

Dual education system

A **dual education system** combines apprenticeships in a company and vocational education at a vocational school in one course. This system is practiced in several countries, notably Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Switzerland, but also Portugal, Denmark, the Netherlands, France and Egypt, and for some years now in China and other countries in Asia.^[1]

In the *Duales Ausbildungssystem* young German people can learn one of 356 (2005) apprenticeship occupations (*Ausbildungsberufe*), such as e.g. Doctor's Assistant, Dispensing Optician or Oven Builder. The precise skills and theory taught are strictly regulated and defined by national standards: An *Industriekaufmann* (Industrial Manager) has always acquired the same skills and taken the same courses in production planning, accounting and controlling, marketing, HR management, trade laws, etc.^[2]

Especially in southern Germany this model is also used for a special college system called *Duale Hochschule*.^[3]

In France, dual education (*formation en alternance*) has undergone a boom since the 1990s, with information technology being the greatest draw.^[4]

1 Apprenticeship section

As one part of the dual education course, students are trained in a company for three to five days a week. The company is responsible for ensuring that students get the standard quantity and quality of training set down in the training descriptions for each trade.

In Germany, this practical training may be complemented by more practical lessons at workshops run by the **guilds** and **chamber of commerce**, in order to compensate for the bias caused by training at only one company. These extra courses usually take three or four weeks a year. The time spent at vocational school is approximately 60 days a year, in blocks of one or two weeks at a time spread out over the year.

In France, the same amount of time is spent in practical training and theory, with the following possible systems:

- 2.5 days in a company, 2.5 days at school,
- one week in a company, one week at school,
- six months in a company, six months at school.

French companies must provide a tutor or other person responsible for the students, or a **human resources** officer to deal with them. Their duties may involve daily tutoring and/or targeted training. French apprentices on the dual education course are paid a certain percentage of the minimum wage for the job they are learning.

2 School section

The other part of the dual education course involves lessons at a vocational school (German: *Berufsschule*). The responsibility for this part of the course lies with the school authorities in every German state or Swiss canton. Both general lessons (for example German, politics, economics, religion or even sport) and trade-specific theory are taught.

Lessons may be taught part-time (one or two days a week) or in blocks of several weeks. The latter is preferred for trades learned by only a small number of students, where students may have to travel long distances to get to the nearest vocational school which teaches their subject.

3 Testing

In Germany, for most trades, the first examination takes place about half-way through the vocational training and is only to test how well the student is doing so far: the marks do not go towards the final exam. Both exams are organised by the **small business** trade group and **chamber of commerce and industry**. Examinations for trained artisans are traditionally known as journeyman's tests (*Gesellenprüfung*).

Examinations for trades which have been recognised more recently are organised slightly differently. Here, the first examination counts as 40% of the total result, with the final examination making up the other 60%.

Those who fail the exam can apply to have their training extended until the following year when they can retake it. Only one extension is allowed.

4 Advantages of dual education

The student is an employee of the company from the beginning and receives tasks according to his growing abil-

ities. If a company is willing to make an employment-contract with the student after his dual education time, the company will get an employee who knows the company's workflow. The student can also benefit from the knowledge about hard skills and soft skills of more experienced co-workers. The student develops under real conditions. Therefore, he can see if he is not able or willing to do this job quite early and not after exams. Furthermore the student earns money from the beginning.

5 Problems with dual education

5.1 Germany

Although the dual education system is generally considered to be exemplary, an increasing number of young people are taking vocational education and training (VET) courses at training sites and schools rather than in real companies, as for various reasons, companies are becoming less willing to take on apprentices. To counter this, the government considered making it compulsory for firms to take on apprentices. This idea, however, was dropped when the trade associations agreed to a voluntary training pact.

The reasons behind the lack of places on dual education courses include:

- companies which take on apprentices have to follow a large number of regulations
- the training itself is very expensive
- the requirements for several positions have become more complex and many school graduates do not provide a fitting level of education
- for the less complex positions only graduates with a very low level of education are willing to do it, but they are not able to keep up with the course
- companies are often highly specialized and unable to train apprentices in all the required areas

Recently some attempts have been made to overcome these difficulties, but as yet with no success. Two solutions put forward so far are "contractual education" (*Auftragsausbildung*) and state-run courses. The former would involve companies training apprentices which they do not plan to employ; the contract would also not be an employment contract. The latter solution would involve training outside of companies, in schools and colleges.

5.2 Switzerland

In Switzerland too, more and more young people are finding it hard to get a place in a company of their choice. In

2004, a conference took place on this subject, attended by all the parties in the **Swiss Federal Council**; as no agreement could be reached on which measures to take, the only result was a call for all companies to take on apprentices.

The lack of places has changed the conditions in which apprentices are taken on. In 2004, one newly founded company even advertised apprenticeships in IT where the apprentices had to pay for the training themselves. The uproar was so great, however, that the company was not able to start up. Today, most apprentices have to take aptitude tests before they are accepted, and there are usually several candidates for a company to choose from.

6 References

- [1] <http://www.hss.de/homepage-e.shtml>
- [2] "Dual Certification Programs". <http://www.german-academic-institute.org>.
- [3] "The purpose of dual studies?". <http://en.dhbw-mosbach.de>.
- [4] "Le boom des formations en alternance". <http://www.leparisien.fr>". 9 July 2005.

- *Much of this information was taken from the German- and French-language versions of this article.*

7 External links

- Quick facts about the German education system from www.germany-info.org
- 2005 Reform of Vocational Education and Training *Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* (Federal Ministry of Education and Research)
- *Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung* (Federal Institut of Professional Education)
- Vocational Education and Training in Switzerland (Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research)

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