Vocational Education and Training in Times of Economic Crisis
Lessons from Around the World
This book is dedicated to Professor David Raffe, former professor of sociology of education and member of the Centre for Educational Sociology at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland). He had been hoping to give a keynote speech at the G.R.E.A.T. conference in Cologne in 2014 but was prevented from attending by ill health. He died unexpectedly in February 2015, shortly after he retired.

David was a researcher with an international reputation but also a fantastic writer and impressive lecturer. Many committees, international organisations and boards benefitted from his advice.

I first met David in the early 1990s, when I was a young student. His deep knowledge, rigorous thinking and incisive writing left a lasting impression on me. He offered me some advice on my own work and, later, invaluable guidance on my Ph.D. thesis about developments in modular VET in Scotland and Germany. Many other researchers, too, have been influenced by David's contributions, and he will be remembered for his generosity and his legacy.

Matthias Pilz
Policy Borrowing in Vocational Education and Training (VET) – VET System Typologies and the “6 P Strategy” for Transfer Analysis

Matthias Pilz

Abstract The issue of exporting VET systems is currently very topical in the international debate. It is, however, surprising that there is virtually no recent research into such areas as practicability, successes achieved, problems encountered, and long-term impact.

If a transfer approach should be successful, there must be at a first stage a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the diverse needs and perspectives of the local stakeholder groups. In line with this logic, the paper presents an analytical tool that can be used to categorise individual countries in terms of the way VET is perceived and designed within the specific socio-cultural context. This also enables initial indicators of potential needs to be identified.

The next stage in the paper is, to focus on the actual transfer of all or part of a VET system from one country to another. There has so far been no adequate explanation of how this might be done. The existing empirical findings show that transfer is a major challenge for all those involved. The approach is intended to provide a structure for such transfers and identify possible problems or obstacles before the process gets under way. This approach, labelled as the “6 P strategy”, is based on the findings documented in the literature and supplemented by the author’s experience of a range of transfer projects.

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1 The Starting Point

The issue of exporting VET systems is currently very topical in the international debate and, of course, in the German debate, too. In Germany, the initial euphoria, particularly during the 1970s (Schmidt and Benner 1989; Arnold 1985; Schaan 1997), very rapidly gave way to a mere sober assessment of the long-term successes (Lauterbach 2003; Biermann 1994). Debate is now focusing again more closely on how, and to what extent, Germany’s “dual” model of VET might be transferred to other countries (Clement 2012, p. 102 ff.; Hummelsheim and Baur 2014). Of particular significance as part of the background to the debate have been the agreements Germany has concluded with a range of countries on intensive cooperation in the area of VET (Thomann andWiechert 2013; Herbert-Lewin-Strass 2014) and the setting-up of the German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (GOVET) (GOVET 2014), which is part of the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) and has responsibility for policy in this area.

Given this renewed interest in the issue of VET transfer, it is, however, surprising that there is virtually no recent research into such areas as practicability, successes achieved, problems encountered, and long-term impact. In the German-speaking world, for example, some approaches have focused on the theoretical basis for transfer (Barabasch and Wolf 2011) while others discuss options for transfer at a more intermediate level of abstraction (Euler 2013). However, there are virtually no empirical findings relating to the export of VET: The exceptions are research evaluating relevant projects implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (Stockmann 2013; Schippers 2009), some other pilot projects supported by the German Government (Posselt et al. 2012) and current work by the International Labour Organization (ILO) on implementing the training programmes of three major German companies in the USA (Aring 2014).

Also of interest is a study of skills development activities in Chinese, Indian and US subsidiaries of German companies (Pilz and Li 2014). This study centred on the initial question of how German companies operating abroad design their skills training at the intermediate skills level by comparison with local companies. It found that outside Germany, the training patterns of German companies familiar with – and mostly appreciative of – the dual vocational training system may provide important indicators of where the system is potentially transferable and where not. The findings from this study, which involved 36 case studies, showed clearly that against the backdrop of country-specific systems, including the education system, the labour market and the social status of vocational training, it may be difficult or even impossible for German companies to carry out wider-ranging training activities and, hence, to transfer the dual system in whole or in part.

Verfahr and Diart (2013) report on an online survey of German companies in India carried out by the Central Agency for Continuing Vocational Education and Training in the Skilled Crafts (ZWH). 170 companies took part in the survey, which concluded that:

In the absence of an appropriate infrastructure, most of the companies surveyed are not yet basing their training on the kind of dual vocational training used by companies in Germany. (…) The main focus of the training is on company- or job-based induction, with very little by way of training in more general aspects. (*author’s own translation*)

A current survey of Swiss training activities in India also offers some useful insights, given that Switzerland’s VET system is similar to the German system in terms of structure and organisational background undertook a study of ten companies (Haering et al. 2014). The questionnaire responses showed clearly that the conditions within Indian companies made it more difficult to export the dual training system. Problems encountered included, in particular, inadequate English language skills and a lack of diagnostic and pedagogical skills among the instructors and trainers (Haering et al. 2014, pp. 28–30). On the participant side, meanwhile, this study found that it companies had problems attracting applications from appropriately qualified young people: the reasons included the fact that vocational training enjoys low social status and the fact that the Indian labour market is unregulated, with easy access and high levels of labour turnover. In addition, Swiss qualifications are not officially recognised (Haering et al. 2014, p. 33). Despite a range of positive individual aspects in this project, those implementing it did not manage to persuade many Swiss companies operating in India to take part (Haering et al. 2014 p. II, 33).

2 Stages in Exporting VET

Since existing research covers only a small number of case studies, it cannot provide an adequate body of empirical data relating to the export of VET within a subsector. Moreover, country-specific findings cannot automatically be transferred to other countries.

Nonetheless, the overview shows a clear trend: if the transfer approach is to be successful, there must be a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the diverse needs and perspectives of the local stakeholder groups, such as employers, young people, elected representatives, representatives of training systems, and trade union representatives. Moreover, the needs of these groups vary in line with the respective regional framework, so the first stage is to focus on an ethnocentric view (Pilz 2012, pp. 561–571), but, rather, on the framework prevailing in the importing country by means of a typology-based systematic country analysis (see Sect. 3.). Such a process often reveals what needs the country has and how they relate to and interact with its training and employment system and with other sectors of society (see Sect. 3.).

The second stage is to determine the specific needs within the individual context and stakeholder group, offering a systematic approach (see Sect. 4.).

The approach outlined here is compatible with a number of existing approaches, such as Wolf’s (2011) working culture approach to VET and the key influence of the framework in the importing country (Barabasch and Wolf 2011). Stockmann and Silvestrini’s (2013) findings also come to the same conclusion in evaluating a number
of projects implemented by the GIZ or its predecessor, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). They make a clear call for

(...) a systematic needs analysis to be carried out prior to, or at the start of, VET projects to ensure that the project delivers training in line with labour market needs. (Stockmann & Silvestrini 2013, p. 178)

and for

(...) projects with a claim to achieving systemic change to be based on comprehensive ex-ante evaluation, with a view to reaching an accurate assessment of the likelihood that the aims will be realised. (Stockmann & Silvestrini 2013, p. 184)

In line with this logic, the next section presents an analytical tool that can be used to categorise individual countries in terms of the way VET is perceived and designed within the specific socio-cultural context. This also enables initial indicators of potential needs to be identified.

3 An Instrument for Producing Country Typologies

Placing a VET system within a typology is the first stage towards identifying requirements for adaptation. For example, where a country’s system is highly stratified, VET may have a lower status and a poorer reputation. If the intention is to remedy this from a training policy perspective, this approach offers potential for designing programmes. It is impossible for us here to discuss all possible examples of needs and requirements. However, it is quite clear that the identifiable needs must be discussed explicitly with the decision-makers and with those involved and that it is appropriate also to reflect previously unidentified needs (see above). This can be achieved using the transfer analysis instrument described below.

3.1 Elements of the Typology

Existing typologies of VET systems (Steedman 2012; Rauner and Wittig 2009; Crouch et al. 1999) are very often facing some problems. For example Frommberger and Reinisch (1999, pp. 340–343) have noted that typologies of vocational training systems frequently fail to acknowledge the complexity of such systems and the extent to which they are an integral part of a country’s general education system, employment environment, and social system (Deißinger 1995, p. 372). To avoid a too narrow approach our new typology combines different perspectives from sociology, political science and also VET pedagogy.

Furthermore, existing comparative research into VET has focused particularly on the macro-level of training systems (Grollmann 2009, p. 255). Consequently, the approach described below is innovative because it integrates all three relevant levels of VET. In other words, elements of the typology are generated not only at the macro-level of a VET system – at the level of stakeholders and funding – but also at the meso-level, including elements such as the curriculum, the nature of the institutions involved, certification, and the teaching staff. Moreover – and this is something that is almost entirely absent in existing typologies (Grollmann 2009, p. 255) – our approach aims specifically to analyse the micro-level, the level of concrete teaching and learning. This is important because it is ultimately at this level that the product of any educational process is developed.

The different elements of the new typology can be described as following (Fig. 26.1):

Firstly a model from the field of comparative political economy is considered and used as “collective skill formation” (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012) is relevant. This approach fits within the tradition of an institutional political economy (Culpepper and Thelen 2008) and focuses on the interaction between political and socio-economic institutions and other stakeholders in the VET context. This model has in the past frequently been used in the international context in a cross-disciplinary way. The model operates primarily at the macro-level. In addition to the influence of stakeholders on VET policy, the issue of direct funding and financial involvement is also of crucial importance (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012, p. 21). The skill formation model will be taken as the starting point for developing a typology and covers four characteristics. It reveals the influence of the state on VET and the potential for change by and influence from companies. Where both influences are limited, individual influence may be prioritised as the third value (for example, participation in individually funded training provision organised by the private sector). Where, however, state and companies have a high level of influence, this may be characterised as a mixed system. As a result, differing levels of activity produce a total of four different constellations of stakeholders that can then be illustrated in the form of a matrix. This model is not only the starting point for the entire typologisation process but also links to the stakeholder model, which is important in VET, and issues of educational governance (Berger and Pilz 2009).
Secondly, we have included elements of an approach from the field of sociology, which focuses on the constructs of “stratification” and “standardisation”. This approach was developed by Allmendinger (1989). In particular, it has proved very productive and informative in international comparative research (Shavit and Müller 2000; Pilz and Alexander 2011). In this approach, stratification forms part of the macro-level and relates to issues of “tracking” and of the marked differentiation of and separation between general training courses from vocational ones. Shavit and Müller (2000, p. 443) have related this approach explicitly to the education system and argue that “(t)he term ‘stratification’ refers to the extent and form of tracking that is pervasive in the educational system.” In their research, they then use the term “tracking” to refer to pupils’ different trajectories through the school system, a view that takes in both the distinction between general and vocational education (and the different routes taken into them) and the differentiation of hierarchical levels by access, selection and transition mechanisms (Allmendinger 1989, p. 233). Another relevant issue is the importance of rankings and league tables for education and training institutions, since such ranking systems not infrequently produce a form of “indirect stratification” (Pilz and Alexander 2011). Stratification should also portray the status and image of vocational training courses within individual societies. To simplify, “stratification” needs to be expressed in a duopolistic sense – as either “high” or “low”. It is important to bear in mind that such characteristics are relative values. The same applies to the following assessments.

Standardisation, by contrast, forms part of the meso-level. The key question here is how the structures and processes underpinning any VET system are standardised and made subject to binding regulation (Müller and Shavit 1998). Shavit and Müller (2000, p. 443) define standardisation as follows:

(...) the degree to which the quality of education meets the same standards nationwide. Variables such as teacher training, school budgets, curricula, and the uniformity of school-leaving examinations are relevant in measuring standardisation.

Standardisation can be given concrete expression and structured by means of differentiating between standardisation activities on the input side, on the process side and on the output side within the VET system. Thus, certification and the accompanying rights and entitlements relate to the output side and are of particular relevance. For example, they may explain whether vocational training courses form part of an exit-based or entry-based system: where follow-on training institutions (value) certificates, this is an entry-based system. Specifically, this element focuses not only on certification but also, and in particular, on curriculum, institutions and teaching staff. Here, too, standardisation is a duopolistic construct.

Thirdly, the explicitly vocational-pedagogical perspective now enters the equation. We cannot directly use existing wide-ranging approaches to typology development but need to adapt approaches from diverse areas of vocational pedagogy and teaching design. Here, the focus is specifically on the concrete relevance to vocational practice or to later roles within the employment system of the teaching and learning processes. To achieve this, we shall fruitfully make use of two established approaches from the pedagogy of VET.

On the other hand, the learning content delivered may be analysed in relation to both its theoretical and its practical content. At operational level, this would, therefore, include aspects such as the skill acquisition expected as a result of a particular learning process or the selection and structuring of the topics covered and the balance between a technical skills orientation and a situational orientation. Of particular significance here is also the question of whether, as part of vocational learning processes, curricula produce a fragmented and poorly integrated acquisition of skills or whether a system focuses instead on the acquisition of complete and complex performed actions in the context of situated learning (i.e. planning, implementation and review) (Billett 2001).

On the other hand, this last point illustrates the crossover with a further approach, this time related to the kinds of teaching and learning involved and, hence, the teaching process. Heavily teacher-centred learning activities can be interpreted as substantially influenced by theory. Here, the interaction and social relationships between teachers and learners (such as teacher-centred work versus group work or receptive learning versus discovery learning), the level of freedom learners have within the learning process (self-directed learning), and the individualisation of learning processes all play a part. Furthermore, the practical relevance of the media and methods used, including such teaching and learning arrangements as case studies, is also important (Grossman et al. 1989).

In short, a duopolistic scale – “high” or “low” – is needed to assess the practical relevance of teaching and learning processes.

### 3.2 Typologisation of Different National VET Systems

Below, we allocate individual countries to the typology for illustrative purposes. The main aim here is to demonstrate how the typologisation works. Consequently, we shall not present each country in detail and will only outline the consequences of each assessment in the context of the dimensions used.

Within the skill formation approach, the USA is seen as having a liberal approach with a low level of state and company influence and a high level of individual influence (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012, pp. 12–14). Both stratification and standardisation are characterised as “low” (Müller and Shavit 1998, p. 14). At micro-level, there is a strong practical orientation to “learning by doing” at the workplace if college courses, which tend to focus more on general training, are excluded (Zirkle and Martin 2012) and the widespread model of skill development at the workplace is given priority (Barabasch and Rauner 2012).

Even if in Canada the impact of the college programs in VET are more important than in the USA, the overall situation in Canada is more or less similar to the one in the USA (Lehmann 2012; Taylor 2006; Kopatz and Pilz 2015).

France, by contrast, is deemed to have a VET system that is primarily state-oriented (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012, p. 12). Against a backdrop of strongly segmented practice between general and vocational education and training,
stratification can be classified as “high” (Géhin 2007). Standardisation is also classified as “high” (Müller and Shavit 1998, p. 14), and teaching and learning processes are strongly theoretically-oriented with a low level of relevance to practice (Brockmann et al. 2011).

Japan’s VET system is strongly dominated by companies (Thelen and Kume 1999). Stratification can be categorised as “high” if the informal elements of training, which are of importance in Japan, are given appropriate significance (Pilz and Alexander 2011; Kariya 2011). Standardisation is categorised by Müller and Shavit (1998, p. 14) as “high”, although only if the informal mechanisms are taken into account, while teaching and learning processes within companies are geared to practice (Pilz and Alexander 2011).

Many studies single out Germany for its ‘dual’ training system in which the state and companies share responsibility for vocational training (Busenmeyer and Trampusch 2012, p. 12; DeiBinger 1995). Both stratification and standardisation are categorised as “high” in Germany (Müller and Shavit 1998, p. 14; Blossfeld 1994), while learning processes are geared to practice or actually form part of practice (DeiBinger 1995; Blossfeld 1994).

The dominant context in India is one of low levels of state and company influence, even if some Industrial Training Institutes exist (Mehrotra 2014; Pilz 2016). Stratification is considered “high”, in particular because of the strict separation between general and vocational training (Singh 2012; Pilz and Li 2014). By contrast, skill formation in the Indian system is dominated by informal structures and processes, with VET institutions, certificates and formal curricula playing only a minor part. As a result, standardisation is classified as “low”, and within this predominantly informal system, learning processes tend to be directly linked to practice (Singh 2012).

In Mexico the situation is quite similar to the one in India. General and academic education is strictly separated from the vocational track. The VET system is very small by number of participants and partially shaped by the different provinces in Mexico to meet their own demands. The formal VET system is predominantly located in state regulated vocational institutions with low connection to the working life. But the major vocational training, which is of interest here, is unorganised and follows a “learning by doing” approach, mostly on the basis of private motivation (Kis et al. 2009).

China can be regarded as a country with a strong state influence on VET (Pilz and Li 2014). The clear separation of vocational training from general education and training, along with restricted scope for ‘progression’ within VET, suggest a high level of stratification (Shi 2012). Standardisation in VET is “high”, but training is not highly geared to practice (Shi 2012; Pilz and Li 2014) (Table 26.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill formation</th>
<th>Stratification</th>
<th>Standardisation</th>
<th>Practice of learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Individualised (low state, low employer activity)</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Individualised (low state, low employer activity)</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>State dominance</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Company dominance</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>State and company dominance</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Individualised (low state, low employer activity)</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Individualised (low state, low employer activity)</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>State dominance</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
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</table>

Source: author's own compilation

The classification of real types to individual dimensions and the emergence of recurring patterns of ideal types may be achieved by forming and analysing clusters. Visually, this can be illustrated in a three-dimensional graphic illustration: Fig. 26.2 demonstrates this for the few examples discussed in the previous section. As already noted above, categorisation as “high” and “low” should be interpreted relatively. The various sub-criteria of each dimension may be weighted differently according to their country-specific importance. Moreover, we would again point out that categorisation does not constitute a cross-country measure and, therefore, says nothing about the relative value and quality of individual VET systems in the comparison (Fig. 26.2).

Even these few illustrative country categorisations throw up some interesting findings. For example, two countries with differing skill formation modes (Japan and Germany) correlate to a substantial extent on all three of the remaining dimensions and, thus, across all three levels. By contrast, countries with an identical skill formation mode (USA and India) diverge substantially on the stratification dimension. It is not possible here to enter into a more detailed discussion on the basis of the small number of country categorisations already carried out and the limited options for implementation: we are focusing here on illustrating how the model works rather than generating findings from the typology.

1Müller and Shavit's slightly different assessment (Müller and Shavit 1998, p. 14; medium stratification) is the result of their three-point scale; we are using a two-point scale here.

2These findings diverge from those of Müller and Shavit (1998, p. 14; low stratification), who argue primarily at the formal level.

3By contrast with informal skill formation, the formal VET system in India is less important in quantitative terms (Pilz et al. 2015).

4To determine the scale and/or relevance of a particular aspect of the VET system as a whole (see discussion above), the relative number of participants in a programme can be quantified as a proportion of all participants in VET. This proportion can then be reflected in terms of the size of the relevant symbol. Thus, a large symbol may represent extensive uptake (for example, 80–100 % of an age cohort in VET complete the relevant part of the system), while a small symbol signifies a smaller importance (below 50 %, for example).
4 An Instrument for Analysing VET Transfer: The “6 P Strategy” for VET Export

The preceding section outlined the process of initial identification of key elements of the existing VET system in the importing country and, in broad outline, possible needs. The next stage is, therefore, to focus on the actual transfer of all or part of a VET system from one country to another. There has so far been no adequate explanation of how this might be done. The existing empirical findings show that transfer is a major challenge for all those involved. The approach described below is intended to provide a structure for such transfers and identify possible problems or obstacles before the process gets under way. This approach, labelled as the “6 P strategy”, is based on the findings documented in the literature (see above) and supplemented with the author’s experience of a range of transfer projects. The “6 P strategy for VET export” comprises six core factors to be taken into consideration in any transfer project. As a result, the strategy does not indicate specifically how any individual project should be implemented at operational level; rather, the “6 Ps” are anchor points for assessing the embedding framework.

The following three characteristics underpin understanding of the system. First, this is a holistic approach that reflects the full range of dimensions and processes involved in transfer: a process will reflect the maximum number of needs and effects only when all areas and levels of a VET system are given full consideration, and this is not the case with a partial analysis. Second, this is a wholly demand-driven approach: transfers will be successful in the long term only where an approach prioritises the needs in the importing country (Kroh winkel-Karlsson and Sjögren 2008; Keating 2009). Third, it should be emphasised that the approach focuses on the central role played by teaching and learning in VET processes, since teaching and learning are the core VET products being exported. Aspects of training policy, organisational factors and other support elements form part of the design but are not central to the strategy.

The “6 Ps” in the “6 P strategy for VET export” are as follows:

1. Priorities

As set out above, the first stage is to set priorities so that the specific requirements of the importing country can be identified. This first point is, therefore, the bridge to establishing a typology (see above): is possible to identify in principle a number of needs at macro level, although this is not in any way a fundamental local needs analysis. Account should be taken not only of training needs from a training policy perspective but also, and in particular, of the perspectives of those involved—learners, instructors/trainers and employers. Setting their potentially differing needs situations against each other and comparing these with existing VET systems makes it possible to operationalise specific training needs.

Identifying these needs is, however, only the first stage. These needs are not then translated directly into transfer aims but form the basis for further critical reflection against the backdrop of the dimensions included in the typology, with a view to assessing how they interact with other parts of the system. The first step is not complete until this has been done.

This process not only enables priority needs to be identified but also aims at securing substantial acceptance and ownership through the participation of those involved. Such acceptance is particularly important where changes may potentially engender fear and anxiety among those affected, such as fear of loss of power (Hall and Hord 2001).

2. Power

Since teaching and learning form the focus of the approach represented here, the skills development needs identified must be underpinned with appropriate resources, as this is the only way in which both qualitative and quantitative training needs can be met satisfactorily. The necessary resources include appropriately equipped teaching and training rooms and modern, target group-specific curricula and teaching and learning materials. The adaptation of curricula and materials should be based on the skills development needs of the current and future regional and/or national labour market, prior learning (for instance, in literacy), and the capacity of the instructors/trainers. This means that it is not always appropriate to deploy the most up to date technology and that, fundamentally, the quality standards of highly developed industrialised countries cannot be transferred across without prior adaptation.

3. People

The role of training staff is underestimated in many cases, but they are the key to successful learning. Only well-trained instructors and trainers can manage meaningful
learning processes. Nor can such skilled staff be replaced by the use of learning materials, learning software or online learning packages: such materials and packages need to be produced by appropriately skilled staff, and learners need guidance from their instructors/trainers in using and reflecting on them.

It is, therefore, essential that an adequate number of appropriately skilled and motivated instructors/trainers is trained and then employed in training establishments.

To achieve this requires not only instructors/trainers with a high quality of training but also an attractive salary for this group as measured by average income in the relevant country. This strategy must also include potential earnings on the basis of which the individual can make long-term plans and that open up career options within the VET system: it is misguided to think that low rates of pay and restricted opportunities for development will attract talented new instructors/trainers with potential. It is not possible to say categorically whether instructor/trainer training should always be academic in nature; this is a decision that needs to be made on a case by case basis. What is clear, however, is that instructors/trainers cannot be recruited directly from the VET institution in which they work, since only a wide-ranging technical and pedagogical training can produce professionals with the right skills and authority.

4. Poaching-avoidance

We now shift the focus to employers – who, ultimately, are the users of skilled staff – to identify two key elements that require attention.

First, it is important consistently to encourage employers to become involved in the training process as a way of ensuring that skills development is based on actual practice and that the skills taught reflect the real world. Regardless of whether companies are directly involved in training, as they are within a dual training system, for example, whether their involvement is mediated through such representative bodies as Chambers of Industry and Commerce, or whether they intervene directly as individual companies in the design and shaping of courses of training, they must receive a return on their investment. The problem of poaching, which is rife in many countries, therefore needs attention to avoid the risk of a high turnover of skilled staff (Muehlemann and Wolter 2011). Nevertheless, the concerns and needs of the companies need to be taken into account (see above).

Second, in-company training and skills development initiatives should be designed in such a way that there is a clear advantage to companies in terms of their cost/benefit analysis of engaging in such activities (Acemoglu and Pischke 1998; Pilz 2009; Berger and Pilz 2009). Without such a clear advantage, long-term acceptance on the part of employers cannot be assumed. As a result, state targets and training regulations should be defined as clearly as possible, written in a comprehensible way, and not be too bureaucratic, so that it is possible to secure these advantages.

5. Progression

A further perspective is that of those taking part in training measures. As the individuals whose skills are being developed, they are, after all, the very focus of any training initiative, so it is crucial to make participation in training as attractive to them as possible. All activities should, therefore, be assessed in terms of the extent to which they motivate participation. When innovations are being put in place in VET systems, it is important that the state focuses particularly on progression (Young and Raffe 1998). State bodies should work towards ensuring that learning processes culminate in a test of skills development that is then recognised and certified according to an agreed procedure. This is the only way of ensuring transparency with respect to the standard achieved by individual participants. At the same time, certification ensures as smooth as possible a transition for the trainee into the employment system. It remains crucial that more substantial training courses are certified in a way that also ensures access to general education for the trainees concerned. Against the background of parity of esteem between general and vocational education and training (Young and Raffe 1998), this will boost the status and, thus, the attractiveness of VET (Lasonen and Gordon 2009).

6. Privileges

Those affected by the implementation of innovations in VET include not only the participants in training measures but also, in a longer view, skilled workers already in employment. Opportunities in the education and training system and options within the employment system are, therefore, equally important. Consideration needs to be given to how skilled workers can be appropriately deployed in employment so that the competencies they have can be used meaningfully and in a way that will motivate them. Factors playing a role here include not only demanding and challenging activities but also such aspects as health and safety at work, workload, etc. Even more important, however, is payment (Blöndal et al. 2002): demand for training, and the likelihood that training activities will bring success depends on there being a long-term monetary advantage to the individual employee in acquiring skills. State agencies should, therefore, work towards a regulatory framework that prevents discrimination and market distortions.

The six points presented here (Fig. 26.3) should be regarded not as a definitive and conclusive construct but, rather, as an initial structured process that will help design and safeguard the implementation of VET exports for the long term. Further
aspects will, therefore, need to be added to reflect the country-specific background in any individual case. There are also many different interactions between the six aspects that also need to be reflected. Moreover, a strategy of this kind is not suitable for drawing conclusions about the micro-management of individual transfer projects (see above), which vary too much in terms of the specific context to lend themselves to a general approach. Rather, the strategy sets out the central anchor points (points 2–6) in the context of which the identified needs (point 1) are to be met. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the stakeholders in the importing country to create the necessary framework. If this cannot be done, then the VET transfer should focus on or be modified in line with the contraindications.

5 Summary

The process presented here comprises a comprehensive analysis of conditions for and structures of vocational training structures in the importing country by means of both a typology and a transfer analysis. Taken together, these elements can fruitfully be used for the export of VET.

It is, however, entirely clear that any individual transfer project is subject to specific conditions and qualifications that require the process to be appropriately adapted. Such adaptation must be undertaken by experts in both the importing country and the country of origin. Limiting factors also need to be taken into consideration. Where the necessary context cannot be created appropriately in the importing country, the transfer activities themselves will need to be adapted to local conditions (see above).

One further aspect also needs to be taken into consideration. The process outlined here is not designed to assess whether any VET system should be transferred in part or as a whole nor which aspects should be transferred. That decision can only be taken within the context of the framework and of the needs identified.

Experience to date shows, however, that it is very difficult to transfer a system such as the German dual VET system in its entirety (Stockmann 2013). Nevertheless, in many cases, individual system aspects can be appropriate for transfer once they are localised (Euler 2013; Mehrtra et al. 2014). In such cases, however, it is essential to warn the partners abroad before any misunderstandings arise, because a partial transfer of a system means also partial transfer of that system’s advantages. Moreover, account has to be taken of the interdependencies between systems and the short- and long-term repercussions of the transferred and non-transferred system aspects; where insufficient consideration is given to these, the outcome may be that the entire process is perceived as negative.

It is, therefore, essential that very careful attention is given to planning the scope and necessary country-specific adaptations before any VET export project gets under way and that every effort is made to ensure that the process of achieving results is transparent. Long-term, sustainable success must be underpinned by mutual trust at expert input and implementation level between the country of origin and the importing country.

References


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