

The Dual Education System (2017)

Abstract

A prominent feature which makes German labor productive and keeps youth unemployment low is the dual education system, a professional training system in which most school leavers are trained on the job while at the same time receiving continuing education in a vocational school.

Source

How does the dual education system work?

In Germany, some 60 percent of young people who attend non-academic secondary schools and do not intend to pursue a further degree participate in the dual education system, which combines practical occupational training in the workplace with classroom study at a vocational school.

The structure of workplace vocational training

Vocational training

The training regulations of the specific occupation provide the foundation for vocational training. As a rule, the trainee spends 3 or 4 days a week in the workplace learning the practical basics of his or her chosen occupation. Since many workplaces are highly specialized nowadays, this practical training is often supplemented by a few weeks in the workshops of the trade guild or professional association. These special training programs help to close any existing gaps.

Vocational school

This part of training usually takes place at vocational schools and includes 8–12 hours of instruction per week. Instruction can also take the form of block courses in which the trainee spends up to eight weeks studying full-time at the vocational school. Curricula vary not just from occupation to occupation, but also from federal state to federal state. Instruction is divided into general content and specialist knowledge applying to the trade or occupation. Thus, for example, all vocational students take classes in German, political science, religion and sports.

Examinations

Over the three-year dual education program, trainees have to take and pass two major exams:

In the intermediate exam, trainees must demonstrate the level they have achieved thus far. The intermediate exam takes place around the middle of training. The final exam—in the crafts also the journeyman's exam—takes place at the end of training. It is usually conducted by the examination committees of the chambers of trade or the chambers of industry and commerce (IHKs). Trainees who pass are considered to have completed their training.

The written intermediate and final examinations conducted by the chambers of industry and commerce are offered at the same time of year (except for in Baden-Württemberg) and with identical questions and tasks. This makes the results comparable across the country.

Those who do not pass can apply to have their training extended until the next date to repeat the exams.

Changes in the testing process mean that ever more occupations are stretching out the final examinations. This means that the first part of the final exam is replacing the intermediate exam. This

exam is therefore already being conducted halfway through the training period and is also relevant for the overall grade received for the training program.

Problems of the dual educational system

Dual education is considered the jewel in the crown of the German educational system and enjoys international prestige. The problem, however, is the balance between workplace training and vocational schooling. Politically speaking, vocational schools fall under the jurisdiction of the federal states. Workplace training according to the Occupational Training Law (BBiG), however, is regulated by the German state. Often, school curricula cannot be easily reconciled with practical training in the workplace.

Differences between curricula and vocational practice

Vocational school curricula are based on the formal framework of knowledge systems, while workplace training is oriented towards the demands of actual vocational practice.

Fewer companies are willing to provide training

Unfortunately, the vocational training situation in Germany has worsened in recent years. Increasing numbers of young people can only attend vocational school because many companies are no longer willing or able to provide the full range of training for a given occupation. Other enterprises are willing to take on trainees but have trouble finding suitable candidates.

In 2010 there were fewer training places than the year before

According to the Federal Institute of Occupational Training (BIBB), there were even fewer training spots in 2010 than in the crisis year 2009. In all, there were 4,500 fewer places than the year before. The economic upswing is passing the younger generation by. The quota of trainees later employed by the companies training them is also falling. The rule of thumb, at least in the old [Western] federal states is: The larger the company, the greater the proportion of trainees they take on. In the new [Eastern] federal states the situation is generally somewhat worse.

Source: Miriam Bax, "Wie funktioniert eine duale Ausbildung?" www.bildungsexperten.net

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