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Transfer of IVET Systems to Other Countries: The German Example

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Abstract

In some countries the conviction has arisen that their traditional national systems of Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) are no longer sufficient for preparing individuals to meet the requirements of the modern world of work referring to a state of the art that is determined by global competition. An easy way to initiate necessary changes appears to be the use of systems that seem to cause economic success. This is obviously the background of bilateral collaboration agreements between the German government and the governments of Greece, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia, and Spain (here called “reform countries”) in the IVET-area that shall help the reform countries to change their IVET systems in a way that they better fit to the needs of the labour market. The “reference model” for this kind of collaboration is the German IVET-system. However, there are many conditions for implementation which need to be reflected with regard to a successful “IVET system transfer”. The article at hand will deliver suggestions how to deal with this fact properly, after the German system of IVET and its strengths and weaknesses have been shortly described.

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1. Introduction

In the majority of cases, responsibility for education in Germany is the domain of regional governments, assigned to 16 states (“Länder”). This is not true for Initial VET where federal bodies as well as institutions of the Länder share the power; moreover, there are some responsibilities - in other countries belonging to public administrations - which are ceded to private organizations working on behalf of public bodies.

The main stakeholders of collaboration within this public-private partnership are players relevant for the set-up and update of occupations:

- The Federal Government represented by the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Education and Research (who delegates the main tasks to the Federal Institute of Vocational Education who works on behalf of this ministry)
- Associations of companies working at sectoral as well as at overarching positions
- Trade unions working at sectoral level
- “Competent bodies” of various origin, responsible for the control of IVET, mostly situated within specific economic or societal areas (as chambers, equivalent public organizations)

2. Setting up an occupational profile*

The set-up starts with an *initiative* that is taken by

- A sectoral association of entrepreneurs
- One of the umbrella organizations of entrepreneurs
- Trade unions
- A competent ministry
- The Federal Institute of Vocational Training and Education (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung – BIBB)

There is no unique way how this initiative is specified: Starting points might be preliminary discussion among social partners (organizations of entrepreneurs and unions), but also the results of a research project carried out by BIBB; and, of course, also a ministry can come up with a directive to start the official set-up (or update) of an occupational profile. In the majority of cases, the social partners come up with suggestions for basic values to be considered for regulations of occupational profiles. These basic values concern the following topics:

- Title of the occupation
- Duration of training
- Structure of training (Possible differentiation according to focuses)
- Form of examination
- Chronological structure
- Issues of environment protection
- Catalogue of minimum requirements for knowledge, skills, and competences

On the basis of these suggestions, the bearers of the initiative apply to the responsible ministry (mostly the ministry of economy and energy) to host a meeting with all stakeholders in order to base the set-up process on the consensus of all involved parties.

This set-up process takes place on a legal basis: the Vocational Education Act (Bundesberufsbildungsgesetz). The act rules in a formal way the procedure to be applied; this includes the roles of stakeholders in this process. Among others, it is determined in this act that *experts* have to be nominated by the social partners and by BIBB who will *together* elaborate the basic values agreed on in the session with the competent ministry. This work leads to a

* The following description benefits from the brochure *Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (Ed.) Ausbildungsordnungen und wie sie entstehen*, [1] It uses also information that the author provided in the project *EQF Predict* (<http://www.project-predict.eu>) [2]

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