

## Summary VSD e-discussion week 2

In the second week, we discussed the topic “**companies as providers of (practical) training**”. Participants shared their experiences from Albania, Bangladesh, Brazil, El Salvador, India, Kosovo, Mongolia, Nepal, Rwanda, and West Africa, complemented by many general inputs on the topic.

### 1. Different variants of collaboration between companies and projects

Collaboration related to work-based training can take different variants:

- supporting a company without changing existing patterns of their on-the-job-training;
- improving on-the-job training leading to productivity gains of the company;
- preceding on-the-job training with a basic training course, whereby the company gets fast and safe induction of trainees to work place;
- concluding on-the-job training with a course preparing for a certificate, which increases the mobility of trainees; and
- alternating on-the-job training with systematic courses, thereby creating an entry point to the dual system. In this case, the company gets exposed to technologies, which adds up to both a potential advantage (productivity gain) and a possible disadvantage (internal conflicts).

### Success factors of work-based training

- In Albania, internships in initial vocational education and training (I-VET) were based on the formula 2+1, i.e. 2 years of centre-based training and 1 year of internship in the private sector. Learners did not enter companies with empty hands, they were considered as workers and their learning was task-driven.
- In Bangladesh, the training first took place in training centres but then moved to the factories themselves, which proved to be a veritable trust builder.
- The example from El Salvador shows that providing training not only to trainees but also to employees at the same time presents an incentive for companies. While trainees get first exposure to the world of work, employees train further in their area of expertise (in-service training). In India, too, the skills development initiative was sold to the companies as a business initiative rather than CSR.
- In Nepal, medium-sized and small companies provide practical training free of cost at work place since they are expanding their production and face an immediate skilled labor shortage.
- Several participants mentioned that next to conducting trainings, companies must play a central role in assessment and certification. This enhances the credibility of the assessment and certifications in the labour market and increases the employment opportunities for trainees.

### 2. Champions for initial anchoring of private sector cooperation

Finding the right partner is crucial; having a strong partner can act as a trigger.

In Bangladesh, the project started with one (leading) company in the leather industry, its “champion”, and now collaborates with 22 partner factories. In Albania, a big do-it-yourself store and building supply centre initiated a skills competition for students of vocational schools and contracted the winning and best performing students as interns. Champions can also be international companies like Swiss companies in India or German companies collaborating with Don Bosco.

### 3. Mix of technical, entrepreneurial and soft skills

Companies not only impart technical skills but also entrepreneurial (especially relevant for future start-ups) and soft/generic skills (such as work attitude, speed, punctuality, integration, communication skills).

### 4. Decent work

Many participants exchanged about the issue of decent work – a very important topic, though not primarily a VSD topic. The contributors discussed on “quality controls” and suggested differentiating between two approaches:

If the project aims at improving existing **informal apprenticeships**, a “policeman attitude” nips every entrepreneurial initiative in the bud. A “productivity advisor”, who has the practitioner’s

background and speaks the language of the entrepreneur, can create a rapport with the small business owner and show how he/she can increase sales, save costs and increase productivity. In a second step, once trust is established, he/she can recommend simple measures to improve working conditions that do not entail significant costs.

If the project aims at **setting up a pilot apprenticeship programme with partner companies in the formal economy**, we are obliged to establish and monitor certain quality criteria regarding working environment and working conditions, in particular in the field of occupational safety and health. While talking to entrepreneurs, it is important to stress the benefits of respecting basic working environment and working conditions: gaining social and legal respect, avoiding fines and penalties from government. In Nepal for instance, associations participate in “decent work orientation workshops”. Nevertheless, the implementation remains tricky. Is it possible to introduce financial or in-kind incentives for companies, which adhere to the standards?

We also have to differentiate between our specific **roles** in different projects. If we are financiers, it is easier to frame and impose conditions, including quality considerations and work conditions. But as soon as a project is in a primarily facilitating role, the issue is different, and even more challenging.

### **5. Moving to the system level**

Many posts already pointed to collaboration with the private sector at the system level. Hence, if we want to achieve system changes, we have to work at all levels (macro, meso and micro) and with both main providers (public institutions in charge of VET and the private sector).

Examples from the field: In Brazil, the government recently set vocational training as a priority and started a governmental programme, through which technical courses are provided for free. In Mongolia, the Mongolian Government is working on TVET law amendments. In Kosovo, Industrial boards are set-up in VET schools and higher education providers and the experiences shared from Rwanda and West Africa show the important role of associations and chambers in VSD.

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Zurich, 17.3.2015