

Germany – Quality initiatives of intermediary institutions and voluntary certification offers for small and medium-sized training companies in the dual system

Summary

The chambers play a central role in the quality assurance of in-company training in the dual system in Germany. In addition to their legally defined tasks (conducting examinations, monitoring in-company training, counselling, etc.), they have increasingly expanded their range of quality assurance services for training companies in recent years. A multistage and multimethod approach was used to focus on the multitude and diversity of these "quality initiatives." The project results provide the first systematic stocktaking of this commitment of intermediary institutions using the example of the Chambers of Skilled Crafts and Chambers of Industry and Commerce.

Date of implementation

The project was carried out from 2019 to 2021.

Scope and partners involved

The project refers to a nationwide sampling. The institutions considered (Chambers of Crafts and Chambers of Industry and Commerce) are regionally operating intermediary institutions.

Funding sources

The project was funded by Erasmus +/EQAVET.

Aim of the implementation

The chambers in Germany have launched a large number of seal programmes, awards and competitions that recognise companies and their training personnel for the quality of their training. In addition, there are many other measures on the subject of training quality, including various advisory and workshop formats, seminars and courses. They all aim to sensitise training companies to the task of quality assurance and to support them in its implementation. Companies can in turn use the corresponding certificates as a marketing tool to position themselves successfully in the competition for trainees.

What these "quality initiatives" of the chambers have in common is that they go beyond the legally defined regular activities of the chambers in the sense of special activities, address the safeguarding and promotion of in-company training quality and are primarily addressed at the companies in a supportive manner. But how widespread are these initiatives, how did they come about and how are they structured?

So far, there have been hardly any reliable findings on this. Against this background, DEQA-VET, as the German Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training, has carried out the first systematised stocktaking and investigation of projects and measures to

promote or reward in-company training quality using the Chambers of Industry and Commerce (IHK) and the Chambers of Skilled Crafts (HwK) as examples.

Targeted EQAVET indicative descriptors at system / provider level

The following excerpt can be retraced in the publication of the Study "Quality initiatives of intermediary institutions and voluntary certification offers for small and medium-sized training companies in the dual system": 74% of the quality criteria found to refer to the training company (Meso level), and about a quarter (26%) to the micro level, the teaching/learning relationships between trainees and training staff. Criteria that go beyond the training quality of the company unit were rarely found.

In this sense, the identified "quality initiatives" address numerous aspects of quality assurance. Those also include indicative descriptors of the EQAVET Framework. The following parts directly refer from the [Framework](#):

- ❖ Implementation plans are developed in consultation with stakeholders and include explicit principles / provider level (p. 13): Staff regularly participates in training and develop collaboration with relevant external stakeholders to support capacity building and quality improvement and improve performance.
- ❖ Implementation plans are developed in consultation with stakeholders and include explicit principles/system level (p. 13): Implementation plans consider the resources required, the capacity of the user and the tools and guidelines needed to support them.
- ❖ Evaluation of outcomes and processes is carried out regularly and supported by measurement/ provider leverage (p. 13): Evaluation and review cover the process and outcomes of education and training, including assessment of learner satisfaction and staff performance and satisfaction.
- ❖ Evaluation of outcomes and processes is carried out regularly and supported by measurement/ System and provider level (p. 14): Early warning systems are implemented.
- ❖ Review/Provider level (p. 14): Feedback from learners on their individual learning experiences and on the learning and teaching environment is collected. Together with feedback from teachers, trainers, and all other relevant stakeholders, this is used as a basis for further action.

Activities

After preparatory literature research with online research, a telephone survey and finally a standardised online survey, several methods of data collection were used.

The resulting pool of different data sets and data was analysed qualitatively and/or quantitatively, depending on the research question. The results from the individual studies were cross-referenced and comparatively examined at various points. In this way, an empirical

saturation was achieved, which made it possible to sort, condense and finally summarise the individual results.

A total of 84.1% of the Chambers of Skilled Crafts and Chambers of Industry and Commerce responded to the call for a survey throughout Germany. Of a total of 53 chambers of skilled crafts, 44 took part in the survey. Of the 79 chambers of industry and commerce, 67 submitted their responses.

The evaluation showed a total of 192 individual initiatives, which are offered by 100 of the total 132 HWK and IHK (on average: 1.45 per chamber). They could be assigned to five main types (training, consulting, networking initiatives, "working aids" and "award" initiatives).

Main outputs and outcomes

A total of 192 individual initiatives were identified, which can be classified into the following five main types.

Award initiatives

Award initiatives are characterised by the fact that companies are awarded prizes for their efforts in the area of training quality. This takes place in the form of the awarding of prizes, placement in rankings - but above all through the awarding of seals. With 70 case studies, award initiatives represent the largest group in the entirety of the initiatives examined. Because these programmes often have a high degree of elaboration and a comparatively high external impact, they occupy a special position among the initiatives studied. In order to take this into account, the award initiatives were examined separately and in depth.

Training initiatives

Training initiatives include teaching/learning offers that are aimed at imparting specialised knowledge, methods and competences and in this respect primarily represent an educational function on the topic of the quality of training. Training initiatives are thus a central vehicle for qualifying VET staff and thus support successful teaching/learning processes.

Guidance initiatives

Within the framework of guidance initiatives, companies are supported with regard to their efforts to further develop their training quality. In contrast to training initiatives, the focus is on the specific concerns of individual companies.

Networking initiatives

Networking initiatives aim to bring different actors responsible for VET quality into dialogue with each other so that training is perceived, coordinated and shaped as a joint task.

Job aids

Initiatives of this type are characterised by the fact that working materials and tools that can be used in everyday training are created and communicated to the companies. This is intended to provide practical

support for the companies' efforts in quality assurance and development.

On January 25, 2023, the head of Department 4 at BIBB, Prof. Dr. Michael Heister, participated as one of four experts in the expert discussion on the "Excellence Initiative for Vocational Education and Training and Ensuring the Quality of Training". The Committee for Education, Research and Technology Assessment of the German Bundestag had invited the participants.

In his statement, Mr Heister presented the results of DEQA-VET's work, among other things. Among other things, he reported during the committee meeting on the DEQA-VET study "Quality Initiatives of Intermediary Institutions". He also referred to the findings in the statement submitted in advance.

The documentation of the meeting (incl. video recording) can be found in the Mediathek of the German Bundestag. Mr Heister's statement begins after 1 hour and 22 minutes.

DEQA-VET dedicated a content page to the participants including the documents and important links mentioned above. It can be found [here](#).

Indicators of the EQAVET framework to measure and evaluate the quality improvements

Indicator 1: Relevance of quality assurance for VET providers

The initiatives promote a quality improvement culture at a very broad basis. The initiatives combine aspects of the whole training process (Rekrutierung / Recruiting Start, Durchführung / Implementation, Prüfung / Examination, Übernahme / Acquisition).

Indicator 2: Investment in training of teachers and trainers

The initiatives offer the companies and their trainer's training and upskilling in Quality Assurance in VET.

Indicator 3: Participation rate in VET programmes and/or Indicator 10 Schemes used to promote better access to VET and provide guidance to (potential) VET learners:

Companies are invited by the Quality initiatives to take an active part in recruiting new apprentices (for example by organising a "Day of training" or taking part in the orientation process of learners.)

Indicator 4: Completion rate in VET programmes

The initiatives promote individual support for the learners by their trainers in order to enhance their prospects to complete the training successfully.

Indicator 5: Placement rate of VET programmes

The initiatives support appraisal interviews before the end of the VET programme to help the learner find a suitable pathway into an employment.

Added value of EQAVET

EQAVET provides reinsurance for the direction and design of the identified quality initiatives. However, they were developed bottom-up in the regions, independently of EQAVET.

Website

- ❖ DEQA-VET Website dedicated to the project (German):
https://www.deqa-vet.de/de/daqavet_119364.php
- ❖ Download the study (English):
<https://www.bibb.de/dienst/publikationen/de/18499>