

# Thematic Brief

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## APPRENTICESHIP

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### INTRODUCTION

Vocational training and learning can be **formal, non-formal or informal**, and can take place in education and training institutions, at the work place, within formal, informal and traditional apprenticeships and in everyday life.

Work-based learning and apprenticeships help **facilitate transition from learning to work**. Apprenticeship aligns vocational education and training to labour market needs and helps individuals to gain a better understanding of the workplace culture and to acquire good work habits.

Apprenticeships and opportunities for work-based learning can also reduce risks for enterprises when recruiting as former apprentices are already used to the workplace.

The EU experience in developing countries confirms that **better and more broadly available apprenticeships can reduce youth unemployment and poverty** when combined with national efforts to spur job growth. Further efforts should be undertaken to make apprenticeship a more attractive and a more efficient pathway to productive and decent jobs for more young people.

### DEFINITIONS OF APPRENTICESHIP

According to Cedefop<sup>1</sup>, **formal apprenticeship** consists of systematic, long-term training with alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation<sup>2</sup>.

According to this definition, apprenticeship has the following characteristics:

- learning alternates between a workplace and an educational or training institution;
- apprenticeship is part of formal education and training;
- on successful completion, learners acquire a qualification and receive an officially recognised certificate.

In Europe, in Austria and Germany, apprenticeship is typically referred to as the "dual system"<sup>3</sup>. Apprenticeship in the European context is fundamentally based on the integration of companies that function as training providers together with Vocational Education and Training (VET) schools or other education/training institutes.

The ILO (R60, 1939 and R117, 1962) defines apprenticeship as a unique form of vocational education, combining on-the-job training and school-based learning, for specifically defined competencies and work processes. Apprenticeship is often regulated by law and based on an oral or written employment contract with a compensatory payment and standard social protection coverage. A formal assessment and a recognized certification come at the completion of a clearly defined duration.

Young apprentices acquire the skills for a trade or craft in a Small or Medium Enterprise (SME) operating in the formal or informal economy through learning and working side by side with an experienced master craftsperson. A formal apprenticeship is based on training policies and legislation while informal apprenticeship agreements are embedded in local culture and traditions. In most cases, formal

<sup>1</sup> CEDEFOP, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Glossary- Quality in Education and Training. CEDEFOP Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011. [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4106\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4106_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Work-based Learning in Europe – Practices and Policy Pointers, European Commission, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf)

apprenticeships are implemented in the formal economy.

The ILO (2012) also distinguishes between traditional apprenticeship and informal apprenticeship. **Traditional apprenticeship** is defined as a system in which skills are transmitted from a father or mother or other family member to younger family members. **Informal apprenticeship** is a system where the skills of a given occupation are transmitted to young people outside the family or kin group. Neither traditional nor informal apprenticeship results in an official certificate. A recognised contract rarely exists between the apprentice and the master craftsman in such traditional and informal apprenticeships. The incentives of the apprentice and the master craftsman to participate in traditional or informal apprenticeship are rooted in the society's norms and customs.

In the informal economy, such traditional and informal apprenticeships exist in most developing countries as a traditional and important source of skills development. Formal apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning are still under-represented and struggling to be established.

The informal/traditional apprenticeship model is not without challenges, including the **low general education level of people operating in the informal economy and the limited technical and pedagogical skills of master crafts persons.**

**Upgrading of informal apprenticeships would create major opportunities** to improve skills provision in the informal economy. Practices in informal apprenticeships differ between localities and trades. Some of the apprenticeship system's decent work deficits are due to negative practices currently in place, such as strong gender segregation along occupational lines.

**Improvements in apprenticeships should lead to better working conditions** for apprentices, train master craftsmen, set skills standards and improve quality assurance. Improvements would thus create opportunities to improve skills provision in the informal economy and create more productive, decent jobs.

## PROS AND CONS OF APPRENTICESHIP SCHEMES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Some advantages as well as drawbacks and challenges should be taken into account when advocating for apprenticeship schemes.

There is evidence that VET graduates who complete apprenticeship schemes tend to make **a smoother transition to work**. A key advantage of work-based learning for learners is that they develop expertise not only through the acquisition of technical skills and personal as well as social competences but also through **socialization in the workplace**.

Skills transferred in this way are to a higher extent **in line with the labour market demand**. The extent to which these competences are acquired, however, differs significantly from one workplace to another and depends on the situations that learners are exposed to and the support they receive from the company.

Apprenticeships in particular are associated with very **positive early employment outcomes** in both developed and developing countries. Work-based learning also makes economic sense, with costs shared between companies and government rather than all being met from the public budget; this means that government budgets should go further.

**Apprenticeship can create lower cost learning opportunities** that many publicly financed school-based VET providers cannot afford. This can be an important way of expanding opportunities and increasing social inclusion among groups that are disadvantaged in the labour market.

Nevertheless, apprenticeship systems are not fully effective if many apprentices leave the workshop without finishing their apprenticeships, if master craftsmen keep apprentices for very long periods without imparting all their skills, or if the conditions of apprenticeship contracts are not sufficiently transparent.

In addition, we should consider that the **apprenticeship model suits some industries more than others**. Sectors and industries with a tradition of apprenticeship tend to support such programmes more effectively. Traditional manual trades and blue collar seem to dominate (mainly bigger industry, crafts). Limited impact is noticed in white collar jobs as well as those requiring other types of higher skills and qualifications.

Furthermore, many employers still do not offer apprenticeships and some of them find it difficult to support the apprenticeship model. The **limited capacity and flexibility** of many small enterprises and micro businesses can often reduce their capacity to take on full time apprentices. 'Shared' apprenticeship schemes are an effective model for overcoming some of the associated barriers.

In addition, evidence shows that the **number of men in apprenticeships is much higher than of women**. Hence, the gender equality issue is still to be solved. Similarly, **ethnic minorities are less engaged in apprenticeships**.

Finally, **structures differ a great deal** in terms of duration, period in workplace, curriculum etc. This implies

difficulties in Integration in VET systems and scaling up.

## CONCLUSIONS

Apprenticeship and other forms of Work-Based Learning (WBL) require a clear regulatory framework, defined roles for the different players and must form an integral part of the entire education system. Special measures should be taken aiming at involving employers in the promotion and implementation of apprenticeship, internship and placement, providing a legal framework for apprenticeship, enhancing the skills of trainers and craftsmen.

Possible fields of cooperation are:

- Tools that can be used to support the quality of apprenticeship (e.g. guidelines to integrate WBL into Education and Training programmes, manuals for employers and social partners, etc.);
- (Open) Resources for training of trainers and craftsmen in informal economy;
- Schemes to train the master craftsmen and entrepreneurs who impart skills to the vast majority of young people and reinforce their skills in the specific subject of work-based learning;
- Guidelines to support Governments in setting up legal frameworks for apprenticeship;
- Comprehensive and comparable international data on formal and informal apprenticeships (statistical information about informal apprenticeship remains fragmented) for evidence-based policy making and innovation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Learning through work in its various forms, including apprenticeships, should be promoted and its quality enhanced.
- Apprenticeship should be an integral part of coherent and comprehensive VET strategies.
- Apprenticeships must take ILO Convention 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment and work and No 182, on the worst forms of child labour, into account. Regulations should therefore be introduced on traditional and informal apprenticeships, in order to set limits on the number of years that training can last, and the daily and weekly working hours for apprentices. Recognition and certification of competences is a key to upgrading traditional and informal apprenticeship and to enhance Work Based Learning.
- Public policies should foster and facilitate quality apprenticeships composed of work- and institution-based learning driven by robust social dialogue
- Public policies should support and acknowledge the emerging roles and learning needs of workplace trainers, tutors and other facilitators
- Proper funding should be ensured by public and private cost-sharing, as well as fair remuneration for apprentices.

## REFERENCES

- The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training, 2010. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/brugescom\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/brugescom_en.pdf)
- The Communication "Rethinking Education"(2012) called for putting WBL high on the policy agenda [http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/strategic-framework/rethinking-education\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/strategic-framework/rethinking-education_en.htm)
- The Council Declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships adopted on 15 December 2013 formulated key messages in relation to high-quality apprenticeships and other work-based learning schemes. [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/139011.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/139011.pdf)
- The Communication of the Commission A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries encourages stronger North-South collaboration among companies for coaching and training on the job. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal->

## IESF TEAM SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Towards a model apprenticeship framework. A comparative analysis of national apprenticeship systems: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new\\_delhi/documents/publication/wcms\\_234728.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_234728.pdf)
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- ILO, Skills for employment policy briefs, Upgrading informal apprenticeship systems, 2011: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---ifp\\_skills/documents/publication/wcms\\_167162.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_167162.pdf)
- Youth Guarantee: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/youthguarantee>
- European Alliance for Apprenticeships: <http://ec.europa.eu/apprenticeships-alliance>
- Quality Framework for Traineeships: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2048&furtherNews=yes>

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