



L20 Apprenticeship Survey

April 2014

Summary of responses

Rising youth unemployment and, high numbers of displaced workers and those employed under informal or precarious conditions clearly underline the need to invest in quality apprenticeships. The B20 and L20 in their joint engagement on this issue have both conducted surveys on key parameters of apprenticeship systems at country level.

Given the fact that those European countries with comprehensive apprenticeship systems in place including Austria, Germany and Switzerland are facing much less youth unemployment than a large number of other OECD countries, explains the renewed interest in designing and implementing quality apprenticeship systems. In order to contribute to the debate, the ITUC and TUAC have conducted a L20 survey on apprenticeship issues among their affiliates in 14 G20 countries¹. The following provides a brief summary of the key survey results:

1. While most G20 countries have apprenticeship systems in place, in a large number of cases, these systems are not comprehensive and do not cover all sectors. It is worth noting that national VET systems do not always include work-place-based training. However, the more comprehensive apprenticeship systems are, the more they seem to be based on work-place-based training.
2. Trade unions and employers associations are not always sufficiently involved in the governance of national VET systems. According to the survey responses, in a number of countries trade unions do not seem to be involved in the process of designing, implementing and governing national VET systems at all (Korea, India, Indonesia). In other countries, their involvement doesn't go beyond (often limited) consultation and information procedures. In some instances, as in the US or the UK, the involvement of trade unions is less comprehensive, and more sector or occupation specific. In economies with a long tradition of skill-based production of goods and services, trade unions are more actively involved in the governance of national VET systems (in particular in Australia, Canada, Germany). Within this country group, collective bargaining agreements often focus on VET and apprenticeship issues in order to facilitate access to quality training as well as to promote gender equity. In this case, collective bargaining has become an important instrument for promoting investments in workforce training as well for cost-sharing. Furthermore, wages and salaries

Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, Unites States

for apprentices are often fixed by bargaining agreements. However, trade unions in many countries have emphasized that the remuneration of apprentices is far from satisfying.

3. The findings confirm that trade unions that are actively involved in the governance of national VET systems perceive these systems as much more balanced in addressing both the interests of employers as well as of the apprentices. It should also be mentioned that with regard to contractual arrangements of apprenticeships and the employment of apprentices – with the exception of Korea – an appropriate compliance with core labour standards has been reported.
4. Across a large majority of G20 countries, trade unions are concerned about the fact that neither apprenticeship programs nor curricula facilitate a transition from school to work in a sufficient manner. They remain concerned about the fact that public as well as private training providers in many countries are not able to provide the latest technology and state of the art learning tools. Serious concerns in this regard have been expressed by unions from Australia, India, Italy, India, Indonesia and Spain. In other countries, among them, Germany and Canada, concerns are more sector-specific.
5. In a number of countries, VET-systems do not focus exclusively on young apprentices as they also include the promotion of training and re-training of adult, formerly displaced workers. Yet, there appears to be much less variation when it comes to policies aiming at the elevation of the status of apprentices and in linking apprenticeships to future career paths. These policies are in general actively supported by trade unions – provided that there is a meaningful trade union involvement in VET-governance.
6. With regard to the provision of quality training, trade unions in many of the G20 countries are concerned about the fact that apprentices often face limited access to supporting arrangements or lack of support through mentors, in particular outside the workplace. Even though these concerns have not been expressed across the board, unions see a serious need for improvement. The same applies to the need for linking quality apprenticeships to social protection. Being employed as an apprentice, according to the survey responses, does not automatically ensure payments of contributions by the employer and the apprentice to social security systems that are guaranteeing health insurance and pension schemes. Including apprenticeships in social protection schemes is indispensable in order to provide decent work conditions. With regard to the latter, it is also essential to address prevailing gender inequities within apprenticeship systems.