



VET Systems & Terminology: A Classification & Clarification

DC dVET Policy Brief

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INTRODUCTION

Dual VET is on everyone's lips and the focus of the work of the Donor Committee for dual VET (DC dVET). This Policy Brief outlines what constitutes a dual system from our point of view and how this compares to other systems. This classification creates a common thematic basis, particularly for targeted communication, which is key in supporting and advisory work.

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VET SYSTEMS MUST BE VIEWED IN CONTEXT

VET systems cannot be viewed, let alone developed further, without consideration of the context in which they are rooted. In principle and as illustrated in figure 1, VET systems operate at the intersection between the world of education and the world of work. As a result, a VET system is largely determined by which of the two worlds bears the (main) responsibility and how they cooperate with each other. The two worlds in turn are influenced by the local society, culture, and the prevailing political system.

All these elements and the respective actors, such as political decision-makers, governing bodies of VET schools, employer and employee representations, individual companies, non-profit organizations, and learners and their families, are stakeholders in a country's VET system. Consequently, VET systems differ considerably between countries and in some countries different sub-systems exist in parallel.

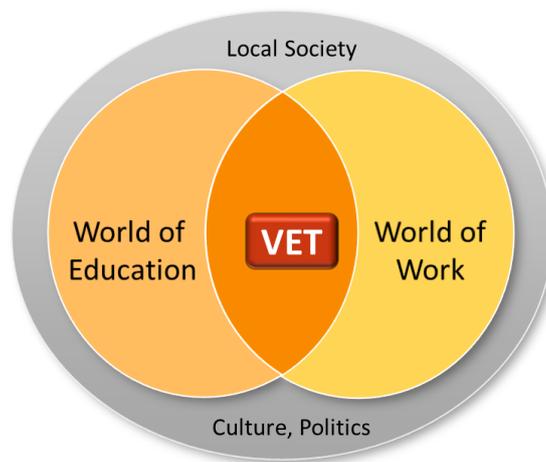


Figure 1: VET in between the world of education and the world of work¹

¹ Adapted from Swisscontact (2014).

The terminology to describe VET systems is not uniform: similar systems may go under different names, and similar names may be used for different systems. Therefore, the types of VET systems need to be classified and the terminology explained. The degree of school-based versus on-the-job-training incorporated in the respective VET system is a useful starting point for classification. This leads to the following continuum with exclusively school-based VET forming one extreme, and solely on-the-job-training marking the other:

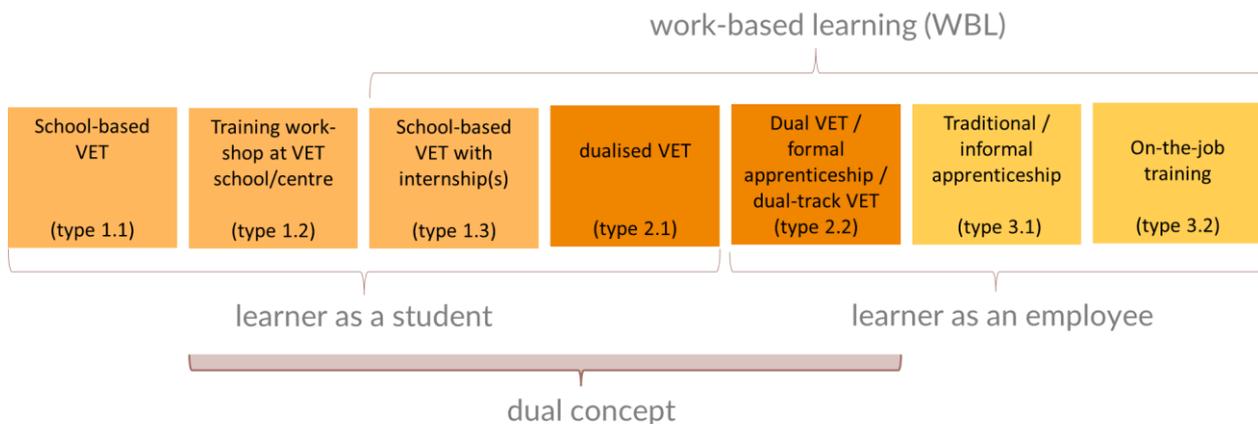


Figure 2: Classification of VET systems²

CATEGORY 1 – EXCLUSIVELY / PREDOMINANTLY SCHOOL-BASED VET (TYPES 1.1, 1.2, 1.3):

Under all three types in this category, the learner has the status of a student, the curriculum and qualification are defined by public authorities and the VET school / centre is in charge of implementing it, determining the type of learning and assessment.

- **Type 1.1 “school-based VET”** represents exclusively school-based training without any element of learning that involves or simulates work-based learning (WBL)³.
- Alternatively, the VET school may aim to incorporate practical applications into the learning process by simulating business situations in separate workshops. This is shown in **type 1.2 “training workshop at VET school/centre”**.
- The third option, i.e., **type 1.3 “school-based VET with internships”**, consists in assigning a certain (minor) proportion of the otherwise school-based learning process to WBL in the form of internships.

CATEGORY 2 – DUALISED / DUAL VET (TYPES 2.1, 2.2)

Two types fall into this category, **type 2.1 “dualised VET”** and **type 2.2 “dual VET”**. They share the following characteristics:

- shared responsibility between the public and the business sector,
- a systematic alternation between school-based and WBL,
- a considerable proportion of WBL,
- learners obtain a formal qualification on completion of the programme, and
- the programmes have a rather long-term duration that can be up to four years.

² Own graph from DC dVET Regional Workshop West Africa (2017).

³ According to the ETF (Grollmann et al, 2021), work-based learning is defined as follows: “The key point of work-based learning is knowledge acquisition and competence development in a genuine working environment. This includes the typical technological, technical, social, and economic learning content and skills that are required at work.”

The three main differences are the (i) ownership, (ii) the status of the learners and (iii) the share of WBL.

- Under **type 2.1 “dualised VET”**, the learner still has the status of a student and ownership primarily resides with the VET school / centre, the share of WBL will be lower compared to dual VET (type 2.2). The VET school / centre enters into contractual agreements with companies that provide the in-company training part in a structured way. The business sector can be engaged at the level of individual companies and/or umbrella organisations, such as chambers or professional associations. In the French speaking contexts this VET type is often referred to as “formation en alternance”.
- **Type 2.2 Dual VET / formal or dual apprenticeship / dual-track VET** describes the formal apprenticeship schemes adhered to in Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland. The key components are the following:
 - Learning venues:** There are at least two learning venues. Typically, the VET school / centre provides apprentices with occupational theory and general education, while companies focus on hands-on knowledge and practical skills. Additional learning venues are inter-company or industry training centres and the virtual learning room.
 - Ownership:** Dual VET is a shared responsibility of the public and the (organized) business sector. Shared responsibilities include, e.g., governance, regulation, and financing.
 - Status of the learner:** In dual VET, companies recruit their apprentices, and both parties enter into a formal agreement with an employment and a learning component.
 - Duration of the training:** In countries with a dual VET system, the duration of initial apprenticeships varies between 2 and 4 years, depending on the occupation.
 - Ratio of learning in business and VET school / centre:** Typically, the proportion of learning in the company to classroom education is between 80:20 and 60:40.

Another important characteristic is the “professional concept”. A dual apprenticeship results in a comprehensive qualification and not simply in a job or number of selected skills. Therefore, the concept of a profession and the pride, quality and respect associated with it by society are key elements.

CATEGORY 3: VET EXCLUSIVELY/PREDOMINANTLY AS “ON-THE-JOB-TRAINING” (TYPES 3.1 & 3.2)

This category marks the opposite of school-based VET. The learner has the status of an employee, and individual companies may define their own training content.

- **Type 3.1 “informal / traditional apprenticeships”** constitute “the training system of the informal economy, which has evolved from traditional learning based on the immediate and extended family”.⁴ They consist in the apprentice learning in an informal context side by side with a master craftsperson and do not lead to a formal qualification. Such traditional apprenticeships tend to be shorter in duration than a formal apprenticeship. However, depending on the nature of the trade, they can last from only a few months to a period of up to five years. Informal apprenticeships take place with a view to obtaining skills that are rather specific to an individual company. Hence the informal qualification travels less easily across a given industry. They are particularly common in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Latin America and increasingly also in Central Asia.⁵
- Under **type 3.2 “on-the-job training”**, no qualification is obtained, and assessment only takes place in so far as the learning employee receives a regular performance review like any other employee.

DUAL VET IS MORE THAN THE DUAL CONCEPT

Types 1.2 to 2.2 correspond to the **dual concept**, but to varying degrees. The dual concept is a pedagogic principle which applies whenever school-based learning and WBL are combined. Hence including small elements of hands-on practical training in a predominantly school-based VET system already satisfies this concept. For this reason, also the predominantly school-based models type 1.2 “training workshop at VET school/centre” and type 1.3 “training at VET school with internship(s)” reflect the dual concept to some extent. The dual concept is, however, only one of the key components of a dual VET system as described in type 2.2 “dual VET”.

⁴ Werquin, P. (2021, p.3).

⁵ Gewer, A. (2021, p.8).

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Gender-specific terms and formulations apply in principle to both genders.