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GENDER INEQUALITIES AND LABOUR  
INTEGRATION. AN INTEGRATED APPROACH  
TO VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN PIEDMONT

Greta Falavigna, Elena Ragazzi, Lisa Sella

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# Gender inequalities and labour integration. An integrated approach to vocational training in Piedmont<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** Public policies are even more interested in vocational training issues, because spillovers fall on the labour market, and then on life quality. Reports of the European Commission registered that women are disadvantaged subjects on the labour market but, at the same time, they are more ambitious and are at their best on the educational side. This paper aims at analysing data of Piedmont Region on vocational training policies, focusing on the role of women into the labour market. Data refer to subjects that accomplished their training course during 2011. Analyses have been performed on interviews, in order to evaluate the effects of training on medium-term employment outcomes of trainees. A control sample has been selected with the aim to evaluate the effect of training, with a special focus on women. Probit models and average marginal effects (AMEs) allow authors to estimate the net impact of training into the labour market. Results suggest that the employment gap between men and women is completely recovered in trainees, also when considering qualitative aspects of employment.

**Keywords:** Vocational training; inequality; gender studies; professional integration; labour market

JEL Codes: I24, I25, I28, J71

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## 1. INTRODUCTION: THE EUROPEAN GUIDELINES FOSTERING THE SOCIAL CHANGE

The article 157 of the Lisbon Treaty<sup>2</sup> of the European Commission (2008) establishes that “with a view to ensuring full equality in practice between men and women in working life, the principle of equal treatment shall not prevent any Member State from maintaining or adopting measures providing for specific advantages in order to make it easier for the underrepresented sex to pursue a vocational activity or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in professional careers”. In general terms, the Lisbon Treaty aims at obtaining equal opportunities for men and women caring of both the formal equality and the substantial one. Member States have been gradually forced to pay attention to equally serve subjects, not only on a gender basis, but also considering their age, nationality, ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, and so on. Moreover, the European regulation does not simply consider equality in the labour market, but also in terms of protection and social safety.

Today, the protection system is not based on the concept of traditional family, where the husband works and earns, while the wife takes care of children and housework (Secretariat Missoc, 2012). Indeed, another variable must be considered, i.e. the woman’s career: in this sense, recent EU policies have been implemented, reconciling “work and family” (Stratigaki, 2004). Even if different social

models have been developed over time, law and social protection have not been completely established yet, particularly concerning the role of women and their valorisation.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union underlines the social and economic relevance of guaranteeing equality of treatments, with particular attention to gender gaps<sup>3</sup>. For this reason, the European Commission spends many efforts in its Structural and Cohesion Funds, with the aim to promote equality between men and women and, more in general, to smoothen the existent gaps. Member States must implement specific actions and, at the same time, show how general actions (for consolidating the cohesion, improving the social inclusion and the labour market, and renewing the agricultural European system) work in order to reduce gaps and combat discrimination.

Creating an inclusive society and reducing inequalities within subjects is surely one of the most controversial points. In the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Commission established some indicators for evaluating the life quality, underlining gender differences. Bérenger and Verdier-Chouchane (2007) analyse UNDP indexes suggesting changes for better representing gender differences and for highlighting women’s situation. Authors conclude that these indicators are affected by country specificities with particular attention to developing countries (Saith and Harriss-White, 1999; Charmes and Wieringa, 2003; Mora and Ruiz-Castillo, 2003; Martinez Peinado and Cairó Céspedes, 2004). Nevertheless, the majority of authors (Klasen,

<sup>2</sup> The Lisbon Treaty represents the consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union. It is available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&t=PDF&gc=true&sc=false&f=ST%206655%202008%20INIT>

<sup>3</sup> For a deeper explanation see <http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/>

1998, 2004a, 2004b; Chant, 2006; Cueva Beteta, 2006) show that these indexes are biased, because they are not defined considering all variables influencing the life quality and the development. In particular, Schueller (2006) underlines the relevance of the economic aspect in the definition of these indicators, while Cueva Beteta (2006) considers missing values the most serious problem.

European relevance of the protection systems has been implemented at national level. The OECD (2012) report shows that since the 1980s the majority of OECD States promote programs for equality in the labour market. In particular, they focused on women's employability in order to improve the work quality. Moreover, the European Commission strongly underlines that social inclusion can more effectively, substantially, and quickly be obtained through work. This is the reason for Social Inclusion being one of the key policy fields for the 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programmes. In particular, for women and other disadvantaged groups, integration can be reached firstly by entry (or re-entry) into employment, and then by combating discrimination in accessing and progressing into the labour market (McGregor *et al.*, 2012; Ortolano and Luatti, 2007).

## 2. GENDER INEQUALITIES AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING: WHICH IS THE ROLE OF PUBLIC POLICIES?

The labour market is dramatically changed over time (Kluve, 2010). Especially in recent years, internal "mobility processes", "first-entry channels", and market re-inclusion are changed. Various social groups are strongly affected by these dynamics, in particular the

weak subjects (women, immigrants, youth, etc.). Indeed, the local specificity of disadvantage depends on the regional conformation of markets (Bergemann et Van Den Berg 2008; Hujer *et al.*, 2006; Card *et al.*, 2010).

In 2010, the 16% of OECD citizens aged 15-29 are NEET, i.e. not (engaged) in education, employment or training (OECD, 2012a). Due to the recent crisis, this trend is dramatically increased (OECD, 2012b). The fraction of young NEET women is 4 percentage points higher than that of men, but many differences among States persist. Except Israel, in all OECD countries the percentage of NEET aged 15-29 is higher among women than men. In order to improve the transition from school to active life, the educational system must pass on the technical, professional, and transversal skills required by the labour market, decreasing the percentage of young adults that are neither attending training courses nor actively unemployed.

The OECD report (2012b) underlines that in Spain, Estonia, France, Ireland and Slovakia, the unemployment rate is equal or higher than 25% for NEET aged 20- 24 that have not finished secondary school. In Italy, this rate was 22.8% in 2010, but it is increased in recent years, when the crisis especially stroke young people.

Concerning this, the World Bank (2012) notices that women's activity rate is very high and gender gaps are small in low-income countries, where women work in subsistence farming with no wage. While in high-income countries, their activity rate is in any case relevant, because more than two thirds adult women work. Nevertheless, on average, the gender variance is lower than 15%. This result is clear for countries showing an elaborated

social protection system and for societies allowing part-time options. On the contrary, men's activity rates are static independently from the country income.

Analysing gender differences, OECD (2012c) highlights that today young women are more interested than young men in completing their secondary studies. Indeed, if overall the fraction of men finishing secondary school is on average higher than that of women (75% vs. 73%), when considering young people the result is opposite (80% men vs. 83 women). In all OECD countries except Germany, the number of graduated young women is higher than that of young men.

More definite gender gaps are in Iceland and Portugal, where female rates are 20 percentage points higher than those of men. Nevertheless, even if women are more interested in receiving their secondary qualification (OECD, 2012c) and in gaining more ambitious professional skills than men (OECD, 2012d), they face more difficulties in labour market.

The transition from school to work is very difficult for everybody. In the majority of countries, the upper school aims at training students to engage the university, so that skills immediately and directly involved in the labour market are reduced. This means that firms must often self-invest in practical education and this generally leads to many and several types of discrimination and selection adverse to women. In this context, vocational training policies can have a professionalization role, improving the employment of unemployed and then, they can be a strategic tool for combating discrimination.

This paper aims at evaluating whether vocational training policies can strengthen women's opportunities, breaking down the discrimination, as suggested in Estévez-Abe (2005), Pollak and Hafner-Burton (2000), and True, (2003). This paper investigates the effect of vocational training (VT) on women integration. This investigation is justified by the specific role of VT policies in Italy, which act against the characteristic gap in integration and employment of the weak targets (Ragazzi and Sella, 2014).

Whenever concerning the weak targets, and women in particular, a good evaluation cannot be limited to the quantitative aspects of employment, but it must assess the qualitative characteristics of the jobs retrieved thanks to the training policy. It is a matter of fact that women are not equally distributed in the labour market, but rather they tend to concentrate in jobs allowing to comply with family care, which are generally less remunerated and with poor career progress (Rosti 2006).

This is referred to as "gender occupational segregation", and it may be either vertical (obstacles to promotions to higher career levels) or horizontal (unequal distribution across occupations). In this paper we are more interested in the last one, since training policies could confirm and amplify social stereotypes which hamper labour market mobility, especially when the courses are pulled by the labour demand. For this reason, a great concern will be put on the measurement of "labour quality", notwithstanding we are conscious of the serious problems in measuring occupational segregation (Blackburn 2009). The present work is based on a survey occurred in 2011



and 2012 in Regione Piemonte<sup>4</sup>, aimed at measuring the net effect of training policies funded by the ESF for the unemployed and disadvantaged workers (Ragazzi *et al.*, 2012, 2013; Sella and Ragazzi, 2013). This is a rather innovative experience, inverting the dependence on monitoring, financial, and output data lamented by the Commission, and giving the access to survey data directly collected with the final recipients. The most innovative aspect of the work consists in the net impact evaluation, which is usually neglected in practical applications, due to many theoretical and methodological issues concerning the *ex post* identification of a proper comparison group. Such goal clearly guided the whole design, for it allows a clear understanding of the main effects of the programme and it helps avoiding the so-called dead-weight loss, i.e. the resource loss experienced whenever subsidising targets which would have been anyway satisfied<sup>5</sup> (Sestito, 2002; Martini *et al.*, 2009). In the perspective of this paper such research design allows us to disentangle two opposite dimensions of women labour integration - the individual gap in employability and the specific marginal effectiveness of training – which would otherwise be hidden.

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<sup>4</sup> Data and results in this paper draw from the activity of the evaluation service «Valutazione del POR FSE della Regione Piemonte ob. 2 “competitività regionale e occupazione” per il periodo 2007-2013», realised by the RTI Isri-Ceris. The authors gratefully acknowledge Regione Piemonte, which is the sole owner of data and of the reports, for letting use the results for scope of research and advances in methodology.

<sup>5</sup> For a complete discussion of the several theoretical issues concerning impact evaluation and the way they may be handled in practical application see Sella and Ragazzi (2013) and Benati, Ragazzi, and Sella (2014).

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis is performed on a representative sample of VT students trained during 2011. Regione Piemonte financed the policy also by means of ESF resources<sup>6</sup>. In order to evaluate the net effects, all courses in the sample issue some final title (either professional qualification or specialization) and they are mostly addressed to unemployed people. For the sake of generality, no highly disadvantaged group is addressed (e.g. detainees or disabled persons).

In quasi-experimental evaluation, the identification of a proper target (the treated) is particularly awkward, since an highly homogeneous control group is needed, which has to be selected *ex post*. Moreover, in both the treated and the counterfactual samples, an adequate numerosness is needed to guarantee statistical significance.

#### 3.1 The target population

The target population collects all students, who successfully attended a course and got the final certificate in 2011. In order to evaluate the net impact of VT, the analysis is restricted to individuals not employed at registration, thus focusing on policies aimed at recovering the employment gap of the weak targets, rather than on policies devoted to generic human capital accumulation. The approach is justified in Ragazzi *et al.*, 2013.

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<sup>6</sup> The courses were financed within the “Unemployed – Labour Market” directive (MdL) and pertained the four actions: III.G.06.04 (qualification for unemployed foreigners) and IV.I.12.01 (basic knowledge qualification for low-school-attendance adults), BAS from now on; IV.I.12.02 (specialization and brief refresher courses) and IIE.12.01 (post-qualification, post-diploma, post-degree specialization courses), SPE from now on.



Table 1 – Target population by certification type and active participation to labour market policies. Absolute and % values. The paper focus on foreign BAS and SPE student (grey area).

	OI	BAS	SPE	TOT by LMP	% by LMP
No	2711	1952	2482	7145	74.4
Yes	1078	617	765	2460	25.6
TOT by certification	3789	2569	3247	9605	
% by certification	39.5	26.7	33.8		

Being the data extracted from monitoring and administrative archives, a careful pre-processing is needed for a correct quantification of the target population<sup>7</sup>, which finally counts 9,605 individuals. This number includes the experimental VET activity in compulsory education, which is out of the purpose of this paper.

Notwithstanding the local peculiarities in VT policy programming, preliminary work advised against a sampling stratification by territory and action (Benati *et al.*, 2014). Hence, the sample is stratified by type of certification (compulsory education, qualification, specialization) and active participation to labour market policies (LMP)<sup>8</sup>.

### 3.2 Sampling design and quality assessment

The optimal sampling strategy is not unique, rather it depends on the evaluation objectives.

<sup>7</sup> Duplicates have been reduced to single records prioritising successful and longer treatments, while incomplete records have been matched to administrative SILP data.

<sup>8</sup> This is due to a special interest in the transition from training to the labour market. Obviously, administrative data can solely pinpoint labour market services offered by institutional subjects (employment agencies, town and Province services), neglecting all informal activity (training and temp agencies, private employment agencies, labour union, religious and voluntary associations).

In the present case, several tasks have to be satisfied:

1. Reliable estimate of VT students' follow-up (accountability purposes);
2. Focus on the main aspects of local VT policies (evaluation and programming purposes);
3. Focus on individual characteristics and outcomes (target evaluation and programming);
4. Net impact estimate (improve policy effectiveness);
5. Investigate labour market transitions.

Clearly, some tasks are partially in contrast, e.g. point 1 claims for a huge treated sample and point 4 for a large counterfactual sample, but no more than 2000 interviews can be globally collected by terms of contract.

In the end, a 2-dimensional sampling strategy is implemented, accounting for the type of certification and the active participation to any LMP after VT enrolment (6 strata overall). This allows the researcher to focus on the peculiarities of each training action, accounting for the effect of other labour market policies. At the stratum-level, a proportional allocation is performed, controlling for individual characteristics that influence his employment outcome (gender, citizenship, age). Practically, the ratios observed in each stratum of the target

population have been reproduced in both the treated and comparison samples, hence controlling for composition effects.

In the treated sample, the optimal size is fixed in 1,532 individuals<sup>9</sup> (Cochran, 1977). It represents the 16.0% of the target population and exhibits a satisfactory precision with respect to similar evaluation exercises (Lalla *et al.*, 2004; Centra *et al.*, 2007; IRPET, 2011). Then, individuals are split across the 6 strata, oversizing the smaller subpopulations in order to reduce the sampling error associated to the most critical strata<sup>10</sup>. Hence, individuals are extracted randomly, following the above proportional allocation design.

The overall response rate is 52.4%, showing a consistent “hard-core” of individuals who systematically refuse to be interviewed or which cannot be reached, possibly affecting the estimates (Cochran, 1977). In fact, non-respondents are displaced by individuals in the same stratum, hence keeping the representativeness constant, but possibly enhancing the non-sampling error (Levy *et al.*, 2008).

### 3.3 The counterfactual sample

The identification of a proper comparison group is the fundamental step in net impact evaluation. It requires a comparison sample as much homogeneous to the treated sample as possible. In principle, the main and comparison groups should solely differ with

respect to the treatment itself, in this case the successful attendance to VT. In fact, counterfactual impact evaluation should answer the question “what if the (training) policy would not have been supplied?”. But this is far from being a simple task (White, 2010). Mostly, it is still more arduous whenever the comparison group has not been designed *ex ante*, as in pure experimental design (randomized control trial), but it has to be identified *ex post*, as in the present case (Ciravegna *et al.*, 1995). Moreover, in the present case the size of the control group is necessarily limited by other evaluation objectives (see sec 3.2).

A careful analysis of the evaluation contest suggests to extract the control sample from the so called no-shows (Bell *et al.*, 1995), i.e. the students who did not attend the course (treatment) and that were not employed at enrolment. Such individuals are highly homogeneous with the treated group.

The alternative strategies were aborted for unfeasibility constraints. In particular, a “pass-list strategy” is quite desirable, since it overcomes selection bias by directly comparing the placement outcomes of the last-admitted and the first-excluded individuals. However, no pass-lists are available for VT policies. Moreover, a counterfactual built on employment agency lists was neglected, since the comparison group would be too heterogeneous with respect to the treated. In fact, employment agency lists collect a particular subgroup of unemployed individuals, who presumably differ from the overall group for several unobservable characteristics (e.g. motivation, proactive attitude, individual abilities, background), which substantially influence their employment outcome (selection bias).

<sup>9</sup> The standard formula for finite populations is  $n_e = \frac{z_{1-\alpha/2}^2 P(1-P)}{e^2} \cdot \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left( \frac{z_{1-\alpha/2}^2 P(1-P)}{e^2} - 1 \right)}$ , where  $e$  is the absolute error in

estimating the unknown proportion  $P$  of the target population  $N$ ;  $z_{1-\alpha/2}$  is the abscissa when the normal distribution function equals  $(1-\alpha/2)$ ;  $\alpha$  is the desired significance level. The chosen values are  $e = 2.31$ ,  $P = 0.5$ ,  $\alpha = 0.1$ .

<sup>10</sup> The overall absolute error is 2.3%, while each stratum lies underneath the 7% threshold.

Table 2– Counterfactual sample, absolute and % values with respect to the counterfactual population.

	BAS		SPE		TOT by LMP		Error by LMP
	A.V.	% pop.	A.V.	% pop.	A.V.	% pop.	
No	160	30.6	224	30.3	384	30.4	4.2
Yes	46	36.8	61	33.9	107	35.1	7.6
TOT by certification	206	31.8	285	31.0	491	31.3	3.7
Error by certification	5.6		4.8		3.7		

$$\text{Employment rate} = \frac{\text{Trained \& Employed (incl. redundancy funds)}}{\text{Total trained}}$$

$$\text{Success rate} = \frac{\text{Trained with working activity (employed + stage) + Students}}{\text{Total trained}}$$

Figure 1 – Placement indicators: Definition.

Table 2 describes the counterfactual sample, which resembles the stratified sampling designed for the treated sample (see sec.3.2). The absolute error is restrained (3.7), revealing the quite good quality of the sample.

#### 4. THE GROSS IMPACT EVALUATION

The gross impact of VT policies is evaluated considering the variation in trainees' working conditions in the medium term, i.e. about 12 months following the qualification (October 2012). In fact, the labour market transition of individuals, who were not employed at enrolment, measures the gross impact of training, with no care of the counterfactual situation. This section explores two complementary gross indicators: a macro measure, based on the aggregate placement outcomes, and a micro measure, based on the individuals' integration scores.

##### 4.1 A macro approach: Gross placement indicators

Placement outcomes can be evaluated by two nested indicators, each representing a specific situation within the labour market (ISFOL, 2003). Figure 1 defines the indicators. The employment rate is the fraction of trained people who were employed<sup>11</sup> on October 2012, hence experiencing a “strong” position within the labour market.

The success rate incorporates individuals who either experience a “weaker” position within the labour market (e.g. *stage* and on-the-job training) or that are still within the educational system.

Investigating placement indicators by gender (Table 3), it emerges that women perform better than men, recording higher employment rates.

<sup>11</sup> Including redundancy funds.

Table 3 – Placement indicators on October 2012 by gender, % values.

	Employment rate			Success rate		
	F	M	TOT	F	M	TOT
BAS	50.2	44.9	48.1	50.2	45.9	48.5
SPE	45.2	42.4	43.9	50.9	50.0	50.5
TOT	47.7	43.5	45.9	50.5	48.2	49.5

However, the impact is clearly different across actions: the employment gap amounts more than 5 percentage points in basic (qualification) courses, and less than 3 points in advanced (specialization) courses. The gap is quite totally recovered in SPE when additionally considering on-the-job training (stage) and re-entries in education, with a success rate of about 50%. Symmetrically, overall unemployment affects 48.1% women and 51.3% men, while the inactivity rate is slightly lower among men (0.7 vs. 2.2).

These results relieve a good inclusion of women into the labour market, especially in basic professional positions (BAS). However, these simple indicators consider rough trainees' status at a certain point in time, neglecting any qualitative aspect of labour market inclusion. Surely, it is a multidimensional object: a possible definition is that an individual is fully integrated into the labour market whenever he has a stable/secured job that is adequate to his education and that guarantees a good income (Blangiardo, 2011). Hence, a bulk of indicators has to be considered in order to assess labour market integration. This task can be addressed by individual integration scores, which adopt a micro-approach to investigate differential aspects of integration by various sub-populations.

#### 4.2 A micro approach: Individual scores of labour market integration

The available data allow to investigate three out of four aspects of the above definition of labour market integration, i.e. the employment position, its security, and the income level<sup>12</sup>. On the contrary, over-qualification is addressed by considering the educational level at enrolment.

Individual scores are calculated for every individual (statistical unit) by selecting *k* integration variables according to the shared definition of labour market integration, and then by processing the frequencies of the sample distribution for the selected variables. Each statistical unit is assigned *k* scores according to each modality of the *k* variables. Each score is calculated by an algorithm, that considers the individual position in the global ranking based on the *k*-th variable. Finally, an average of the scores is calculated at each statistical unit, i.e. the integration score, which is ranged [-1;1] (Cesareo and Blangiardo, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> The employment position is described by five modalities: inactive, unemployed, student, on-the-job trainee, employed. Job security has three modalities, reflecting contract duration: low for one year or less fixed-term contract, medium for fixed-term contract lasting more than one year, high for open-ended contract. The income level is defined by four classes: <= 500 Euros; 501-1,000 Euros; 1,001-1,500 Euros; more than 1,500 Euros.

Table 4– Average integration scores by gender and action among trainees and mean-comparison tests.

		Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff. (M-F)	Pr(T<t)	Pr( T > t )	Pr(T>t)
BAS	F	295	-0.252	0.424	-0.064	0.055	0.111	0.944
	M	185	-0.313	0.433				
SPE	F	279	-0.458	0.570	-0.018	0.639	0.723	0.361
	M	236	-0.440	0.598				
TOT	F	574	-0.352	0.510	-0.033	0.160	0.320	0.840
	M	421	-0.386	0.535				

Table 4 substantially confirms the previous result, showing an higher integration score for women in BAS (diff. -0.064). This outcome is stronger than the previous one, for it involves a multidimensional definition of labour market integration. On the contrary, no significant gender differential is retrieved in SPE. As well as the previous macro indicators, integration scores calculated over the treated are affected by deadweight effects. To get rid of such weakness, average integration scores must be compared between the treated and the not treated: discrepancies can be attributed to the treatment, i.e. to vocational training.

## 5. THE NET IMPACT EVALUATION

Since the sampling strategy guarantees an high homogeneity between the treated and the

counterfactual samples (see sec.3.3), a comparison in their average integration scores represents the very first step for the net impact evaluation.

### 5.1 Differentials in average integration scores

Table 5 shows integration scores in the counterfactual sample. Overall, counterfactuals' scores are higher than trainees', suggesting that they are systematically stronger over the labour market (Table 6). In fact, about the 50% dropped-out because they got hired before qualification. Moreover, it emerges that drop-out men are significantly better integrated than women in SPE (diff. 0.175), while no significant gender difference is retrieved in BAS.

Table 5 – Average integration scores by gender and action in the counterfactual sample and mean-comparison tests.

		Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff. (M-F)	Pr(T<t)	Pr( T > t )	Pr(T>t)
BAS	F	86	-0.276	0.310	-0.039	0.807	0.386	0.193
	M	120	-0.237	0.317				
SPE	F	130	-0.144	0.331	0.175	1.000	0.000	0.000
	M	155	0.030	0.350				
TOT	F	216	-0.197	0.329	0.110	0.999	0.000	0.000
	M	275	-0.086	0.361				

Table 6– Average integration scores among treated and not treated and mean-comparison test.

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff. (NT-T)	Pr(T<t)	Pr( T > t )	Pr(T>t)
Treated	995	-0.367	0.521	0.232	1.000	0.000	0.000
Not treated	275	-0.135	0.351				

Comparing with the mean-comparison tests in Table 4, it can be argued that vocational training strengthens women integration into the labour market, although not recovering the overall integration gap. In fact, female BAS trainees show better labour integration, which is not recovered in the counterfactual sample. Similarly, female SPE trainees recover the gender disadvantage detected among drop-outs. Hence, it seems that Piedmont VT globally acts to recover employability gaps of particularly weak targets. This result is confirmed by the multivariate analysis.

### 5.2 The multivariate analysis

The net impact of training policies has been assessed through a multivariate probit model. This approach allows estimating in percentage terms the net impact of training policies on the probability of employment about one year later, taking simultaneously into account the effect of individual characteristics on such probability. This technique avoids the composition effects which affects the rough comparison of outcomes between the treatment and counterfactual groups (net employment differentials). The regression model in Table 7 shows a positive and significant effect of age, instruction level, participation to VET on individual employment probability. In particular, age coefficients show a nonlinear impact on employability: *ceteris paribus*, it is more

likely that adults find a job with respect to young people (0.082), but their advantage decreases with age ( $age^2 = -0.001$ ). The positive impact of education endorses the labour market attractiveness of individuals embedding a stronger human capital (0.073). Note that this conclusion is not in contrast with another result, i.e. that training is more effective within basic courses. In fact, education is an advantage independently from the decision to participate to training. On the other hand, the net impact of VT is overall positive, but it decreases with education at enrolment, as shown by the negative and significant coefficient of the interaction variable between education and training (-0.058). This partly explains the fact that training courses for low-skilled individuals appear to be more effective than specialization courses. Training acts in the Piedmont system so as to recover the disadvantage of individuals with a lacking education path.

Among the counterfactuals, students who dropped-out for hiring seem to be favoured (0.058), probably because they show a proactive attitude in the labour market. With one year lag, these individuals are still stronger with respect to the trainees, who have enforced their human capital. Hence, this variable can be interpreted as a proxy of unobservable individual characteristics, related to the psychological and social expertise, that are fundamental in finding and holding a job.



Table 7– Probit model on the treated and counterfactual groups.  
The symbol # indicates interaction variables.

Variables			
Woman	-0.380*** (0.129)	Training	2.137*** (0.361)
Age	0.0824*** (0.0271)	Training # Education	-0.0584** (0.0257)
Age <sup>2</sup>	-0.00124*** (0.000396)	Woman # Training	0.395** (0.155)
Education (years)	0.0735*** (0.0211)	No-EU # Training	0.205 (0.179)
No-EU	-0.249* (0.144)	OSS # Training	
Upstream unemployment (months)	-0.0256*** (0.00400)	1 1	0.726*** (0.120)
Drop-out for hiring	0.858*** (0.126)	1 0	0.283 (0.273)
		Constant	-2.236*** (0.470)
Observations	1,485	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.0994
Standard errors in parenthesis	*** p<0.01	** p<0.05	* p<0.1

Concerning variables that negatively influence employability, we observe a negative impact of citizenship to the detriment of non-EU nationals (-0.249), although training recovers this disadvantage (0.205). Moreover, upstream long-term unemployment has a significant and negative impact (-0.026) on employability.

On equal terms, a longer unemployment spell before enrolment lowers the probability to find a job after the training.

This highlights two phenomena. Firstly, the share of long-term unemployed is a proxy of the share of highly disadvantaged individuals among the VT courses assessed.

In our sample, the 14.2% individuals have been unemployed for more than two years before the enrolment, and the 25.2% for periods between 12 and 24 months.

In many cases, this long-term unemployment represents the effect of latent individual characteristics – behavioural attitudes, cultural and human capital – that hamper labour insertion.

Secondly, the exclusion from the labour market itself generates a disadvantage in terms of employability that persists after training.

Staying away from the informal networks that oil and thin the demand-supply matching mechanisms, the rapid obsolescence of skills and knowledge, the even quicker degradation of the set of contacts useful to find a new job, and the psychological and social mechanisms of loss of trust, self-esteem, social acknowledgement, these are all phenomena which tend to become chronic, and then can no longer be overcome by the individual.



On the other hand, variables describing the context of life (parents' education or the family material endowments such as pc, internet, driving license, private transport means, dimension and property of the house) do not prove significant<sup>13</sup>. The model seems to indicate that material and contest difficulties do not really hamper employability, and certainly less than the aspects linked to the motivation and relation sphere of the individual do.

Other not significant aspects were the territorial differences (at the province level) and the type of action. From these first results, we conclude that the regional scale is the best scale for extensive surveys like the present one, because there is no sensible differentiation in the policies granted at the sub-regional level, at least in the Italian context. Dummies related to the type of policies (BAS, SPE) were not significant as well. The observed differences in the employment performance (gross impact and employment differentials) are due to the greater concentration in the most successful actions of those disadvantaged individuals for which the training policies prove so effective in Piedmont. In models where these individual differences are accounted for, the different performances disappear.

### 5.3 *The impact on women*

Let's now have a closer look to the results concerning women. Although the descriptive statistics show better female employment rates, the multivariate analysis shows a strong and persistent disadvantage. The negative and significant coefficient of the gender dummy (-0.380) tells that women have a much lower

<sup>13</sup> The coefficients do not significantly differ from zero neither one by one, nor as a group, via the F test.

probability to find a job than men. Although women's motivation to work and willingness to take jobs in difficult conditions (e.g. personal care, night work or hard environmental conditions) is generally appreciated a lot by the market, they are weaker on equal terms. But the data show also an effect in the opposite direction, i.e. that of training. The initial disadvantage is completely compensated in the case of trainees.

This result cannot be appreciated by simply observing the model coefficients, while the two contrasting effects can be precisely estimated using the Average Marginal Effect (AME). This method calculates the probability to find a job twice for each individual in the sample (both the treated and non-treated), based on his individual characteristics: one time under the hypothesis he attended a training course, and another as if he had not. The difference between the two values is the marginal effect; the AME is averaged over all individuals. This is a more precise method with respect to the standard one, where a theoretical "average individual" is created, whose marginal effect is calculated. With no distinction in target groups, the AME method shows a net impact of +14,5 percentage points, meaning that treated individuals have a probability to find a job (with a time lag of one year) which is nearly 15 points higher than if they had not been treated<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> It must be observed that this results holds because an appropriate control group has been created. A test on selection bias has been conducted, estimating a two equation model: the first concerning the probability to accomplish the whole training path, and the second the probability to find a job given the participation choice (Heckman, 1976). This test excludes the existence of a significant selection bias.

Table 8– Average marginal effects of training for men and women.

	AME
Men	0.086** (0.044)
Women	0.198*** (0.039)

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

Table 9 – Test on VT gender differentials (women vs. men) by treatment.

	AME
Not trained	-0.115*** (0.042)
Trained	-0.002 (0.031)

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

The AME method clearly shows that training policies recover the initial disadvantage of women in terms of employability.

In Table 8, the net impact of training by gender is calculated. It can be clearly seen that trained women raise their employment probability by almost 20%, while men of less than 10%.

This happens thanks to the special care of the weak targets in the assessed policies, which makes them more effective in recovering their disadvantage. In Table 9 it can be seen that, on average, the employment gap amounts 12 percentage points to the detriment of women among drop-outs, but this effect vanishes among trainees.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper doesn't address the evaluation of a specific gender policy but rather the effect that a wide active labour policy, i.e. VT courses, may have on the reduction of gender inequalities.

This because training policies in Italy are on the main targeted on weak groups and aim at their labour and social inclusion (Ragazzi Sella 2014).

Our aim is to assess the different responsiveness to public policies of males and females, and to produce, by this way, evidence on the necessity to implement specific gender policies.

This paper analyses the effect of training courses concluded in 2011. We draw data from a survey performed in Regione Piemonte, based on a representative sample of treated and on a control group, selected from

no-shows. Since employability is a multidimensional phenomenon, we adopt a multiple approach analysing the performance of VT policies through several complementary techniques:

- a macro approach based on aggregate placement indicators
- a micro approach based on individual integration score
- a net impact evaluation assessed by a multinomial probit regression.

The first approach is useful to provide an aggregate and synthetic view of gender differences in employment and success rates. It emerges that apparently women have better performances than men, both in basic and advanced courses. But this approach suffers from some shortcomings, which induced us to complete the analysis with individual integration scores and multidimensional econometric regressions. Firstly, since it is often stated that gender discrimination appears more in the qualitative aspects of work than in employment levels, it is necessary to complement the analysis with this type of information. To take into account the multiple aspect of labour integration it is necessary to calculate a composite indicator. We decided to adopt an algorithm in which the elementary indicators of labour market integration are weighted following the individual position in the global ranking for that indicator. Another problem of aggregate placement indicators is represented by composition effects. Gender differences in employment rates may result not only by actual disparities in the treatment of male and female workers, but also by other personal characteristics affecting employability (age, education, previous work experience, etc.). Hence it is imperative to adopt a multinomial

approach, trying to isolate the effect that individual characteristics, gender and training policies have on the probability to find a job.

Both are useful but incomplete since the probit model is based on a dichotomous indicator of work status, while integration scores still suffer from composition effects.

For example, apart from gender distinction, integration scores detect a weakness of trained versus non trained. This may be ascribed to different composition of the treated and non-treated groups as far as some variables such as former education and unemployment which strongly affect employability, furthermore being a sort of proxy of hidden individual characteristics. Coming to gender differences, both approaches seem to indicate that non-trained women have worse performances than non-trained men, while trained women perform as well as men. But these results have different meanings. In the case of integration scores, the results for two groups (trained vs. drop-outs and males vs. females) in the sample are compared. In the case of the multinomial regression the differences are calculated as an average of the individual impacts. Analysing the different types of training policies, in the case of specialisation courses, addressed to highly educated individuals, the results are the same than in the general case. But as for base qualification courses for low educated adults, trained women are even better integrated than males on the labour market. Since the initial gender gap is nullified after the course, we can conclude that training policies are also effective to reduce gender inequality.

Ongoing further research is intended to assess longitudinal aspects in labour insertion (survival analysis), and to evaluate the effects of gender stratification in specific professions.

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