

WORK-BASED LEARNING IN ARMENIA

Work-based learning in the Armenian VET system

The system of formal vocational education and training (VET) in Armenia has two levels: preliminary vocational – craftsmanship – education (one to three years), and middle vocational education (two to five years). VET in Armenia is mostly school-based but since the introduction of modular training, practical instruction has increased considerably.

The only common work-based learning (WBL) element is the system of internships ('praktika'), which is compulsory according to state educational standards. Depending on the VET speciality and internship type, the duration varies from two weeks to three months.

The government has given high priority to the introduction of a WBL system, with a national working group created in 2018 to develop a concept paper on WBL, which was approved in June 2019 (including a road map for implementation). The paper identified three main forms of WBL: internships, company-based vocational schools, and dual/apprenticeship education. The objective is a step-by-step development: from the improvement of the internship scheme to implementation of dual/apprenticeship education.

Since 2018, 5 formal dual technical VET (TVET) courses for 90 apprentices have been implemented in 4 pilot VET colleges in cooperation with 21 private companies. In 2018, 3 short-term training programmes (lasting 4 to 6 months) were implemented with the involvement of 67 apprentices.

There are several pilots related to WBL/dual implementation supported by donors including the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ, a German development agency) – Private Sector Development and TVET South Caucasus –, and the European Union (EU) – SAY YES Skills for Jobs and Promoting Partnerships for Effective Work-Based Learning Opportunities in VET.

The role of social partners

The main structure of social partnership in VET at the national level is the National Council for VET Development (NCVETD), a tripartite consultative body acting in accordance with the principles of social partnership. The main purpose of the NCVETD is to provide advice to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports for decision making and elaboration of VET development programmes.

Social partners are involved in the 14 sectoral committees, where they provide expertise via a technical review of the draft state educational standards. Social partners are also involved in the college governance boards, the management body in every public VET institution.

A new Concept on Social Partnership in VET was endorsed by the NCVETD and approved by the education ministry in March 2018. Several changes

are proposed, including increasing the role of sectoral committees.

The main challenges

Although the WBL concept paper has been approved, its implementation is a challenge. The first step (improvement of internships) is being implemented but the road map is very ambitious.

The motivation of employers remains a challenge for several reasons: distrust of the quality of education provided by the VET institutions, organisational constraints in the company, and a lack of incentives (financial and/or non-financial).

The Labour Code does not envisage regulations for internships (status of the learners).

Some pilot programmes are underway or have recently finished. The pooling of pilot results is crucial in order to share the lessons learned and develop WBL.

KEY FIGURES

- **As of January 2019, there were 23 preliminary VET institutions (craftsmanship schools) and 80 middle VET institutions (colleges).**
- **In the academic year 2018/19, there were 28 442 learners in public VET institutions (46.3% were women).**
- **The vast majority of the learners (84.4%) were involved in secondary VET while the remaining were in post-secondary VET.**
- **In 2019, the VET budget represented 4.30% of the education budget and 0.75% of the total state budget.**
- **The EU is the principal donor supporting VET developments in Armenia. The systemic reforms of the Armenian VET system are implemented in the framework of the Better Skills for Better Jobs programme that is funded through EU budget support (Sector Reform Contract in the Employment and VET Sectors – total value: EUR 15 million).**

The practical training implemented at the companies is still not effective enough. The motivation of employers to offer their sites for apprenticeships is also low.

How does cooperation between learning venues work?

Cooperation is improving. In recent years, numerous partnerships between VET institutions and private companies, including large ones, have been established.

Employers are now more involved in curricula development, and in teaching and assessment processes.

According to the legal requirements for organisation of any type of internship, a contract is signed between the VET institution and the company.

The employers, trade unions and representatives of other institutions are involved in the college governance boards (up to 35% of the total number of members). Each board is responsible for such issues as election of the college director, approval of college development (business) plans and the budget as well as curricula and programmes.

2020 objectives

Based on the WBL concept paper, the objectives are to:

- implement the suggested improvements to internships (outcomes of 2019 work);
- elaborate on the principles and conditions of financial and fiscal activities of the WBL from 'real' companies (physically) adjacent to VET institutions (feasibility study);

- design mechanisms and procedures for training teachers involved in the delivery of WBL;
- develop WBL internal and external quality assurance systems in VET institutions, including standards for determining and assessing teaching outcomes in the workplace.

The latest developments

In June 2019, the National Council for VET Development approved the WBL concept paper, a policy framework necessary for the development of WBL in Armenia. A road map is attached to the concept paper that includes activities with the aim of WBL effective implementation from 2019 to 2025.

Work was carried out to improve internships in the VET system: internship organisation and an assessment guide for improvement and modernisation was introduced for the milk and dairy products technology speciality.

Capacity development is underway for VET providers and employers in two regions to establish effective partnership design and pilot the WBL element in VET for two agricultural occupations: veterinarian and milk technologist.

Short-term courses in milk and dairy technology, with a strong WBL element, were designed, piloted and provided to young people and adults in target regions.

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WORK-BASED LEARNING IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

Learning Opportunities in VET was launched. The Strategic Development Agency is implementing the project, which is due to run until April 2021.

The project aims to pilot the WBL model in agricultural VET in the Syunik and Lori regions of Armenia. The project will also support Goris and Stepanavan State Agricultural Colleges in strengthening the partnership with the private sector by adopting WBL in veterinary and milk and dairy technology specialities.

The following outcomes have been achieved so far:

- revision of detailed education plan and curricula;
- elaboration of practical workplace training modules based on the WBL model for formal veterinary and milk and dairy technology specialities, in line with educational standards;
- introduction of a guide for organisation of WBL for the two target VET specialities.

