



# Schooling in the Workplace

How Six of the World's Best Vocational Education Systems Prepare Young People for Jobs and Life

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# Introduction



“What is VET? Vocational education and training (VET) helps prepare people for work, develops their skills while at work and changes what they are doing so that they can work in new or different occupations.”

- Yvonne Hillier, University of Brighton (NVCER), 2009

# Education and Economics

- ▶ Reasons young people are having difficulty finding employment in the United States:
  - ▶ Young people are entering the labor force with few skills and low education attainment.
    - ▶ High drop-out rates
    - ▶ Low college/university attendance and completion
  - ▶ In a highly competitive market, young people are not achieving academically at acceptable levels.
- ▶ Countries that help their young people enter the labor market well share the following characteristics:
  - ▶ Special youth policies
    - ▶ Guarantees of schooling coupled with work experience
    - ▶ Sanctions for nonparticipation
  - ▶ Vocational education in partnership with employers and unions
    - ▶ Links education and labor market needs
    - ▶ Includes significant learning in the workplace
    - ▶ High rates of upper secondary completion



# What is VET?

- ▶ Strong vocational education and training (VET) systems generally include the following elements:
  - ▶ Public/private partnerships exist between the state, schools, employers, and labor unions.
  - ▶ Employers play a major role in defining the qualifications required for clusters of occupations in their sectors of the economy (rather than universities).
  - ▶ Employers build curriculum and develop and carry out assessments with the support of organizations representing their occupational sector.
  - ▶ A government education agency (usually at the national level and with employer participation) is responsible for standardization of the system and for quality control and improvement.



# Why is VET Important?

- ▶ Certain skills are better learned in applied settings
- ▶ Responds to obvious needs in the economy
- ▶ Greater guarantee of employment
  - ▶ High percentages of young people who complete their apprenticeships or trainee stints are hired by the companies that train them.
- ▶ Certain training pathways can lead to higher education (*tertiary level*).
- ▶ Meets the developmental needs of young people
  - ▶ Apprenticeships, sustained internships, and other intensive forms of workplace learning provide a structure that helps young people transition from adolescence to adulthood.



“In short, the smartest and quickest route to a wide variety of occupations *for the majority of young people in the successful countries* - **not a default for failing students** - is a vocational program that integrates work and learning...The purpose is not ‘college for all,’ as in the United States today, but rather to provide the education and training young people need to prepare for career, or calling” (p. 6).



# Ch. 1 - Qualifying for a Calling

The Philosophical Rationale for Vocational Training



# Qualifications

- ▶ As defined by the EU is, “the formal outcome (certificate, diploma, or title) of an assessment and validation process obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards and/or possesses the necessary competence to do a job in a specific area of work.” (25)
  - ▶ Different countries, similar ideasGermanic countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) - *Fachkompetenz* (ability , expert knowledge, and know-how), *Personalkompetenz* (personal qualities such as autonomy, critical faculties, self-confidence, sense of responsibility and duty, and development of moral concepts and commitments), and *Sozialkompetenz* (social intelligence and relational competence)
  - ▶ The Netherlands - “a broad concept of occupation made up of knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (31). Integrative approach towards competence, seeing it as, “the integration of abilities required to cope with complex tasks” (31).
  - ▶ France - *savoir* (to know), *savoir-faire* (to know how to do), and *savoir-etre* (to know how to be).
  - ▶ Norway - With their “two-plus-two” apprenticeship program, VET is construed as “encompassing broad competencies needed for entrance into working life, and as preparation for learning that is expected to continue during the entire lifespan” (32).
  - ▶ Australia - purpose of VET includes reference to “lifelong learning, broad knowledge and skills, and the cultivation of habits of mind and attitudes that lead toward success at work and in one’s community” (33).
- ▶ Vocational Training varies by culture



## Ch. 2 - Employer Engagement

Good for the Bottom Line, Good for Young People



# The role of employers as educators: Apprenticeship

## ► Benefits

- Integrated learning
- Practical real-world experience
- Fruitful employment market results
- Employers can ensure that training meets specific needs
- More cost effective than the usual US route

## ► Risks

- Employers invest in apprentices who may or may not continue on with them.
  - However, successful VET countries pay apprentices learning wages, so more cost effective for employers



# Apprenticeship, continued

- ▶ Ideal Conditions

- ▶ Regulated employment markets

- ▶ Protection against expensive hiring errors for employers.
    - ▶ In lightly regulated countries, there are fewer regulations on hiring and firing, so hiring errors are less costly.

- ▶ Training wage

- ▶ Use of on-the-job apprenticeship education

- ▶ In 2009, more than half of Australian employers reported having used the VET system in the previous 12 months, employing an apprentice. About 23% of employers in Germany and 30% of employers in Switzerland train apprentices in their workplaces.



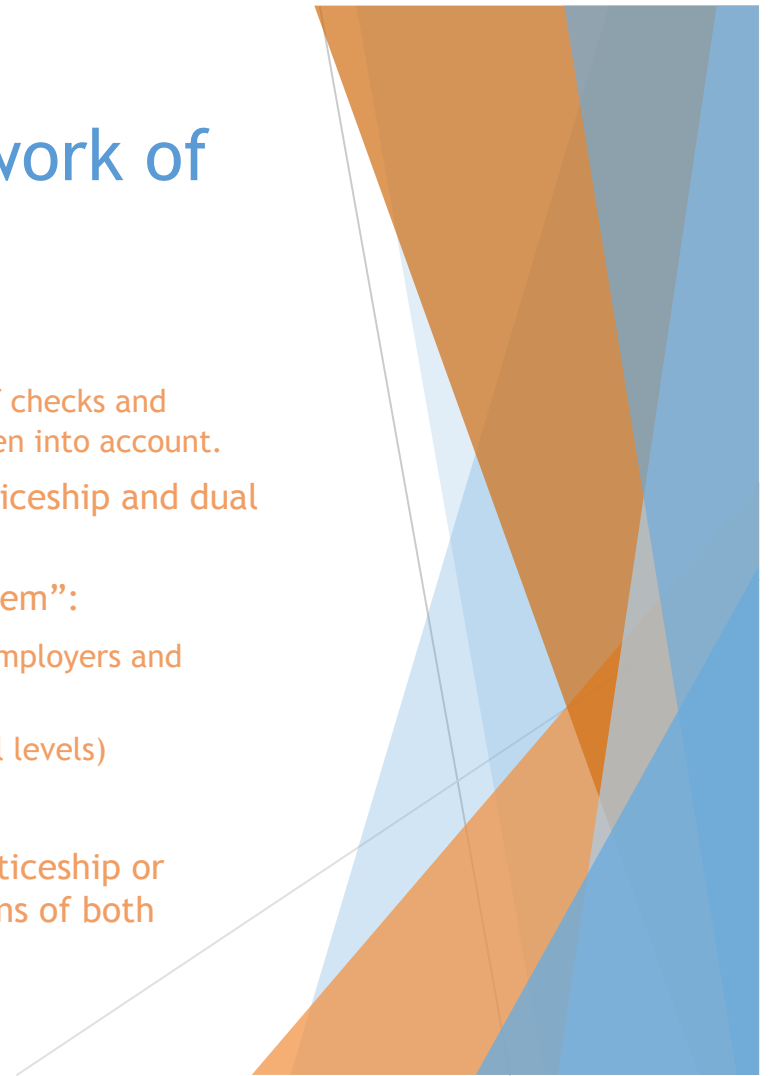
## Ch. 3 - State-Directed VET Systems

Formal Public/Private Partnerships in Action



# The Structure and Legal Framework of State-Directed VET Systems

- ▶ State-directed ≠ State-run
  - ▶ Public and private entities work in partnership with a system of checks and balances to ensure that the interest of all stakeholders are taken into account.
- ▶ The most well-known state-directed models are the apprenticeship and dual system models.
- ▶ Legal framework which sets up a “tripartite governance system”:
  - ▶ The representative bodies established by the social partners (employers and unions)
  - ▶ The state (ministries, education boards at national and regional levels)
  - ▶ VET providers (schools, state or regional entities)
- ▶ The foundational document within this system is the apprenticeship or traineeship contract, which sets out the rights and obligations of both trainees and the firms receiving them.



# Intermediary Organizations

- ▶ Relieve some of the education and training burden that would otherwise fall on the employer
  - ▶ Critical for sustaining the VET system
- ▶ Ensure that apprentices and trainees attain the necessary qualifications for each legally defined occupation
- ▶ Most are organized by economic sector, providing expertise within related occupations.
- ▶ May do any or all of the following:
  - ▶ Find apprenticeship workplaces
  - ▶ Provide orientations for young people starting apprenticeships
  - ▶ Execute contracts between employers and apprentices
  - ▶ Provide general training in the basics of a career area
  - ▶ Develop curriculum
  - ▶ Carry out assessments in partnership with educators
  - ▶ Represent their occupation or sector in the development and validation of qualifications



# The Costs and Incentives of VET

- ▶ In state-directed systems, governments offsets employer expenses by providing incentives and supporting them to take on training through any of the following means:
  - ▶ Direct subsidies
  - ▶ Tax breaks
  - ▶ Training levies
  - ▶ Curriculum development
  - ▶ Assessment
  - ▶ Research
  - ▶ Trainer Education
- ▶ In strong VET countries, a government entity is usually designated to do market research to determine specific industry supply and demand. This is to ensure that the supply of apprentices matches the demand for their services.

