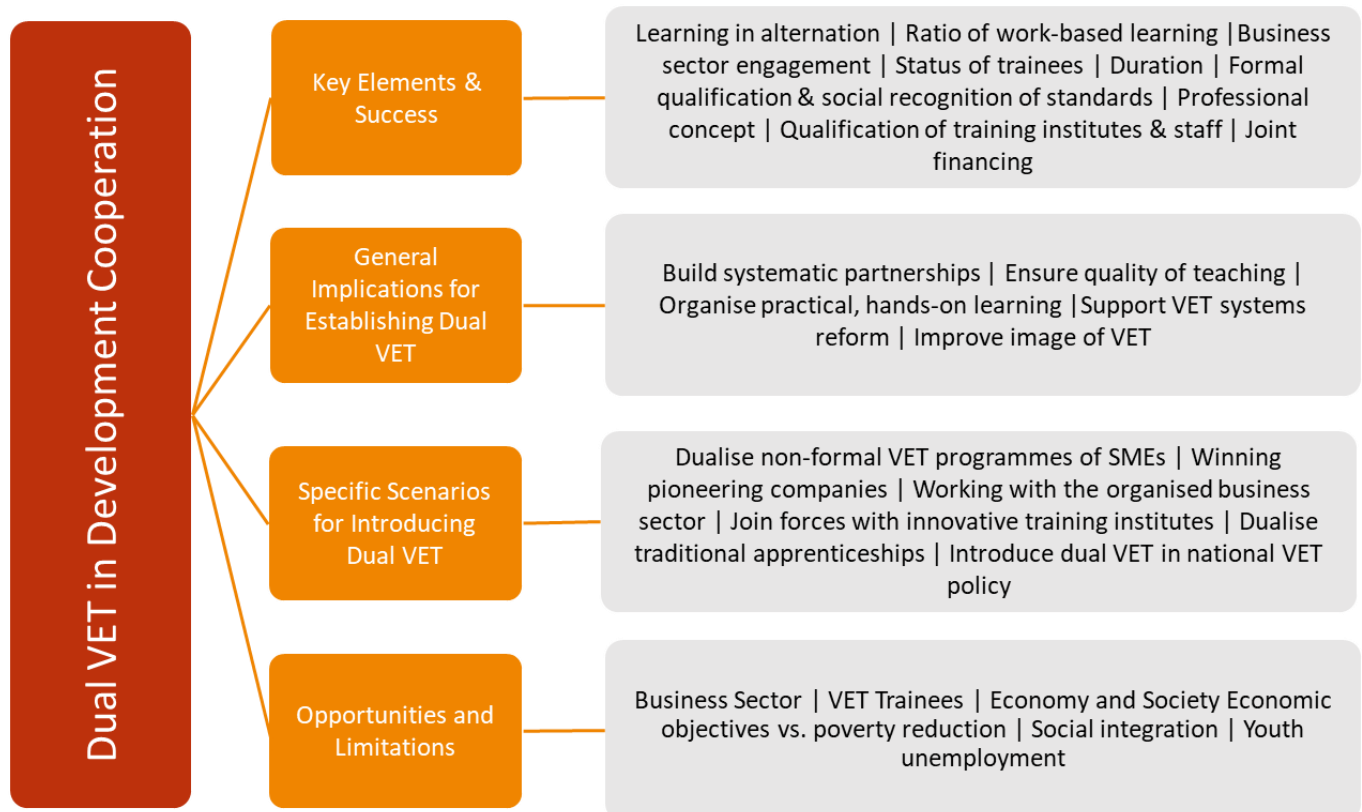




Dual VET in Development Cooperation: Key Elements, Success Factors, Opportunities and Limitations

DC dVET Policy Brief

In development cooperation, dual VET or dual VET elements can generate a number of advantages for partner countries. In order to fully realise these advantages, several elements must be considered. They are highlighted in this policy brief that is structured as illustrated in the following figure:



KEY ELEMENTS AND SUCCESS FACTORS OF DUAL VET IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Duality in VET is first of all a principle to structure learning processes. The alternation between practice and classroom learning lies at the heart of it. In this pedagogical approach, practice learning can generally, depending on the context, take place at the workplace, in training workshops, labs or simulated businesses¹. However, a dual VET system goes beyond this dual pedagogical approach and is characterised by the following **key elements & success factors**:

- **Two learning venues and learning in alternation:** The training is held at least at the two learning venues, VET school and company, with a systematic alternation between theory and practice, reflection and action. Interlinking classroom-based learning with hands-on learning in a business setting greatly enhances trainees' skills and consequently employability.

¹ For a more detailed description and classification of dual VET see the DC dVET policy brief „[VET Systems & Terminology – A Classification and Clarification](#)“.

- **Ratio of work-based learning:** Work-based learning outweighs school-based learning: In countries with a dual VET system, the ratio of business-based training to school-based learning is between 80:20 and 60:40.
- **Shared responsibility and business sector engagement:** A dual VET system is characterised by a shared responsibility between public and private partners, VET schools and businesses (individual companies and the organized business sector). The engagement of the business sector in VET is essential to ensure that the demand of the economy is met. Business sector engagement should encompass the development of demand-based occupational profiles and curricula, training delivery, examinations, steering and financing of VET.²
- **Status of trainees:** In a dual VET system, the trainees are recruited by businesses and become employees with an employment or an apprenticeship contract.
- **Duration:** The duration of the training is medium- to long-term. In countries with an established dual VET system, it typically lasts from two to four years.
- **Formal qualification and social recognition of standards:** Dual VET leads to a formal qualification. For its success it is crucial that this qualification is recognized both by the labour market and the local society. Therefore, standards need to be established that ensure high quality while facilitating adaptation of the curricula to changing economic needs.
- **Professional concept:** In countries with a dual VET system, VET is tied to the concept of professions that occupy a specific place in society and are therefore more than just embodiments of certain skills. Upon completion of their dual VET training, graduates have obtained a professional qualification recognised on the labour market and at the same time a professional identity and professional confidence. In the context of partner countries, an adapted professional concept can be applied, understanding occupations as a broad qualification rather than just specific jobs or narrow skills.³
- **Qualification of training institutes and staff:** High-quality teaching and learning processes depend on qualified staff and competent training institutions. In dual VET, this applies not only to VET schools and their VET teachers, but also to skilled in-company-trainers that guide trainees throughout their work-based learning process.
- **Joint financing:** Overall, a dual VET system is more economical for the state than a school-based VET system, because businesses bear a large proportion of training costs.

In general, all the above elements and success factors of dual VET have great potential to be realized also in partner countries of development cooperation. At the beginning of any intervention though, many or all of them have not yet been materialized. Whenever an element or success factor is found lacking, specific objectives should be formulated to promote its realization. Their concrete design and implementation need to be carefully defined based on the local context involving all relevant actors.

Be aware that it takes time to build a dual system; trust building, collaboration with businesses, enhancing the capacity of educational partners, model development, creation of a solid ownership, strengthening associations and interest groups, working at the structural level to integrate dual VET into the regulatory framework, implementing initial course cycles – each lasting from one to three years – quickly add up to an initiative requiring a 15-year horizon at least.

² For more detailed information on Business Sector Engagement see DC dVET Working Tool: "[Engaging the Business Sector in VET](#)".

³ For a detailed definition of the professional or vocational concept, its elements and its significance see <https://ibw.at/en/library/id/258/>, pp. 62 – 66.

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GENERAL IMPLICATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING DUAL VET

In the frame of development cooperation, the following efforts can be made to support partner countries in establishing a well-functioning dual VET system:

- **Building systematic partnerships:** Establishing partnerships between the state and the business sector, resp. between schools and businesses.
- **Ensuring teaching quality:** This can be enhanced by aligning teaching curricula with the demands of the labour market and by training and continuing education of teaching staff and in-company-trainers.
- **Organising practical, hands-on learning:** This is best served by involving businesses. Where this is not (yet) possible, training workshops that ensure high-quality learning experiences in realistic work environments can be built.
- **Supporting VET system reforms:** VET systems reforms should be carried out with the aim of including dual VET in the existing local system rather than changing the local VET system altogether.
- **Improving the image of VET and starting with attractive occupations to create an attractive system:** Initiatives such as career counselling, information, public campaigns, or professional competitions can all help to foster the overall image. It is recommended that initially dual VET models should be rooted in attractive sectors and professions or in classic artisanry, i.e., sectors and occupations that enjoy high social recognition. This can contribute to raising the social perception of dual VET.

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SPECIFIC SCENARIOS FOR INTRODUCING DUAL VET

To introduce dual VET in partner countries, business sector participation must be ensured. Depending on the local context, one or several of the below scenarios can be used to bring business sector participation about:

- **Dualising non-formal VET programmes of medium and large-scale companies:** Many of these businesses have their own in-house training programmes to address skills gaps of their staff. These training programmes can be used as starting points and transformed into dual, formal and standardised VET programmes.
- **Pioneering companies as partners for dual VET models:** Medium and large-scale enterprises have a vested interest in qualified staff and sufficient financial clout, which allows them to act as pioneers in introducing dual VET models.
- **The organised private sector as partner for dual VET models:** If business associations or informal bodies recognise the problem of shortage of qualified staff, they can become important allies in introducing dual VET.
- **Innovative training institutes as initiators of dual training courses:** If such training institutes are well connected and widely appreciated in the business community, they can act as initiators of dual VET.
- **Dualising traditional apprenticeships in the informal sector:** Such traditional or informal apprenticeships are frequent in many African and Asian countries. They can be dualised by introducing a classroom element to supplement the business component.⁴
- **Introducing dual VET approaches as part of the national VET policy:** Also in this scenario, it is important to ensure that the business sector is involved in policy and the development of it.

⁴ For more information informal apprenticeship see DC dVET Publication "[Formal and Informal VET in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)".

OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS: WHAT DUAL VET CAN (AND CAN NOT) BE EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE

By establishing dual VET in partner countries of development cooperation **various advantages** can be realised:

The **business sector** can profit from several benefits of its engagement in dual VET including productive contributions of their VET trainees already during or shortly after completion of training, creation of their own pool of skilled workers or positive effects on employee retention. Besides, engagement in VET can contribute to a positive company image.⁵

VET trainees receive the opportunity of developing professional expertise that facilitates their labour market insertion and retention as they develop skills and competences that are required by the companies. Besides, the VET training constitutes a first working experience which enables them to build self-confidence and to make more informed career choices at an early stage in their professional lives.

At the **overall level**, the partner country can benefit from the availability of a skilled workforce, which in the long term can translate into more favourable economic conditions, such as higher productivity and innovation. Moreover, dual VET can contribute towards reducing youth unemployment and can help attract foreign direct investment.

Limitations: Although dual VET can be very effective, it should not be seen as a panacea to all economic, social and individual problems. Some needs may be better served by introducing other initiatives than dual VET programmes. **Economic objectives and poverty reduction** are often at the heart of introducing dual VET in development cooperation. Although dual VET certainly contributes to both the economic competitiveness of a sector and labour market integration of VET graduates, it needs to be stressed that these effects will only materialise over the long term. Moreover, a possible contribution of dual VET to social integration will only come about, if the educational system offers specific courses and measures for disadvantaged target groups. Therefore, it remains crucial for any intervention in development cooperation to carefully assess the most suitable approach in the given context – this might be dual VET, including dual elements in VET (e.g., closer cooperation with the business sector) or in some cases even approaches with few or even no reference to dual VET.

Paying attention to the local context, setting realistic objectives and allowing for a sufficient time will greatly enhance the positive effects of any dual VET initiative in development cooperation.

⁵ For more information see DC dVET Publication "[How to Convince the Business Sector to Engage in VET? List of Arguments](#)".

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Gender-specific terms and formulations apply in principle to both genders.