

International vocational education and training cooperation – a positive first-year appraisal



FRIEDRICH HUBERT ESSER

Prof. Dr., President of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)

In the face of high youth unemployment and shortages of skilled workers in many countries, dual initial vocational education and training structures are more sought after than ever. International cooperations on vocational education and training take up this interest and often – in the course of a mutual learning process – culminate in efforts to reform national qualification systems accordingly. A large number of German stakeholders with a range of motives and approaches are involved.

A common strategy is essential

There is an increasingly important need for transparency about the different activities and for coherence, i. e. a common strategic approach to reform, so that these endeavours complement one another as far as possible. Just over a year ago, under the coordination of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the German government therefore passed a strategy for international cooperation on vocational education from a single source. Key components of this strategy are the establishment of the “Round Table for International Vocational Education and Training Cooperation” and the German Office for International Cooperation in VET (GOVET) at BIBB.

The “Round Table” now concentrates the expertise of representatives from the political, business and social sectors and provides a platform for the information and coordination needs already mentioned. GOVET is the central contact partner for all stakeholders in vocational education and training cooperation. BIBB contributes its own expertise, with the additional backing of staff seconded from the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

As a competence centre, for years BIBB has been the point of contact for numerous foreign delegations and a highly esteemed dialogue partner for its combination of research expertise and proven practice. Over the years a tight network of European and non-European partner institutes has grown up. For instance, BIBB is Germany’s UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre as well as a longstanding cooperation partner of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) in Thessaloniki and the European Training Foundation (ETF) in Turin. BIBB also maintains intense professional communication with the vocational training institutes in Austria and Switzerland. Joint research and development projects exist with partner

institutes in countries including South Korea and Australia. This cooperation will be strengthened with a particular emphasis on institutes in European partner countries.

International cooperation thrives on communication among equals

BIBB also gains valuable impulses from international cooperation for its work at national level. This was evident just recently during the BIBB Congress in Berlin, where 800 participants from 35 countries discussed the detailed organisation of education and vocational training systems. The increasing internationalisation of VET makes high demands on the staff of BIBB, who support and instigate cooperations around the world with profound subject knowledge and intercultural sensitivity. The willingness to engage in reciprocal learning and an appreciative attitude towards dialogue partners are the fundamental prerequisites for successful advisory work and cooperation.

In establishing GOVET, the German government has expressed its trust in BIBB’s competence and expertise. When “Round Table” members met at the end of September 2014, their verdict on its first year was a positive one. The statements in this issue by the Education Minister and the State Secretary on the work of the “Round Table” likewise reflect the growing momentum of international cooperation. We take this as both an incentive and an imperative to keep up the common approach as we tackle future challenges. ◀

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Deborah Shannon, Academic Text and Translation, Berlin