



IOE-BIAC-GAN SURVEY: DO NATIONAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) SYSTEMS REFLECT THE B20-L20 JOINT UNDERSTANDING ON QUALITY APPRENTICESHIPS?

MAIN FINDINGS

Introduction

In a joint understanding in June 2013, the B20 and L20 stressed the key role of high quality apprenticeship systems in bringing young people into the labour force and ensuring the availability of workers that are equipped with the skills businesses need.

This joint understanding presented to G20 Labour Ministers and to the G20 Employment Task Force, identifies seven key principles that make for successful apprenticeships. The joint understanding of key elements for quality apprenticeships is attached to this analysis.

In preparation for the OECD-G20-EU conference on apprenticeships systems taking place in Paris on 9 April 2014, the IOE, BIAC and the Global Apprenticeship Network (GAN) contacted their national member federations in G20 countries to assess the extent to which national VET frameworks are in line with this joint understanding. Responses from 17 out of 19 countries were received. The survey allowed us to better understand the challenges that employers and young people face when it comes to VET in G20 countries.

Main Findings

The majority of G20 countries have a national VET system which combines workplace-based as well as off-the-job training. In some countries like the US, there is no uniform national system, but highly diversified and decentralised approaches. In Japan, apprenticeships are not governed by legislation and different private VET initiatives exist in parallel.

In seven countries, employers' federations and trade unions are not sufficiently involved in the design, implementation and governance of VET systems. The survey results indicate that it is in precisely these countries where social partners do not have the possibility to adequately engage with VET systems, that the curricula of the VET systems neither correspond to the needs of businesses nor the interests of apprentices, and that the curricula do not achieve a smooth school-to-work transition. Basically, these systems fail to deliver their main function: to equip young people with the skills they need to enter the labour market quickly.



VET institutions in 30% of the countries surveyed do not have the latest technology and learning tools. In view of the rapid development in technology, it is of course a challenge for VET institutions to stay up-to-date. However, through private-public-partnerships and other innovative solutions, this problem can be addressed. If pupils learn using obsolete technology, they are bound to meet with challenges in the workplace and the labour market.

A further finding of the survey was that in the majority of G20 countries, older displaced adults who need to move into a new industry or update their skills do not have sufficient access to apprenticeships. Such access is only available in three of the G20 countries. Governments must make better use of the potential of apprenticeships to open up opportunities in the labour market for displaced adults.

The majority of G20 countries engage in initiatives which elevate the status of apprenticeships so that they are positively perceived as a pathway towards a satisfying career. In countries where this is the case, government activities are supported by employers' federations.

It is reassuring that in the vast majority of countries national VET systems are in compliance with core labour standards and are linked to social benefit(s) and occupational health and safety systems. A remaining challenge, however, seems to be the issue of remuneration. While in six countries appropriate remuneration is provided to the apprentice participating in the VET system, in six others this is not the case. This finding could be attributed to the issue of the definition of apprenticeships. It would be important to explore the issue in more depth and to analyse the background of the remuneration-policy in the countries concerned.

In a significant number of countries, promoting gender equality objectives by facilitating training of both male and female participants for non-traditional gender occupations needs to be pursued more actively. Not using the apprenticeship systems to promote gender equality objectives is a missed opportunity, not only with regard to gender equality in itself, but also with regard to activating untapped employment potential. This is especially important in countries faced with an ageing population and a shortage of skilled workforce.

Finally, in half of the G20 countries, the apprenticeship systems neither encourage entrepreneurship and innovation, development of general business knowledge and skills nor responsible business conduct. In view of the importance of start-ups for job creation, this is a significant problem which needs to be urgently addressed.

Conclusions

The survey shows that in a large number of G20 countries, social partners do not always engage sufficiently in the governance of VET systems.. Involving employers' and workers' organisations in VET systems is not an aim in itself, but a precondition to ensure that



apprenticeships systems correspond to both the needs of businesses and the interests of apprentices. This is not the case in many G20 countries.

Skills development has been high on the G20 agenda since the beginning of the process. G20 leaders already pledged to support robust training efforts in their growth strategies and investments in the 2009 Pittsburgh Declaration. Moreover, the ILO in collaboration with the OECD developed a G20 skills strategy which was welcomed by G20 Leaders in Toronto in June 2010. In Los Cabos two years later, G20 heads of state and government committed to intensify efforts to strengthen cooperation in education, skills development and training policies — including internship and on-the-job training — that support successful school-to-work transition. Indeed, skills development has been one of the priority areas in which most action has been taken by G20 governments since 2010. According to the ILO-OECD G20 implementation report, since 2010 a common objective has been to render skills more relevant to the labour market, including through apprenticeships and dual training systems.

However, the findings of the survey show that much more needs to be done. Five years after the Pittsburgh Declaration, the VET-systems in many G20 countries are still far from being effective. Although employers acknowledge that the development of effective apprenticeship systems needs time, progress so far has been disappointing. Employers, workers and societies at large do not expect miracles but the determined implementation of what has been agreed at G20 level.

Governments are called on to implement the B20-L20 joint understanding of key elements for quality apprenticeships, which enjoys the support of employers and workers around the world.

Business is committed to deliver and has started to follow-up the G20 recommendations on its own by creating the Global Apprenticeships Network (GAN). Through GAN National Networks, employers' federations will be taking the lead in promoting and advocating for more and improved quality apprenticeships. The priorities and activities of the GAN National Networks will be different depending on country needs. However, better partnerships with training providers and social partners is a priority in nearly every country.

Some GAN members will present their innovative solutions during the OECD-G20-EU Conference on apprenticeships systems on 9 April 2014. IOE, BIAC and their member federations as well as the GAN, offer governments the opportunity to collaborate closely in the development and improvement of VET systems. Business and governments pursue the same goal: to ensure young people are employable today and in the future by being equipped with the skills that match business needs.

ANNEX: Joint understanding of key elements for quality apprenticeships