

Competing with skills for clothing: A comparative case study on the skill-formation regimes for the garment industry in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka

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One major aspect of economic globalization, the removal of barriers to global free trade, drastically increased competition in traditionally low-skill industrial sectors and thus the skill-needs of developing countries. Therefore, governments in developing countries find themselves urged to ensure a sufficient amount of skills, necessary for the survival of these industries. This is specifically true for the garment industry, which has experienced increased competition since the quota-regime for this trade was recently phased out.

As there is hardly any empirical evidence on such processes, the paper presents the results of an exploratory comparative case study that analyzes how actors both in the private and the public sector develop and change the skill-formation regime for the garment industry in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The broader analytical aim of the paper is, however, to present a theoretical model explaining genesis and change of skill-formation regimes in countries with a weak administrative and political regime and with a production regime that is characterized by export oriented, labor-intensive manufacturing industries.

The paper, thus, makes an important contribution to the congress by looking at training systems and processes in developing countries. The study underlying the paper is a contribution to the literature on skill-formation in developing countries, which has, so far, produced very limited empirical evidence on how the respective skill-formation regimes actually develop and change and on how employers' association influence training policy. The theoretical model also lays the foundation for future comparative research in this field. Furthermore, the findings presented in the paper will help to refine programs and policies related to skill-formation in developing countries and to make them more relevant for industrial needs in general, not only for the ones of the garment sector.