

Donor Committee for dual Vocational Education and Training: Founding Event and Specialist Conference on 14 April 2016, Lucerne (Switzerland)

Workshop 1: Workplace as a place of learning

Starting point

The practical acquisition of skills directly in the real working environment is key for dual vocational education and training. In the core countries of dual vocational education and training, Germany, Liechtenstein, Austria and Switzerland, the ratio of practical learning in the company to school-based learning is between 80:20 and 60:40. Workshop 1 concentrated on this specific aspect of dual vocational education and training and dealt with the issue of how this element can be implemented in development cooperation. The fundamental question was: how can actual duality be achieved in vocational education and training?

In this regard, there were lively discussions on the following themes in three working groups:

- **Working group 1:** The relationship between school and company as places of learning or how should/must the dynamic relationship between school and company be shaped so that a workplace can function as a place of learning?
- **Working group 2:** Company as a place of learning or how should/must a company design a workplace so that this can actually be experienced as a place of learning by the person who is being trained?
- **Working group 3:** Framework conditions for the company as a place of learning in dual vocational education and training or which requirements/framework conditions are necessary so that the workplace can function as a place of learning?

Excerpts from the discussions of the working groups

WG 1: The relationship between school and company as places of learning

Moderation: Wolfgang Schlegel (INBAS)

Resource persons:

- Matthias Jäger (vocational education and training expert and editor of the study “Berufsbildung als Option in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit” or “Vocational education and training as an option in development cooperation”).

The following themes were discussed and emphasised in WG 1:

- Dual training at two places of learning is more cost-efficient than full-time school-based vocational education and training programmes. These can be financed only in strategically important branches.
- The share of the practical part in dual training needs to be at least 50%. The ratio of school-based training to company-based training can/needs to be managed flexibly, however, and a higher school-based part can be worthwhile in the first year and this can then decrease as the training progresses.
- In companies competences are taught which can otherwise not be acquired (job-related socialisation).
- An institutionalised form of encounter and exchange between the training staff at companies and the teaching staff at VET schools is required. External agencies (e.g. VET offices) play a key role for achieving this cooperation.

- If the teachers at schools do not have any company experience or if this was a long time ago, this prevents smooth cooperation. Conversely, academically trained teachers feel superior to partners at companies. The challenge for programmes is to achieve communication on an equal footing here. Good practice in Peru: teachers from training centres have the possibility to complete a work placement in companies.
- One key challenge is to create transparency about learning processes at the respective places of learning and to establish a practical link between learning at the company and the learning of theory at school. In this regard it is important to increase the personal responsibility of the learners so that they pass on their experiences from both places of learning to the respective other place of learning.
- The participation of both places of learning in the performance assessment is an important element to ensure functioning cooperation between the places of learning.

WG 2: Workplace as a place of learning

Moderation: Gottfried Traxler (ADA)

Resource person: Julian Fässler (examples Mexico and China, ALPLA Werke GmbH & Co KG)

The following themes were discussed and emphasised in WG 2:

- Training at the workplace is, in the case of ALPLA, closely based on the needs of the company and therefore the market. The training uses state-of-the-art technology and introduces the learners step by step to complex production facilities. This means the learners can become innovation drivers of tomorrow.
- For the workplace as a place of learning, countries with no tradition in vocational education and training need a precise and well thought-out concept. Training is pioneering work because the stakeholders involved (trainers, subject teachers, parents, staff) are not familiar with the model of dual vocational education and training. Energy and money have to be invested in confidence-building measures so that authorities, teachers and parents know the young people are in good hands.
- Dual learning has to be explained and experienced – every day – and the organisation of the workplace as a place of learning has to be adapted to the cultural conditions of the country. Learning functions completely differently in China than in Mexico. A high level of school-based education, drill, discipline, fear of making mistakes and shyness in China contrast here with a low level of the school system, an open basic attitude and gratitude in Mexico. For this, adapted learning materials have to be developed which contain detailed work instructions for learners AND trainers. This is the only way to ensure the quality of training.
- Trainers have to become motivated and employees need to have their fears alleviated. The sharing of knowledge is not as self-evident as in Europe. Corresponding changes can be made only if the management of the company in Europe and, even more importantly, in the regions are firmly convinced by this approach.

WG 3: Framework conditions for the company as a place of learning in dual training

Moderation: Gertraud Findl (ADA)

Resource persons:

- Ann-Kathrin Hentschel (project manager “Reform of VET”, Serbia, BMZ/GIZ)
- Barbara Wilfinger (Austrian Federal Economic Chamber/WKÖ, Department of Educational Policy)

The following themes were discussed and emphasised in WG 3:

Legal framework

- Apprenticeship has to be a formal qualification and therefore a fixed component of the education system (essential for employees AND company). Subsequently the workplace also has to be a fixed component as a place of learning. This requires higher-level control (governance system) which is clearly different from the one for full-time school-based vocational education

and training. In concrete terms this means the companies play an active role in designing and controlling the entire system (curricula, occupational profiles, entrepreneurial freedom when carrying out company-based training, etc.).

- The cooperation of the private sector should be in an organised form (intermediaries important) so that individual companies are not overburdened and in order to design a balanced overall system. It is necessary to build on existing structures and networks here. Economic chambers and/or sectoral associations, for example, come into question here. These should bear the main responsibility for the integration of companies in dual training. Capacity building measures are often necessary for these intermediaries.
- There needs to be particular focus on quality assurance (in particular of company-based training). Minimum quality standards for the company as a place of learning need to be laid down in the legal framework (in general) and in the curriculum (specifically). Minimum quality standards need to be defined for the participation of companies in dual training (e.g. for training trainers).
- It also needs to be considered how elements such as employee protection/occupational health and insurance coverage can be promoted and legally enshrined. Here the stakeholders are often in the area of conflict between ensuring minimum standards and additional costs for the companies.
- Companies should not be forced to join in. However, incentives can be provided to motivate them, e.g. tax incentives, free training for trainers, support with the quality assurance of the company-based part of training.
- The establishment of dual approaches has to be carried out in a process. For example, first of all new concepts can/need to be introduced and tested in a pilot project and then legally enshrined and extended to other regions/occupations. When they are legally enshrined it must be ensured, in turn, that these items are also realised (implementation and quality assurance).
- The roles of the stakeholders change with the introduction of dual approaches. This often triggers fears of loss and therefore resistance and requires close monitoring and confidence-building measures.

Financial framework

- The higher-level control and the school-based part have to be publicly funded. In the case of the company-based part of training, however, the cost-benefit calculation of the companies is the determinant. Overall, apprenticeships need to function without subsidies. The training costs of the companies need to be recognised as investments here.
- Important basic principle: public support in kind and not in cash in the sense of concrete assistance for companies (e.g. apprenticeship offices in Ö).

Take home messages of Workshop 1: Workplace as a place of learning

WG 1

- The cooperation between the two places of learning requires formal structures and institutionalised cooperation (e.g. holding joint examinations). Specifically defined agencies in a key position could be suitable for this.
- Respectful cooperation on an equal footing between the trainers in the company and those in the school often requires confidence-building measures in the partner countries.
- Coordination (in terms of timetables and syllabuses) of the teaching contents in the company and school is essential. Topics should be coordinated so they run at corresponding times and so that the contents complement each other.

WG 2:

- The commitment of the company is required on all levels: investments + human resources + learning in the work process = “hardware” + “software” + processes.
- The important things are technical know-how and also didactic and intercultural competences; intercultural competence in particular was underlined as important in the WG.

- More cooperation is needed between the active companies; more cooperation and coordination between the donor organisations is also desirable.

WG 3:

- New training forms often lead to resistance and fear at established institutions of the vocational education and training sector. It is important to address these concerns proactively. Dual training needs to be seen as an additional offer and not as competition.
- The capacity development of intermediaries (e.g. economic chambers) is seen as being essential. Greater exchange on this, for example at the regional level, would be desirable. The wish was expressed for the DC dVET to take up this theme.
- Very good legal framework conditions are often established but there is then a problem in the implementation. Here quality assurance mechanisms are required which are incorporated directly in the implementation processes.