

4 Governance and framework for social partners' involvement in vocational education and training

This chapter focuses on measures that aim to reduce fragmentation and foster co-ordination in vocational education and training (VET) systems. Co-ordination of VET policies represents a challenge in many countries as different bodies and levels of governance can be responsible for VET. The chapter looks at how social partners, including employers and sometimes trade unions, can be involved at different levels where decisions about VET are taken, and provide their input on various aspects of VET.

Co-ordinating VET policies

A successful vocational education and training (VET) system needs strong individual vocational programmes. But such programmes, in isolation, are not enough. The vocational system also needs to be internally coherent, with clear relationships between different VET programmes and the wider education and training system, with clear routes of transfer and progression between vocational training and general education programmes. In addition, the vocational system needs to fit with wider social and economic requirements. This coherence and internal logic also needs to be transparent to all the stakeholders in the system. That will allow individuals to make informed choices, with an eye not only on immediate outcomes, but also on progress from one VET programme to another and into the labour market. It will also help employers to understand and relate to the different vocational programmes, which can increase their trust in the system and their willingness to engage in the design and delivery of VET.

The issue of co-ordination between various decision makers may potentially represent a challenge in Brazil as VET schools are run by a range of bodies including the federal government, states, municipalities, private providers from Sistema S, and other private providers (Itaú Educação e Trabalho, 2021^[11]). Expansion of initial upper secondary VET would also require building a framework for social partners to advise on various aspects on VET policy.

In this report, the term ‘social partners’ designates both employers and trade unions, recognising that the composition of social partners differ by countries. In many countries, employees’ representatives are involved in consultations about VET. Their point of view may differ from that of employers as they represent employees’ interests. So for example, they may be in favour of a broader VET curriculum that provides individuals with strong general skills facilitating individual mobility on the labour market. Employers, on the other hand, may be more interested in provision of employer-specific skills that make individuals job-ready but which cannot be readily applied to another employer. The role of trade unions in the VET system depends very much on their organisation and their broader role in policy-making in individual countries.

Co-ordination across different levels of governance

The governance of VET is often complex, reflecting the fact that VET caters to different populations, such as young people in schools and adults returning to education, and spans across a range of sectors. Consequently, responsibility for VET can be spread across different bodies and levels of governance.

Different ministries can be vested with different responsibility for VET. For example, in Israel responsibility for most adult vocational education and training rests with the Ministry of Labour, responsibilities at upper secondary and post-secondary level are shared between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. In addition, the Ministries of Health, Tourism, and Defence all have significant responsibilities regarding training in their respective sectors. Division of responsibilities can be a challenge if different provisions duplicate each other and are poorly connected. One effect of such fragmentation is that vocational programmes may be dead-ends, when students moving across programmes run by various ministries find it difficult to have their qualifications recognised and build on knowledge and experience acquired previously (Kuczera, Bastianić and Field, 2018^[21]). Responsibility for VET can also be spread across different levels of governance, such as the national level, regions, municipalities and individual institutions. The exact distribution of responsibility depends on the administrative structure of the country. Typically, in countries with devolved administrations such as Germany, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and United States, sub-national units retain major responsibility for education.

Several strategies are used to reduce fragmentation in the VET system. Some countries do so by vesting one institution with overarching responsibility over VET. In Viet Nam, some parts of the VET system were managed by the Ministry of Education and Training, while others were supervised by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs. Recognising challenges resulting from shared responsibility the legislation simplified the existing landscape and consolidated most responsibilities for the VET system under the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (Kis, 2017^[31]). In a federal context, a number of OECD

countries balance decentralisation with strong federal institutions in the domain of vocational education and training. This is clearly visible for example in the federal management of the VET system in Switzerland, and in the co-ordination role of the Commonwealth government in Australia. On the other hand, Canada's Red Seal Program is managed by a voluntary intergovernmental partnership, which facilitates labour mobility and harmonization of apprenticeship training across provinces and territories through common standards and examinations. Co-ordination at the national level ensures that VET qualifications are recognised country-wide and VET graduates are employable in their field across the country. In Switzerland, the establishment of federal diplomas for the police and fire service workers (who are employed locally by the cantons) ensures that they can work in any canton (Fazekas and Field, 2013^[4]). Some countries ensure that VET is provided efficiently by fostering collaboration between different bodies and levels, and sometimes create an independent body which role is to mediate and represent interests of various stakeholders (Box 4.1). Different measures are not exclusive, i.e. a country may vest one level of governance (e.g. federal authority) with more responsibilities and at the same time create independent bodies facilitating collaboration.

Box 4.1. Bodies and mechanisms facilitating collaboration

Germany

In the Federal Republic of Germany responsibility for the education system is divided between the Federation and sub national units - the Länder. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*, BMBF) has overall responsibility for VET strategy. Individual qualifications are endorsed by specialised ministries (often the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Technology), but need the agreement of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Hoeckel and Schwartz, 2010^[5]).

The Federation is also responsible for in-company vocational training, and the Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Länder are responsible for vocational education in schools. Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs in the Länder organise, plan, manage and supervise the entire school system. They design the school curricula, train and pay the teachers and are responsible for legal supervision of the Chambers (*Rechtsaufsicht*). Due to this primary responsibility of the Länder there is substantial variation across states with regard to the organisation and content of teaching in the school part of the dual system.

For vocational education and training within the dual system (apprenticeship), which takes place in cooperation between school and company, the Federation and the Länder agree on fundamental issues and in particular on training rules and regulations for the learning locations. To facilitate co-ordination between the federal government and Länder, a Coordinating Committee for Vocational Education and Training has been set up. This committee deals with issues relating to the co-ordination of in-company vocational training and vocational education in schools in recognised occupations requiring formal training (*anerkannte Ausbildungsberufe*) under Federal law (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, 2018^[6]).

The Netherlands

The Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market (*Samenwerking Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven*, SBB) was created in in 2012 to facilitate interactions among different stakeholders involved in the VET. SBB involves all major players such as: the MBO Raad (association of all VET and adult education institutions), the AOB (largest teachers' union in the Netherlands), the NRTO (umbrella organisation for private education institutions), major lobbying organisations, employer associations, and major labour unions (SBB, 2021^[7]; Renold et al., 2016^[8]).

The SBB is organised into eight sectoral chambers responsible for workplace learning quality and keeping VET qualifications up to date in their own sector. Each chamber is supported by social partners. The SBB advises the Minister of Education on topics related to the VET such as skill needs, qualification and examination structures. It is also responsible for the accreditation of training firms and has a say in the design of the curriculum (SBB, 2021^[7]).

Qualification files are the foundation of the Dutch VET curriculum as they set national education standards for all programmes. Each file describes competencies, skills, and knowledge provided and tested within each VET programme. The files also specify how each skills should be acquired (ECBO, 2016^[9]).

Malaysia

Malaysia has a complex VET landscape, with programmes governed by 11 ministries and delivered in around 1 300 private, public and state government VET institutions. In an effort to bring more co-ordination into this scattered landscape, a national TVET Council (MTVET) was set up at the end of 2020.

The MTVET is the highest decision-making body related to the strategic direction of VET in Malaysia, and is responsible for improving the co-ordination in the system through public and private stakeholder involvement. The MTVET also serves as a platform for the government to empower VET in meeting the needs of the industry. Three strategic thrusts have been defined for this empowerment: integrated and co-ordinated governance, industry-driven VET, and VET shaping the future. These are supported by six key initiatives: formulating sustainable financing models; developing policies to encourage industry participation; creating a national VET branding plan; establishing a VET collaboration hub; establishing VET programme policies; and developing a one-stop VET data centre.

Good practice examples of stakeholder engagement already exist in Malaysia. A number of institutions have been successful in establishing direct links with business, such as the Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC), which is dedicated to meet the immediate human resource needs of the business community and whose graduates exhibit an employability rate close to 100%. Similarly, Polytechnic and Community Colleges have regular engagement with industries through Industry Advisory Councils (IAC), and have developed work-based-learning and mobility programmes aimed at connecting lecturers and students with industry. (OECD, 2021^[10])

Costa Rica

Costa Rica created the National Integrated System of Technical Education for Competitiveness (SINETEC) to co-ordinate and harmonise VET provided by different bodies. SINETEC was conceived as a body within MEP designed to integrate the different aspects of technical education. SINETEC is, on paper, composed of educational institutions both from the public and private sectors along with the social partners. Its objectives are: to co-ordinate the activity of training institutions and meet the needs of the productive sector; to promote technical education; to collaborate in the attraction of high-tech investment; and to advise the government in the field of technical education. However, some stakeholders have already suggested the revival of this institution as its impact is limited. The Costa Rica example shows that creation of a co-ordination institution is not enough. Institutions co-ordinating actions of various stakeholders should seek their active engagement and have a clearly defined role (Álvarez-Galván, 2015^[11]).

Local autonomy

Co-ordination of VET policies should not eliminate local and school autonomy in some aspects of VET. Decentralisation may lead to positive outcomes by giving inspired individuals enough space for action and development of new ideas. It may foster an innovative and flexible approach, which adapts to the needs of local communities and individual employers, and in the public policy space, allows room for local innovation, entrepreneurial approaches and diverse voices in the debate. Local autonomy is particularly important in large and diverse countries such as Brazil, as it is highly unlikely that one set of rules and standards would suit all localities. For example, evidence shows that the ambitious programmes launched by the Brazilian government to retrain workers for employment in sectors with growing employment work best when they address local labour needs (OECD, 2020^[12]). While these programmes mainly target adults, similar conclusions can be drawn in relation to programmes for young people (OECD, 2020^[12]).

However, decentralisation typically results in a lot of variation if the outcomes are very much dependent on individuals. The objective is thus to ensure co-ordination of various provisions, typically organised at the national or regional level, while allowing some degree of innovation and flexibility at the local level. VET programmes typically aim to achieve objectives and follow standards defined at the national level. The national guidance and quality control ensures all VET schools in the country meet at least the required minimum. Ideally, national prerogatives are combined with local freedom whereby schools can often adapt the content to the local labour markets. Local freedom also allows institutions to go beyond the required minimum and set up strong partnerships with local employers. For example, in Norway schools in areas with economic activities related to petrol extractions, propose VET programmes preparing for the related jobs.

Systematically involving social partners

Why involvement of social partners is important

The vocational training system has to respond to the needs and interests of multiple stakeholders, employers in particular, as well as other labour market actors such as trade unions, so that training yields the right skills for employers, and supports individuals over a lifetime career. The engagement of social partners ensures that the skillsets embodied in vocational qualifications reflect occupational needs, and that the mix of training provision reflects the demand for jobs of different types. At the local level, good relationships between the vocational training system and social partners help to facilitate work placements for vocational students (see Chapter 3). Looked at across countries, VET systems therefore maintain a diverse range of bodies to maintain these links at national, regional and sectoral levels. At the national level, over-arching VET bodies engage the social partners, and typically serve the function of drawing together different ministries with VET responsibilities and other relevant stakeholders.

Social partners' involvement can be described as a continuum between two extremes: social partners run education and training which is provided entirely on-the-job, and schools keep the full responsibility for vocational education and training with no input from social partners. The majority of initial VET programmes fall somewhere in between. Social partners' engagement would typically be strong in apprenticeship systems whereas in school based VET it would be less prominent.

A study by Renold et al. (2016^[8]) argues that collaboration between public authorities responsible for education and training and social partners yields optimal outcomes, as all the involved parties benefit. Education authorities are best placed to teach as they have access to teachers, curriculum designers, and students. Employers, on the other hand, possess the latest equipment and technology and the most qualified trainers, and can provide students with real world experience (Renold et al., 2016^[8]).

Involvement of social partners in VET policy yields many benefits. The engagement of social partners in VET systems helps to improve labour market outcomes for students and helps to meet the skill needs of employers. Strong VET systems, drawing on social partner engagement, yield benefits to employers by increasing the pool of qualified labour, and benefit students by facilitating their transition to skilled employment (Chapter 3 discusses in more detail benefits associated with work-based learning). In Sweden, a study looking at the provision of work placements in upper secondary VET shows that a strong partnership between the school and local councils improves outcomes from VET (Lundin, 2016^[13]). The collective involvement of social partners in VET as a valuable spin-off, can encourage innovation in firms. Social partners are able to reflect upon, and share information, new technologies, production and training methods while updating the components of VET programmes. This effect is stronger for small firms, implying there is a transition of knowledge and innovation from larger companies to smaller ones (Rupietta and Backes-Gellner, 2017^[14]).

The role played by social partners and areas of their involvement

A strong VET system involves social partners at all levels where decisions about VET are taken. How the division of responsibility over VET is shared across different bodies depends on individual countries. Social partner engagement occurs at national level, for example in agreeing the main policy features of the VET system: at local and regional level, for example in handling arrangements for work placements. Table 4.1 shows the levels at which social partners are involved across selected OECD countries. Denmark and Finland, like Sweden, maintain arrangements for engaging social partners with individual institutions.

Social partners are often organised by sectors and decide or advise on corresponding VET programmes, for example, social partners representing the construction sector provide input in the design of VET programmes in construction. Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) in South Africa provide an example of such sectoral bodies (see Box 4.2).

Table 4.1. The levels at which there exists an institutional framework for social partner engagement (2007 data)

	National	Regional	Institution/Local
Austria	x	x	
Denmark	x		x
Finland	x		x
Germany: apprenticeship	x	x	
Germany: school based VET		x	
Norway	x	x	
Sweden	x		x
Switzerland	x		

Note: The framework for social partners' involvement at the institution level refers to formalised collaboration between institutions and companies at local level. It does not include individual companies providing work placements to students. For example, in Denmark it refers to Local Trade Committees that are set at the institution level.

Source: The OECD International Survey of VET Systems, 2007 – countries' responses (unpublished); Tritscher-Archan, S. (2016^[15]), Vocational education and training in Europe – Austria, Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports, http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2016/2016_CR_AT.pdf; Andersen, O. and K. Kruse (2016^[16]), "Vocational education and training in Europe – Denmark.", Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports, <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/denmark-vet-europe-country-report-2016>; Protsch, P. and H. Solga (2016^[17]), "The social stratification of the German VET system", *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 29/6, pp. 637-661, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2015.1024643>.

Box 4.2. Sectoral bodies in South Africa

Following the 1998 Skills Development Act, 23 SETAs were created in 2000, each with their own clearly defined sectors. The members of SETAs represent organised labour and employers, and relevant government departments. After the responsibility for SETAs was transferred from the Department of Labour to the Department for Higher Education and Training, the number of SETAs was reduced to 21 in 2011.

According to the (amended) Skills Development Act, the main functions of SETAs include:

- Analysing skill needs in the sectors through Sector Skills Plans.
- Implementing the Sector Skills Plan by establishing learning programmes (including VET programmes), approving employers' workplace skills plans and annual training reports, allocating grants to employers, education and training providers (including VET institutions) and workers, monitoring education and training.
- Promoting learning programmes (including identifying workplaces for practical work experience and supporting the development of learning) and registering agreements for learning programmes.
- Collecting and disbursing the skills development levy.
- Liaising with the National Skills Authority, the public employment service, education bodies, provincial skills development forums, and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations.

Source: OECD (2019^[18]), *Community Education and Training in South Africa*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264312302-en>.

The influence of social partners can be just advisory or consultative, or alternatively can involve full decision-making. In many apprenticeship systems social partners decide on occupational qualifications, corresponding skills, assessment requirements and methods, and the content and delivery of work placements (e.g. in countries such as Austria, Denmark, Germany, Norway and Switzerland). Norway has reinforced the role of social partners in the apprenticeship system by promoting their role from advisory to decision making in relation to the content of training taking place in companies (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017^[19]). The high level of involvement of the social partners reflects the central role of the employer in apprenticeship: relative to other forms of vocational training, employers therefore have more obligations but also more control.

VET systems engage the social partners in different ways and at different levels (see Table 4.1). Effective arrangements should allow social partners to provide their input into VET regularly, in a timely manner, and in all relevant areas. Box 4.3 describes the form of social partner involvement in Denmark, Norway, South Africa and Sweden. In the four countries, systematic arrangements give the social partners an advisory or decisive role either at national, regional, sectoral or institution level.

Box 4.3. Involvement of social partners in VET

Denmark

National level: Advisory

The national advisory council on vocational upper secondary education and training (*Rådet for de grundlæggende Erhvervsrettede Uddannelser*) meets 8-10 times a year. Among others, it advises the ministry on the establishment of new VET programmes and changes in existing ones, VET programmes to be offered in apprenticeship centers, which VET schools should be approved to offer specific VET programmes. The council includes representatives of the social partners, local governments and regional organisations, schools, teachers, and student associations. There are 31 representatives from the employer and employee organisations in the council (Undervisnings Ministeriet, 2018^[20]).

National level: Decision making

Around 50 national trade committees (*faglige udvalg*) are responsible for 106 upper secondary VET programmes, and are composed of and funded by employer and employee organisations. Trade committees update existing courses and propose new ones, define learning objectives and final examination standards; decide on the duration of the programme, and the ratio between college-based teaching and practical work in an enterprise; approve enterprises as qualified training establishments and rule on conflicts which may develop between apprentices and the enterprise providing practical training; issue journeyman's certificates in terms of content, assessment and the actual holding of examinations (Andersen and Kruse, 2016^[16]).

Institution level: Advisory

Each vocational college (providing school-based education and training) works with at least one local training committee that includes representatives of local employers and employees appointed by national trade committees, and representatives of staff, management and students appointed by colleges. Local training committees work closely with colleges to adapt the content of VET programmes to local needs, strengthen contacts between the college and local employers, and support colleges with the delivery of programmes, for example by securing work placements for students. They also serve as a link between local and national levels, ensuring that national committees have a good overview of local circumstances and that local policy is aligned with national objectives. For example, they assist and advise national trade committees in approving local enterprises as qualified training establishments and in mediating conflicts between apprentices and enterprises (Andersen and Kruse, 2016^[16]). The National Committees can hand over obligations to the local trade committees if they are better taken care of at the local level.

Norway

National level: Decision making

At the national level, Norway has a National Council for VET (*Samarbeidsrådet for yrkesopplæring*) and nine Vocational Training Councils (*Faglige råd*), one for each VET programmes, where social partners are represented. These bodies have an advisory role in respect of the first two school-based years of apprenticeships but a decisive role in the last two work-based years of apprenticeships. The government has to take into account the proposals of the social partners unless they are against the law or involve a substantial increase in public spending.

Regional (county) level: Advisory

Social partners sit on 19 Vocational Training Boards (*Yrkesopplæringsnemnda*), one for each county. They provide advice on quality, career guidance, regional development and the provision in the county to meet local labour market needs (Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU), 2016^[21]). County authorities are also responsible for approving enterprises that provide apprenticeship training. While counties are free to develop their own approval procedures, they typically involve social partners from the relevant sector in the process.

South Africa**National level: Advisory**

The National Skills Authority (NSA) is a statutory body that was first established in 1999 in terms of Chapter 2 of the Skills Development Act 1998. The NSA brings together representatives from the state, business, labour, community, education and training providers, and employment services. Its role is to advise the minister on skills-related topics, including the VET system, as well as to liaise with the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs, Box 4.2). Its strategic objectives include among others: Provide advice on the National Skills Development Policies to the minister and make inputs in other policy development process related to the Department for Higher Education and Training; Review Skills development legislative framework to support integration of education and training and the national priorities of government; Monitor and evaluate the work of the SETAs and the implementation of the National Skills Development Strategy; Support post-school education and training to realise national priorities. (National Skills Authority, 2021^[22]).

Sweden**National: Advisory**

The Swedish education system has 18 national upper secondary programmes of which 12 are vocational, all offered either as a school-based programme, or as an apprenticeship. Since 2007, Sweden has developed a permanent national framework for social partners' involvement. In 2010, programme councils for each national upper secondary VET programme were created (*Statens offentliga utredningar (SOU)*, 2015^[23]). Thirteen sectoral National Programme Councils (*nationella programråd*) concern themselves with the 12 national vocational programmes. Each council has 8-10 members representing industry, social partners, and sometimes national and regional authorities, and meets around six times a year (Ministry of Education Sweden, 2018^[24]). Councils advise the National Agency for Education (the government agency that manages, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, the Swedish school system for youth and adults, including upper secondary VET) on the quality, content and organisation of upper secondary VET for youth and adults, aiming to match VET provision to labour market needs. The councils advise on proposals for new subjects or courses submitted by the National Agency, which may lead to modification of the proposals, or possibly even their abandonment (Equavet, n.d.^[25]).

Local: Advisory

Schools are expected to set up collaborative arrangements with one or more Local Programme Councils (*lokala programråd*) in areas corresponding to the VET programmes available in the school. Local Councils are expected to include representatives from local working life, other stakeholders and social partners, and their role is to advise schools on how to adjust VET programmes to local labour market needs and support VET provision, for example, by finding work placements for students. But the influence of local councils varies greatly (Lundin, 2016^[13]; *Statens offentliga utredningar (SOU)*, 2015^[23]). Local councils are not legally regulated (Ministry of Education Sweden, 2018^[24]), and schools are free to organise local councils to fit their needs, so that there is much variation in the quality of local partnerships.

The information provided in Box 4.3 shows that social partners have a say on various aspects of VET. A study by Renold et al., (2016_[8]) explores links between social partners' engagements in VET and youth employment outcomes in selected countries. It distinguishes three areas of social partners' involvement:

- curriculum design phase which is about establishing qualifications and examinations standards and setting up quality requirements for VET programmes
- curriculum application which concerns itself with the delivery of the curriculum including provision of training, cost sharing, administration of exams
- and finally there is a curriculum feedback phase during which qualifications are updated.

According to country experts and practitioners involvement of employers in the curriculum design is the most important followed by their engagement in the curriculum application and providing feedback.

The Netherlands and Korea provide contrasting examples of countries with regards to social partners' role in the development of curricula. In the Netherlands, firms and VET schools work together to design a curriculum that fits the needs of the labour market. Skills and knowledge that individual VET programmes should develop in students are described in qualification files. The qualification files have to be updated every four years. Since 2012 their efforts are co-ordinated by the SBB (see Box 3.4 in Chapter 3), a platform facilitating interaction among different stakeholders (Renold et al., 2016_[8]). In Korea, involvement of social partners is more limited. Schools are relatively free to create the VET part of the curricula, mostly according to local industry demands. Officially, industrial groups and employers are not involved in curriculum design (Renold et al., 2016_[8]), but they might influence the content through negotiations with the VET high schools (Kuczera, Kis and Wurzburg, 2009_[26]). There is no formal process for VET high school curriculum updating since it is all done in-school.

In Switzerland, the role of different stakeholders in defining VET qualifications and standards of VET programmes is in fact legally defined (Box 4.4).

Box 4.4. VET ordinances and training plans – VET legal basis in Switzerland

The legal basis for each VET programme in Switzerland can be found in VET ordinances (*Berufsbildungsverordnungen*) issued by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET). These are prepared through the joint efforts of the Confederation, the cantons and the corresponding professional organisations. VET ordinances cover the legally relevant aspects applying to a given occupation: they define the occupational profile, the content of training, the criteria that qualified workers in the occupation must meet, the maximum number of students, and qualification procedures.

All VET ordinances provide for the creation of a Commission for Quality and Development for the given occupation or occupational group. Each Commission is composed of members representing all of the VET partners (Confederation, cantons and professional organisations). Their role is to initiate and adapt training plans for specific VET programmes to the current needs of the labour market. If necessary, the commissions can submit a request to OPET to change the VET ordinance.

Training plans (*Bildungspläne*) form the basis for the vocational teaching concept used for VET programmes. They are used to structure vocational education and training courses and guide vocational teachers and trainers in their work. They define not only the technical but also social and personal skills a student must acquire, the content of education (lessons at vocational schools, range of practical skills taught at the host company and content of industry courses) and specify the respective roles of vocational school, host company and industry training centre in providing these competencies. They also define the process of assessment (Hoeckel, Field and Grubb, 2009_[27]).

Source: Hoeckel, K., S. Field and W. Grubb (2009_[27]), *OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training: A Learning for Jobs Review of Switzerland 2009*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264113985-en>.

Organisation of employers more broadly

It is easier to engage employers when organised structures, such as employer associations or chambers, exist. Germany has a network of Chambers of Commerce and Industry that represent employers from different sectors. The membership is compulsory as all registered companies in industry, commerce or service are required by law to be a member of one of the Chambers. The Chambers among other things play a key role in provision of VET. They are responsible for providing advisory services to participating companies and supervising company-based training. The Chambers also register apprenticeship contracts, assess the suitability of training firms and monitor their training, assess the aptitude of VET trainers, provide advice to training firms and apprentices, and organise and carry out the final exams.

In some other countries, employers are less organised. This can pose a problem to policy makers as it may not be clear whom they should talk to. The United Kingdom addressed this issue by imposing an obligation on employers who wish to develop an apprenticeship qualification to work together. Employers' input into the definition of qualifications is managed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. The Institute is an employer-led organisation sponsored by the Department for Education, with an independent chair overseeing its work. This chair leads a board of employers, business leaders and their representatives to make sure the apprenticeships and technical products are of the highest quality. The Institute develops, approves, reviews and revises apprenticeships and technical qualifications with employers. A group of employers that wish to set up a new apprenticeship submits an occupation proposal to the Institute. Following the acceptance of the occupational proposal, the standards and assessment as well as funding plan are defined. They are then reviewed by an independent party (Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, 2021^[28]).

Conclusions

Some forms of co-ordination between different levels of governance and existing education and training systems is important to foster coherence and collaboration in the VET system, avoid fragmentation, and make the system easy to navigate for students, schools and employers. The issue of co-ordination between various decision-makers may potentially represent a challenge in Brazil as VET schools are run by a range of bodies, including the federal government, states, municipalities, private providers from Sistema S, and other private providers (Itaú Educação e Trabalho, 2021^[11]).

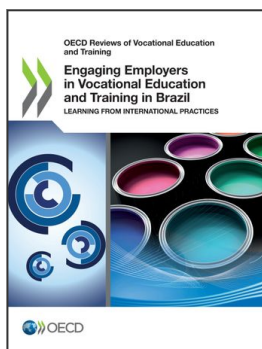
Local autonomy is particularly important in large and diverse countries such as Brazil, as it is highly unlikely that one set of rules and standards would suit all localities. Ideally, national/regional prerogatives are combined with local freedom whereby schools can often adapt the content to the local labour markets and student needs. Therefore, the objective should be to ensure co-ordination of various provisions, typically organised at the national or regional level, while allowing for innovation and flexibility at the local level.

Brazil may start with revising existing or creating new VET programmes of excellence through collaboration between selected schools and companies or Sistema S. Stimulating economic development in poorer regions can be one of the goals in setting up such centers of VET excellence. The initiative can be scaled up if successful. Some VET programmes are already run by employers (as part of Sistema S), and many of these programmes are associated with positive labour market outcomes. Involvement of Sistema S in discussions on how the current reform should be rolled out and how to ensure social partners are involved in provision of VET can help in ensuring the quality of VET.

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From:
Engaging Employers in Vocational Education and Training in Brazil
Learning from International Practices

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/d76a2fe6-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2022), "Governance and framework for social partners' involvement in vocational education and training", in *Engaging Employers in Vocational Education and Training in Brazil: Learning from International Practices*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/da8d7e38-en>

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