1) personnel policy designed to motivate, to increase loyalty amongst the staff and to prepare them for taking over a post; (2) the desire to maintain competitiveness, to adapt to the market and to keep pace with the competition; (3) the need to maintain the level of skills to keep pace with technical evolution; (4) the desire to increase the performance and the quality of services provided by the company; and (5) the interest in external training in order to participate in networking with partners and/or with the competition.
The principal reason for supporting CVT varied according to the company’s sector of activity. Thus, in the sectors of banking and insurance, chemicals and high-tech companies, the principal motivation is to develop human capital and to retain it. CVT is viewed in the perspective of internal renewal; for this reason it is incorporated into the preparation of career planning. In the construction sector, the most frequently mentioned argument shows concern with maintaining the level of competitiveness and the capacity to adapt to market conditions. In the hotel and catering sector, the motivation of companies to support CVT is altogether less evident, and no specific arguments can be identified from the analysis.

**Obstacles encountered by companies in their commitment to continuing vocational training**

During the interviews with HR managers, we collected information about impediments to CVT from the company’s point of view. First, we observed that the number of arguments opposing support for CVT was far less than the number of arguments in favour of CVT. While the companies consulted gave seventy-five arguments in favour of CVT, we collected only thirty-eight reasons unfavourable to CVT. Furthermore, almost 30% of the HR managers did not present any argument against supporting CVT.
The major obstacle in the opinion of the HR managers lies in the lack of time available for CVT. Financial and opportunity costs represent a second major obstacle. The possible risk of a recently trained member of staff leaving soon after the training represented a less serious obstacle; only three HR managers mentioned it. This last observation can no doubt be explained by the fact that the wage-earners covered by our sample had principally undertaken relatively short-term CVT (see Figure 1). We may recall that, in the case of long-term training taken in charge by the employer, the company may have protected itself from an early departure by inserting a contractual clause stipulating reimbursement in the event that the wage-earner breaks the working contract within a given period of time.

The views and the expectations of companies and wage-earners towards continuing vocational training: convergence or divergence?

The analysis of the reasons encouraging wage-earners to train themselves shows that it is not so much the training as such that motivates individuals as the expected outcomes in terms of employability and professional advancement. This leads to the following
question: Do companies that support CVT wish to guarantee the long-term collaboration of their employees? The answer is “yes”, since one of the major purposes attributed to CVT on the part of the HR managers is to motivate the staff and to ensure their loyalty to the employer.

From the outset, we expected that the commitment of employees to CVT would be strongly influenced by the training costs. However, even though the financial barrier was mentioned on numerous occasions by the employees, this does not represent the primary obstacle. Time constraints were mentioned more frequently: the lack of time for CVT, the work overload resulting from involvement in CVT activities; conflict arising with the organization of family life. In a mirror effect, the HR managers also raised the lack of time as the principal impediment to CVT. Knowing firstly that our sample included nearly 70% of companies with more than fifty staff members and that, secondly, it is far easier to cater to the absence of wage-earners in a large organization, we assume that this constraint would have been even more significant if small and medium companies had been more widely represented in our survey.

According to the principles of human capital theory, an increase in competences, accompanied by an improvement in productivity, should lead to an advantage for the trained person. What is the situation for the wage-earners in our inquiry? We may say first of all that wage-earners have relatively little information available about the way their salary is calculated. Some 57% of them believed that CVT had had a positive impact on their salary. Their responses allow us to make two observations: the impact of CVT on the salary depends in part on a possible change of post following the training and in part on the length and type of training (whether leading to a diploma or not). We may note, however, that a change of post following training did not necessarily lead to an increase in salary for all the wage-earners in our sample. Opinions on the impact of CVT on the salary vary from one sector of activity to another: in the hotel and catering field, and to a lesser extent in high-tech industrial enterprises, a large majority of wage-earners stated that their salaries did not increase following training. On the contrary, in the construction industry a large majority of wage-earners stated that their salaries did increase after training. It is possible that these variations in salarial policy can be explained because the people to whom we spoke in the construction industry had been
involved in long-term training. The opinions of the HR managers confirm the employees’ points of view: in three-quarters of the companies CVT had an impact on remuneration when it resulted in a change of post or function; this is also the case of formal training leading to a diploma which also had an impact on remuneration. The analysis of responses according to the companies’ sector of activity indicated a variable effect of CVT on salaries. In the financial services sector (banking and insurance), the impact of CVT on salaries is largely influenced by a change of post or function. In the industrial sector (high-tech industries), salary increases following CVT are rare; they may take place following the acquisition of a university degree (MBA); sometimes those who have recently acquired such a degree benefit from a salary increase in the long term when they have demonstrated their new competencies. Some HR managers emphasized that CVT was necessary to remain in a post.

What is evident from the replies of the wage-earners and the HR managers is that CVT will often have an impact on remuneration when the wage-earner is moved to a new post. We should therefore ask some questions about the impact of CVT on professional mobility. Two-thirds of the wage-earners estimated that CVT opened up new opportunities in the company that had provided the training or in other firms. However, the prospects of opportunities for mobility are conditioned by the size of the firms and their sector of activity. It follows that the larger the company, the more CVT will provide opportunities for internal mobility. The responses of the wage-earners can be divided into two groups: companies employing less than fifty employees where CVT leads to upward mobility on every other occasion; and companies with more than fifty employees where CVT opens up new responsibilities. The analysis of the responses according to the company’s sector of activity also leads to several conclusions. In the hotel and catering sector only 25% of those interviewed believed that CVT would open up new opportunities in their company. This conclusion was corroborated by the HR managers who stated that CVT does not lead to a change of post in their company. On the contrary, in companies in other sectors of activity, between 66% and 75% of wage-earners declared that CVT opened up new opportunities. Furthermore, wage-earners had a different appreciation of internal and external mobility according to the sector of activities. In high-tech industries and in banking and insurance, wage-earners believed that they enjoyed the same opportunities for mobility in the company that provided the
training as in another company. This statement is interesting, because it indicates that wage-earners who had benefited from CVT - whether specific or general according to Becker’s (1962) definition - have no interest in changing employer since the opportunities available are considered to be much the same both within and outside the company that provided the training. On the other hand, wage-earners in construction companies and in the hotel and catering business have a different view of internal and external opportunities. Construction workers believe that the internal opportunities following CVT are greater than those in a competitive company. We find the opposite situation in the hotel and catering sector where wage-earners expected new opportunities would only result from changing company. Do wage-earners who have undergone CVT place emphasis on this element when looking for a new employment opportunity, either internally or externally? The inquiry would seem to suggest that wage-earners mention this aspect only rarely.

The wage-earners for whom CVT did not lead to new opportunities gave different reasons for this: the training was not completed; it was designed to consolidate the present post; people had reached the limits of their professional development; the wage-earner had only been in the company a short time; the training had not been relevant to the activity carried out.

Let us now look at the attitude of HR managers. According to them, CVT does not lead to a change of post in two-thirds of companies. The remarks collected allow three trends to be isolated:
- Companies carry out CVT to maintain or develop the competences of wage-earners in the same working position;
- Companies carry out CVT to develop the competencies of the wage-earner with a view to a change of post or a career change;
- Companies specifically reject any change of post following CVT.
Changes of job following CVT do not exist in the hotel and catering sector. They are rare in high-tech industries; in these companies, it is more a question of maintaining the competence and the performance of the worker in the existing post. In contrast, in banking and insurance establishments half of the HR managers stated that CVT usually
leads to a change of post. This appraisal agrees with that of the wage-earners in these same establishment.

We mentioned earlier that any anxiety that wage-earners who had benefited from CVT would leave at the end of the training was exaggerated. The opinion of half of the HR managers was that undergoing CVT did not increase or decrease departures; some of them emphasized that departures depended basically on the employment situation at that time, while others pointed out that their company had a very low level of staff turnover owing to excellent working conditions. CVT was more likely to make workers more loyal than encouraging them to leave; this confirms that CVT fulfils the function assigned to it by personnel policy, namely to perpetuate the relationship between employee and employer.

The fresh perspectives of employees and employers on the anticipated or actual impact of CVT agree to a large extent. This statement has important implications for the development of CVT in companies and for introducing public measures in support of CVT.

**In conclusion … research that calls into question preconceived ideas**

The study whose outcomes are presented here was conducted in the context of a Swiss Federal programme encouraging research in the field of vocational education. It is then appropriate, even indispensable, to ask about the impact of the research results, particularly since the Swiss Government recently prepared and made available for consultation a draft law on continuing training.

Of course, the outcomes of the research should be interpreted with caution and hasty conclusions should be avoided, particularly due to the limited size of the sample of companies and wage-earners. In a country where research into the economics of vocational education is not well developed, the data presented in this document nevertheless encourage us to pursue this research into the conditions affecting the need for CVT in companies.
The outcomes of the research call into question several acknowledged ideas about CVT in companies. We will illustrate this statement with three examples. The generally understood idea that the prospect of a salary increase was the principal motivation of wage-earners to become involved in CVT is completely demolished: wage-earners who undertook CVT in general did not do so to gain rapid economic rewards; their principal concern was to acquire new competences in order to carry out their work better, to conserve their job, perhaps to have access to a new job. No doubt the wage-earners were aware that there was a certain instability in the present employment situation (even in Switzerland!), meaning that access to employment or staying in the job market had become less secure. In the same way, the statement that companies become involved in CVT with the primary objective of rapidly improving their competitiveness is called into question by the responses of HR managers: CVT is primarily intended to motivate the present staff and make them loyal, and therefore corresponds to a mid-term personnel policy. Finally, the reader might have expected that the cost of training was the principal obstacle in undertaking CVT (from the point of view of the wage-earner) and in supporting CVT activities (from the point of view of the company). However, both the employees and the employers are confronted in the first place with a problem of managing time. The former are anxious that CVT might lead to an overload of work that they will have to deal with outside normal working hours, thus reducing the time available for their private lives, while the latter dread a misalliance between the absences connected with training and the operational needs of the units in which the people undergoing training are located.

An efficient personnel policy should take into consideration the motivations and the impediments facing workers who wish to undergo training. It would be useful if the wage-earners knew (better) the expectations and the objectives ascribed by their employers to CVT. Finally, political decision-makers should be aware of the true motivations of all those who undertake or encourage CVT, if they are to avoid their supporting measures not achieving the desired effect.
References


