

KEY ELEMENTS OF QUALITY APPRENTICESHIPS

G20 Labour and Employment Ministers agreed in their meeting in Guadalajara to “Promote, and when necessary, strengthen quality apprenticeship systems that ensure high level of instruction and adequate remuneration and avoid taking advantage of lower salaries.” Quality apprenticeships have been considered by the G20 Task Force on Employment as one of the key policy tools to promote effective school-to-work transitions”.

Apprenticeships are a combination of on-the-job training and school-based education. In the G20 countries, there is not a single, standardized model of apprenticeships, but multiple and varied approaches to offer young people a combination of training and work experience.

In general, apprenticeship programmes may be understood as forms of vocational education and training that combine and alternate periods of theoretical classroom learning and practical training at a workplace. Training periods may be carried out on-the job or at school, depending on the design of the programme and the needs of companies. In some cases, school learning is given greater emphasis, in others, work experience, but all seek a suitable combination of both. Ideally, apprenticeships lead to a formal qualification recognised in the labour market.

Given the differences in apprenticeships and taking into consideration the diversity of national contexts in the G20 countries, the following characteristics are key elements that apprenticeship programmes may include in their design and implementation.

1. Key participants in apprenticeships

- a. Young people mostly, though other age groups may be included.
- b. Employers.
- c. Trade unions.
- d. Training and education institutions and vocational schools.
- e. National, regional and local governments.

2. Main objectives of apprenticeship programmes

- a. Provide workers with knowledge, skills and qualifications needed in a changing work environment.
- b. Avoid skill shortages, tackle skills mismatch and foster lifelong learning.
- c. Help employers raise the level of the workforce skills according to the particular needs of companies.
- d. Provide young people with qualifications facilitating their access to labour market and increasing labour market mobility.
- e. Reduce the incidence and duration of unemployment.
- f. Promote faster and more efficient school-to-work transitions.
- g. Help countries raise school enrolment rate and avoid school drop-outs.
- h. Support economic growth, competitiveness and productivity.
- i. Apprenticeships may be a stepping stone on pathways to satisfying rewarding careers.

3. Main beneficiaries

- a. Apprentices, young people that become skilled workers.
- b. Unemployed individuals who wish to acquire skills to reintegrate the labour market.
- c. Employers that find qualified workforce and loyal workers.
- d. The society as a whole through a better educated workforce, improved human capital, better skills, more employment.

4. **Rights of participants**

- a. Determine an adequate legal framework to regulate apprenticeships.
- b. Respect the ILO fundamental principles and rights at work.
- c. Facilitate social security schemes for apprentices.
- d. Provide occupational safety and health training and protection.
- e. Ensure equal access to apprenticeship programmes.
- f. Encourage the participation of women and disadvantaged youth and people with disabilities.

5. **Income/support for apprentices**

- a. Engage in a contractual relationship between the firm and the apprentice that ensures decent working conditions.
- b. Establish minimum wages/adequate remuneration levels for apprentices and ensure that apprentices receive the minimum legal level of remuneration.
- c. Remuneration may reflect low productivity of apprentices while in learning. However, it is fundamental to avoid misuse of apprenticeships as cheap labour.
- d. Apprentices should have the same benefits as those of other workers, i.e., full coverage of social security.

6. **Apprenticeship funding**

- a. Assumed largely by firms, depending on each context.
- b. Some financial support offered by government, which may include tax incentives and assistance for disadvantaged.
- c. In some cases, shared costs between employers, apprentices and governments.

7. **Eligible occupations for apprenticeship programmes**

- a. Many occupations may be suitable to develop apprenticeships.
- b. Apprenticeships have been commonly associated with manufacturing, construction and trades, but are increasingly being used in the services sector.
- c. Frequently apprenticeship programmes focus on occupations required by the labour market, helping to address skills shortages and mismatches, as well as to develop new industries.

8. **Appropriate education level to incorporate youth to apprenticeship programmes**

- a. Students, graduates or workers with a quality basic education.
- b. A comprehensive knowledge basis of skills and competences, including literacy and numeracy skills, is necessary before entering vocational training. Lifelong learning and career development are important.

9. **Key issues to ensuring labour market relevance of quality apprenticeship programmes**

- a. Fostering a timely review of programmes.
- b. Ensuring qualifications and skills provided match evolving labour market demands.
- c. Providing skills that facilitate occupational mobility of apprentices.
- d. Encouraging continuous training.
- e. Fostering close collaboration, consultation, alliance and dialogue among relevant stakeholders, especially training institutions, employers, labour organisations, business stakeholders and professional associations.
- f. Continuous review of occupations and skills within each occupation to ensure relevance of apprenticeship learning.
- g. Effective pathways for entry, as well as assurance of high quality trainers and training provision of on-the-job and off-the-job mentoring.

10. A good career guidance-apprenticeship relationship

- a. Career guidance should provide information on the opportunities and benefits of vocational alternatives to further learning, including apprenticeships.
- b. Access to high quality career guidance and support could improve transition from school to further training, study or work.
- c. Labour market information systems are valuable tools to assist youth to make informed decisions.

11. Improving skills through apprenticeships

- a. In general, all skills that require theory and practice are improved through apprenticeship programmes.
- b. Practical, technical and specialized skills are especially developed through apprenticeships.
- c. Apprenticeship programmes should take into consideration an appropriate balance between specific and transferable skills.
- d. Transversal skills (which require an integration of several fields of knowledge and attitudes towards problem solving) are better acquired when the individual is confronted with real situations at the workplace.
- e. Apprenticeships also reinforce core skills such as problem solving, teamwork, communication.

12. An active role of business and labour organisations

- a. Promote active support of all the relevant stakeholders, particularly labour and business organisations, for the development, implementation and continuous improvement of high quality apprenticeship programmes.
- b. Encourage participation of business and labour organisations in the definition of training programmes.
 - i. Proposals for the creation, design and update of programmes.
 - ii. Identification of needs of a particular sector to facilitate targeted programmes.
- c. Foster role of trade unions towards ensuring the welfare and the rights of the apprentices, as well as their occupational safety and health.

13. Apprenticeships and the informal/ unorganised sector

- a. Apprenticeships may be a way for workers to enter the formal sector.
- b. A training body or commission could assess and recognize skills, capabilities and competences acquired in a non-formal or non-traditional way.
- c. A commission or body should set apprenticeship standards and supervise them.

14. Encouraging entrepreneurship through apprenticeships

- a. Apprenticeship programmes could develop entrepreneurial skills among youth.
- b. Entrepreneurial competences may be directed towards sectors where self-employment is prevalent (services, trades).
- c. Business incubators could assist to develop entrepreneurship among youth.
 - i. Business incubators may require stronger support to provide a more stable environment to youth to complete their training, including an appropriate supervisor, mentoring and the collaboration with other key stakeholders to provide additional learning and monitoring.

15. Promoting domestic follow-up of apprenticeship programmes

- a. Promote the recognition and validation of training through national bodies (commissions, committees), with the involvement of social partners, that certify qualifications and competences.
- b. When necessary, strengthen data on labour market outcomes of apprenticeship programmes.
- c. Review progress involving key stakeholders, according to national contexts.

16. Other key elements of quality apprenticeships

- a. Continue exchanging information and best practices at sectoral, national and international levels.
- b. Provide opportunities for apprentices to develop further, e.g. to gain higher qualifications and degrees.
- c. Foster adaptability, efficiency and affordability of quality apprenticeships.
- d. Develop apprenticeships in SMEs and sector-based approaches.

The Task Force considers apprenticeship programmes to be an efficient way for enhancing workers skills shortages, addressing skills mismatches and reducing youth unemployment.

The Task Force considers there is scope, subject to national circumstances, for the G20 countries to address one or more of the key elements listed above to scale-up, strengthen and improve the quality of apprenticeship programmes, as well as the development of evaluation tools.

Ministers may wish to take account of the exchange of good practices on quality apprenticeships within the G20 Task Force and encourage further exchanges and follow up on this subject.

Individual countries could, on a voluntary basis, explore technical cooperation on quality apprenticeships.

Ministers may also wish to acknowledge the involvement of the social partners and encourage their efforts to foster agreements that promote and strengthen quality apprenticeships.