

WORK-BASED LEARNING IN GEORGIA

Work-based learning in the Georgian VET system

The vocational education and training (VET) reform implemented in the last decade in Georgia was aimed at supporting socio-economic development and poverty reduction, and improving the VET provision to meet the requirements of the labour market.

In all VET educational programmes, 40% of provision is compulsory practice. Apart from school-based VET, in recent years, work-based learning (WBL) and dual education have gained a lot of attention. While WBL is mainly a learning concept that integrates theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience, dual VET, which is the most integrated form of WBL and particularly responsive to the job market, goes much beyond the design of learning processes and is particularly dependent on systemic cooperation between the state, business sector and civil society. The introduction of dual education programmes began in 2016, significantly enhancing the employment and self-employment opportunities of VET graduates. At the same time, modularisation of VET programmes together with competence-based teaching and assessment are being introduced throughout the national VET system.

As part of its Private Sector Development Programme in the South Caucasus, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ, a German development agency) has supported the introduction of dual education programmes in the wine, tourism and construction sectors.

The role of social partners

The National VET Council has been the main consultative body on VET policy. It consists of representatives of government, social partners and civil society organisations. The work of the Council was suspended in 2019 with a view to identifying new and more effective modus operandi to engage social partners on VET policy dialogue.

Social partners participate in the management of VET colleges through supervisory boards. At the local level, industry is expected to be more involved in VET provision, by offering WBL/dual type apprenticeship provision, organised in partnership with enterprises and VET institutions. Sector bodies are assumed to have a potentially important intermediary role to play in the implementation of this approach. Social partners are also involved in the validation of occupational and educational standards through sectoral committees.

All programmes implemented since 2019 are modular and are based on the framework documents and educational standards that were developed with the involvement of employers.

The main challenges

To strengthen public-private cooperation, specific measures have been implemented in the course of the ongoing VET reform. However, there are several challenges on how to scale up dual programmes that will promote employment rates and growth of entrepreneurship. Therefore, currently the share of dual programmes in VET provision remains very low in relation to other types of programmes.

The lack of representatives of regional enterprises in sectoral associations is an obstacle to expanding public-private partnerships beyond the capital and large cities.

Although small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent 99.7% of Georgian companies, their capacity to host learners or to be engaged in the VET system remains very weak. They need more support and advice on how to be more involved.

Finally, low attractiveness of VET among the population remains a big challenge for expanding WBL.

KEY FIGURES

- In 2019, there were 100 VET providers, of which 72 were VET colleges (25 public and 47 private), 20 were higher education institutions (13 public and 7 private) and 8 were general education schools (1 public and 7 private). The public network covers all the regions of Georgia and the government is investing in expanding the network in the years to come. The biggest number of providers is concentrated in Tbilisi.
- In 2019, 30 programmes with a dual approach were implemented in 15 education institutions; 51 private companies were engaged in dual programmes; over 800 students were enrolled in dual education programmes from 2016 to 2019. In the 2018/19 academic year, 67 students completed dual programmes. It should be noted that the employment rate of dual programme graduates is higher than the average employment rate of vocational programme graduates; in particular, in 2018/19 the employment rate of 68% is 6% higher than the average employment rate of vocational programme graduates.
- Since 2019, all VET programmes are modular based; employers participate in the process of developing the programmes.

To support private sector engagement in VET, dual education programmes are being established in selected sectors and public–private partnership models are being developed.

How does cooperation between learning venues work?

There is a lack of experience and traditions of WBL: employers do not always consider training as part of their responsibilities and school–enterprise cooperation is underdeveloped. The role of sectoral intermediary organisations is crucial in enhancing exchange of experience and cooperation between hosting companies.

In the agriculture sector, admission rules have changed and a new alternative selection procedure of learners has been developed. Companies/farms providing WBL now select the learner together with the sectoral association and the college, which has increased the motivation of companies to become a WBL partner.

In accordance with the legal framework, the college has an annual contract with a VET teacher. For implementation of the dual education programmes, a specialist from the partner company is involved in the teaching process, but the VET institution neither takes part in the selection process nor has a contract with the teacher.

Looking at the future

In its Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017–21, the government has identified priorities that include aligning VET with the labour market needs. To achieve this goal, various actions need to be developed to encourage the improvement and implementation of WBL/dual education.

The introduction of dual education programmes in 2016 has increased the employment opportunities of learners (the majority of graduates being employed by the company in which they received their qualification).

To consolidate past and current achievements and to address future challenges, the legal framework including regulatory acts on WBL and the introduction of the new formal status of dual VET need to be amended with a view to extending WBL (improvement of internships, new sector qualifications, scaling up of dual programmes).

The latest developments

- There has been an increase in programmes implemented through dual or WBL approaches: from 23 in 2018 to 30 in 2019.
- New quality assurance procedures in line with European quality assurance mechanisms have been developed.
- Since 2019, all VET programmes are competence-based modular programmes. They were all developed with the involvement of employers and include a compulsory entrepreneurship module.
- To improve the quality of WBL/dual education, new procedures are being developed to grant a status of ‘learning enterprise’.
- In the academic year 2019/20, applicants were able to enrol in dual education programmes without professional testing (on the basis of a successful interview with a partner/private company).
- Since 2019, dual education programmes have been offered in new sectors: information technology and port logistics management.
- The government has launched and finances new short-term training and retraining programmes.

For information on our activities, jobs and tendering opportunities, please visit our website:

www.etf.europa.eu

© European Training Foundation, 2020

Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

SECTOR PRACTICE: AGRICULTURE

Sectoral associations are increasingly involved in VET, including in WBL/dual programmes. One example is the Georgian Farmers’ Association that is piloting a donor-supported programme (United Nations Development Programme and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) to introduce WBL in agriculture.

The association has provided support to the companies – in selecting learners (definition of a selection method, development of selection guidelines, interviews with applicants), identifying profiles for instructors, and training instructors and teachers. Capacity building and financial support for SMEs in the introduction of WBL has been provided.

It is also notable that the Georgian Farmers’ Association and other agrarian associations have initiated the establishment of a sector skills organisation called Agro-Duo, which will be the leading organisation in the development of agricultural qualifications.

