



IOE-BIAC Comments for the G20 Task Force on Employment on Key Elements of Quality Apprenticeships

October 2, 2012

At their meeting in Guadalajara in May 2012, the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers recommended that the G20 should provide a platform for fostering the sharing of experience and best practices on how to design and implement high quality apprenticeship programmes.

Business fully supports this recommendation. The B20 Employment Task Force has stressed the necessity of high-quality internships and apprenticeships in order to ease the school-to-work transition. Lack of skills and work experience are in fact the most important obstacles to successfully entering the labour market. Quality apprenticeships are an effective tool to help improve work opportunities for young people, both in the short and long term.

Business appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the 1-2 October meeting of the G20 Labour Employment Task Force. The IOE and BIAC emphasize especially in this regard the B20 employment recommendations to the G20 Summit in Los Cabos, as well as the work of the BUSINESSEUROPE youth task force and its recommendations on how to improve the quality and image of apprenticeships. The IOE and BIAC jointly propose the following points for addressing key elements for quality apprenticeships. The focus now has to shift to action as Governments implement the essence of their joint analysis.

In some countries, well functioning apprenticeship systems already exist. Two key characteristics of their success are linkages with educational systems and effective cooperation between the participants. Relevant public policy frameworks, quality education systems, company engagement and social dialogue are essential Ingredients. This partnership is all the more essential in working to broaden the scope of apprenticeships globally.

However, in some cases apprenticeships may not be attractive for companies or they may suffer from negative public perception. Addressing this issue merits attention.

Taking into account the diversity of systems, the objective of the G20 cannot be to try to harmonise systems or to advocate a global scheme. The aim must be to identify successful elements of apprenticeships that can assist states to establish and improve their own national systems. What also needs to be explored is how G20 countries can support each other, and indeed other countries, in building up or strengthening apprenticeship systems, based on the key elements of quality apprenticeships.

At the same time, it has to be clear that a well functioning apprenticeship system is only one component of a comprehensive reform agenda to tackle youth unemployment. Youth employment reflects the general employment performance of states. Without growth and general job creation, the problem of high youth unemployment will not be solved.

General Points: Key Elements of Successful Apprenticeships Systems

- A good primary and secondary education system, which includes literacy and numeracy, as well as other core competencies, is a precondition for smooth integration into the labour market. Only if young people leave school with the skills that meet the requirements of companies, will their integration into the apprenticeship systems be smooth and rapid.
- A positive perception of Vocational Education and Training (VET) is needed and better and broader awareness of the opportunities that VET paths may lead to, in order to attract gifted and talented young people. Linked to this is the need to give proper career guidance (the latter in cooperation with companies).
- Apprenticeship systems need to be based on the close coordination of curricula with business, which ensures that labour force supply meets the demands of business and that a smooth transition from training to work is guaranteed. Employability has to be a key component of the VET-systems in order to avoid skills mismatches on the labour market.
- Apprenticeship systems must be workplace centred: A significant part of the training must be conducted in companies to ensure the work-based character of the systems. Apprenticeship systems thereby benefit from a combination of classroom and on-the-job training. The methodology to achieve such an effective balance can be found in what is called the *dual learning system*. Such a system is currently practiced in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands, amongst others.
- At the same time, high quality vocational schools are needed, with highly qualified and motivated teachers and good equipment. VET institutes need to have at their disposal the latest technology in learning tools.
- Apprenticeship systems need to be *competency-based* rather than *time-served*. This approach allows apprentices to progress their abilities and skills at their own speed. *Competency based* systems require good assessment processes,
- To make it easier for small and medium-sized business (SMEs) to offer apprenticeships, the bureaucratic burdens must be low. Moreover, group apprenticeships should be made possible in order to facilitate the participation of SMEs who cannot on their own train across the whole apprentice skills set.
- Apprenticeship systems need their own special contractual arrangements.
- Apprenticeships should encourage entrepreneurship and innovation through the development of skills and general business knowledge.
- Apprenticeship systems should not only target young people but also displaced adults who either need to move into a new industry, or update skills for the new needs of business.

In sum, a well designed and functioning apprenticeship system should benefit all participants: the apprentice, the company engaging the apprentice, and the broader economy and society, which benefits from a skilled employable work force.

Business looks forward to working with the G20 Employment Task Force, the ILO, OECD and Trade Unions to maximise the effectiveness of apprenticeship frameworks both locally and globally. The goal must be reducing youth unemployment and enhancing career prospects for all.

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