
Relevant Education – how to share responsibilities

Speaker

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Third Ministerial Meeting on Education of the Broader
Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) countries and the
Group of Eight (G8)

21 – 22 November 2007 Bonn / Petersberg

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Bonn, 22 November 2007

(1) The dual system of vocational education and training, the combination of in-company and school-based qualification, was and remains a basis for the ability of companies to adapt and innovate to secure success in the world economy. The fact that this system is firmly established in statutory and institutional terms whilst its integration into the cultural landscape and values system also provides a further basis means that it provides a virtually inimitable competitive advantage.

(2) Once a purely in-company system, the dual system of vocational education and training has transformed itself into a system featuring a range of learning venues and combinations of learning venues. The main characteristics of the system are the multitude of structural approaches and organisational forms adopted and the wide range of partners involved.

(3) As is the case in all other countries, present prognoses indicate an increasing requirement for more highly qualified workers in future. Merely raising the proportion of higher education graduates will not, in itself, be sufficient to meet this need. BIBB research results have demonstrated that academic and vocational qualifications tend to develop in a complementary fashion.

(4) Within the dual system, more than 60 percent of a year group received qualified vocational education and training. About one in four companies is involved in the provision of VET in the dual system. In 2006, companies invested around 27.7 billion euro in vocational training. Even if the productive work produced by trainees is included in the calculations, the net amount is still 14.7 billion euro. This renders in-company vocational training one of the largest areas of privately organised education in the world.

(5) Chambers, trade and industry associations, employers' associations and the trade unions are all involved in the organisation of vocational education and training. The so-called principle of consensus is a constitutive feature of German VET. Involvement on the part of the trade and industry associations is only partially statutorily secured via the Vocational Training Act. It also has its basis in the rules and agreements which have developed into established practice over the course of time.

(6) In the past 10 years, over 80 percent of training occupations, just under 350 in number, have been modernised or completely redeveloped. 60 percent of young people now undergo training in service occupations. A major task for the coming years will be to reduce the number of occupations and consolidate individual occupations to form occupational fami-

lies. An attendant task will be to create flexible structural concepts featuring joint basic qualifications and additional opportunities for differentiation and elective qualifications.

(7) Reform is also needed to improve the prerequisites for lifelong learning. The “continuing training system” in the IT field may be viewed as exemplary in this regard. This system features three levels. The first level enables workers to obtain qualifications for high-quality specialist tasks, the second offers operative professional qualifications, whereas the third level offers training for management duties. The overall aim is for advanced qualifications achieved on the labour market to enjoy equivalence with Bachelor and Masters qualifications.

(8) For many people, vocational education and training represents a bridge to study at an institute of higher education. One in five of those commencing a course of higher education study has already completed a course of in-company VET. Providing credit for competences acquired in initial and advanced in-company VET for the purposes of a subsequent course of higher education study would enable a reduction in study time to be achieved.

(9) Alongside the dual system of vocational education and training, recent years have seen the development of various forms of dual courses of training and study. This has provided the dual system with a tertiary or “top” level. 600 dual courses of study are currently available, over 42,000 students being enrolled in these. Most of these courses take place at Universities of Cooperative Education, Universities of Applied Sciences or within the commercial business administration sector.

(10) The development of a German Qualifications Framework offering compatibility with the qualifications frameworks of other countries provides an opportunity to increase transparency and permeability between educational systems. This would also have repercussions for the perceived value of national qualifications and for the relationship between such qualifications.