

WORK-BASED LEARNING IN BELARUS

Work-based learning in the Belarusian VET system

The English term 'work-based learning' has no direct equivalent in Belarusian. The terms 'in-service training' (an integral part of the education process when implementing technical vocational education, training, retraining and advanced training of workers) and 'practice' (an integral part of education programmes for secondary specialised education (SSE)) are used to designate practical training aimed at the formation and improvement of students' professional skills.

In-service training (at the level of technical vocational education) consists of initial, main and final periods. The formation of basic professional knowledge, abilities and skills of students is carried out in the initial period of in-service training. The professional knowledge, skills and abilities of students deepen and expand in the main period of in-service training. Both the initial and main periods can be carried out in training workshops, educational farms, resource centres, training grounds, other structural subdivisions of educational institutions, and in organisations, including study places of these organisations. In-service training encompasses at least 40% of the total duration of the education programme. Approximately 70% of students enrolled in in-service training in companies have paid jobs.

Practice training is divided into educational and in-service (split again into technological and pre-diploma) training at the level of SSE. The educational practice can be carried out in training workshops, educational farms, training and experimental sites, other structural subdivisions of educational institutions and other organisations. To teach students the skills of working on modern equipment using the latest technologies and materials, the educational practice or part thereof can be organised in the resource centre. The technological practice is carried out in organisations and in training workshops and facilities of education institutions that produce commercial products using manufacturing technology that meets the requirements of the practice curriculum. The pre-diploma practice is carried out, as a rule, in organisations where the graduate will work in future.

The in-service training and practice for students is conducted under the guidance of the education institutions' teachers and trainers. Company employees provide additional guidance when conducting hands-on training.

The role of social partners

In Belarus, the main social partnership body is the National Council on Labour and Social Issues. Representatives of economic sectors and the private sector are involved in the work to determine the vocational education and training (VET) programmes and quality requirements.

The National Council for the Development of the Qualifications System (NCDQS) was created to ensure the implementation of the Strategy for Improving the National Qualifications System (NQS). The NCDQS work includes determining the priorities and main tasks in the field of improving the NQS for the near future and the development of occupational standards. The members of the NCDQS are representatives of government bodies, state organisations, employers and trade unions.

Currently, there are 13 sector skills councils (SSC) in Belarus. Their work aims to identify promising areas for the development of labour activity in a specific sphere, the need for qualifications, and ensuring interaction between the education system and other stakeholders in the development of occupational standards. SSC members are representatives of state bodies, state organisations, employers, stakeholders in the education system and trade unions.

Example of cooperation: The State Employment Service of Minsk organises and conducts working meetings with

employers. The purpose of this service is to expand and diversify the range of employers cooperating with the employment service, to study specific conditions of labour organisation and production, to strengthen partnerships, and to assist in solving employment problems.

The main challenges

- Processes for interaction with businesses need to be developed and also require qualified personnel and adoption of relevant regulations.
- Most teachers have relatively little direct contact or cooperation with employers.
- Large companies can offer work places for in-service training but small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) lack resources, including qualified staff to take care of interns.
- Training in the workplace in real production conditions needs to be available in the first year.
- SMEs often face challenges in identifying and retaining highly qualified workers (particularly in sectors impacted by technological changes, such as information technology (IT)).
- Career (professional) guidance is not very effective and matching employers' needs and learners' skills is not always provided.

KEY FIGURES

- **There are 127 technical VET (TVET) institutions and 147 SSE institutions, of which 43 are affiliated to higher education institutions and 5 to the Republican Institute for Vocational Education (RIPO). Out of all the institutions, 13 SSE institutions are privately owned.**
- **During the 2019/20 academic year, 63 400 people studied in TVET institutions, and 112 500 people were trained in educational institutions implementing the SSE educational programmes.**
- **About 88% of TVET institutions implement VET educational programmes for adults.**
- **Overall, 89 TVET institutions provide pre-vocational and vocational training for learners at general secondary education institutions at their own facilities.**
- **Over the past five years, enrolment numbers have been falling in both TVET and SSE, as well as in higher education.**

BELARUS

An efficient and quality VET system relies on good partnerships between business and VET providers. In Belarus, the interaction between VET institutions, employers and representatives of public organisations and other interested institutions takes different forms.

How does cooperation between learning venues work?

- Companies and VET institutions arrange joint workshops, training courses and masterclasses for VET trainers and teachers of special disciplines, focusing on issues related to working with modern materials and equipment.
- Specialists from companies participate in the final assessment of graduates.
- Social partners are involved in the planning process.
- Various organisations collaborate to develop educational standards and curricula documentation and improve the material and technical base.
- Employers provide places for in-service training and practice for students.
- Employers contribute by providing traineeships for teachers.
- VET providers perform self-tests, including a comprehensive analysis of educational activities. They involve stakeholders in the follow-up of educational activities based on feedback surveys from students, parents, employees, employers and other bodies on the effectiveness of educational programmes. Feedback is used to improve the educational process.
- SMEs are able to enter into direct agreements with a VET institution to request graduates and to benefit from graduate placement programmes.

Looking at the future

The priority areas for the education system are as follows:

- development of mechanisms for the cooperation of educational institutions, public authorities and employers;

- digital transformation of vocational education;
- alignment of the list of occupations and specialities with the current structure of types of economic activity;
- improvement of career guidance activities;
- increasing the attractiveness of VET;
- development of professional workplace culture, as well as social and personal competences of young people.

The latest developments

- The approved Education and Youth Policy for 2016–20, with the fourth subprogramme Development of the System of Technical Vocational and Secondary Specialised Education, includes the improvement of training quality. Currently, the Education and Youth Policy for 2021–25 is being developed.
- A strategy for improving the NQS was approved in 2018. It aims to provide the NQS with a number of new elements, such as the National Qualifications Framework, the Sectoral Qualifications Council and occupational standards.
- At regional level, a network of 50 leading resource centres has been created with a view to improving the quality of VET. The centres are equipped with modern tools and innovative equipment. Cooperation on pedagogical methods between centres is favoured and they are reference centres for WorldSkills.

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WORLD SKILLS BELARUS

Every two years, the WorldSkills Competition (WSC) is the world's largest professional education event. In 2014, Belarus joined WorldSkills International. Participating in WSC is the opportunity to share educational approaches and methods of work, and to measure global occupational, educational and technical standards. It is also a way to promote VET. At national level, it creates cooperation between stakeholders. The Belarusian team includes representatives from the leading Belarusian enterprises, the VET system and higher education. As the national operator of WorldSkills International, RIPO selects and trains the best young workers, trainees and students to participate in the WSC. From championship to championship, the number of skills in which the Belarusian team participates is growing: the team performed in 15 skills in 2015 (São Paulo), in 27 skills in 2017 (Abu Dhabi) and in 33 skills in 2019 (Kazan).

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