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EDITORIAL

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**Quality creates trust – a magic formula for greater equivalence and permeability!**

Dear readers,

The expansion in education is producing rising numbers of pupils with higher school leaving qualifications without delivering any noticeable benefit for the dual system. The overall training figures for 2012 and the associated prospects make for sobering reading. There is a decline in the number of training contracts and an increase in the number of vacant training places. BIBB/Institute for Employment Research projections from 2012 predict considerable shortages at journeyman and skilled worker level before the year 2020. Trade and industry have recognised this problem and are undertaking joint endeavours together with the Federal Government to attract more young people into the dual system.

**QUALITY AS A VEHICLE FOR THE RELIABLE VALIDITY OF VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

Alongside banging the drum for vocational education and training, we also require support measures to be put in place, in particular at VET policy level. Approaches which accord greater validity to vocational training, such as the current debate within the context of the German Qualifications Framework (DQR) surrounding the alignment of upgrading training qualifications compared to the alignment of higher education qualifications, are particularly promising in this regard. The agreement reached between the Federal Government, the federal states, trade and industry, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the German Rectors' Conference that vocational qualifications may in principle be aligned to the three top reference levels within the DQR certainly appears to be conducive to raising attractiveness. A system of quality assurance which meets the necessary requirements is, however, also needed. This is equally a prerequisite for trust amongst stakeholders. "If it says master craftsman qualification or Bachelor degree on the tin, that is what must be inside" – this would be one colloquial way of indicating the key future emphasis to be pursued if there is to be greater equivalence and permeability.

From a vocational training point of view, the basic conditions for reliable quality assurance in upgrading training are already in place. Examination standards are governed by legal provisions and are monitored via a regulated supervisory system in which the Federal Government, the federal states and the competent bodies all participate. Trade and industry are represented at every level of the planning, implementation and evaluation of upgrading training measures in the form of involvement by the social partners and the chamber organisations. This fulfils important general conditions with regard to the public law character of training provision and also in terms of the way in which such provision relates to the world of work. A synoptic comparison of the quality assurance systems in vocational and academic education carried out by the Centre for Higher Education (CHE) and Prognos in 2009 on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi) comes to the conclusion that, despite differing general legal frameworks, both sectors are undertaking similar activities within the field of quality assurance and that the quality assurance level in vocational education and training is comparable to that in the institutes of higher education. Notwithstanding this, the survey stresses that the implementation of quality assurance control cycles has not yet been achieved in a universal and comprehensive manner, either in vocational education and training or in academic education.

### **MUCH HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE, BUT THERE IS STILL MORE TO DO!**

This is a challenge which is not going unheeded by VET stakeholders. Various initiatives aimed at developing proposals for the systemic further development of quality assurance in the vocational education and training system are ongoing, especially against the background of the DQR debate. The pilot project activities being conducted under the lead management of BIBB and a discussion currently being staged by trade and industry experts and the social partners which encompasses the demand arising from the CHE/Prognos survey for the implementation of a quality assurance process in the form of a closed control cycle are particularly worthy of mention. The aim is to develop quality standards within the scope of a control cycle comprising planning, implementation, evaluation and reflection for the areas of regulatory work, examinations, providers and courses. Specific results in this field are bound to foster the DQR process and thus promote equivalence and permeability within the educational system, because quality creates trust and much more besides!

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