

Education and skills-based training are key to producing employable young people



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The business world praises Dual Vocational Training for aligning students' skills with the needs of companies.

Companies in Spain are coming around to the German educational method Dual Vocational Training. The system, which combines classes at a vocational school with on-the-ground

training, has been praised for aligning students' skills, knowledge, attitudes and values with the needs of companies. It can reduce the learning curve for new hires, help boost employability and increase business productivity.

These were the findings of IESE's [Education for Jobs Initiative](#), headed by [Jordi Canals](#). The Initiative's recent [report](#) with the leadership and talent think tank [enClave de Personas](#) surveyed 14 companies, mostly multinationals, operating in Spain. Collectively, they gave Dual Vocational Training a rating of 4.3 out of 5.

Despite this vote of confidence, the method, which is [widely established in Germany](#) and Austria, has a limited reach in Spain. Last year, over 45,000 Spanish students opted for the dual approach, but this represents less than 5% of the total number of students in vocational training. What's holding it back?

Difficulties in implementing vocational training in companies

The firms surveyed were generally positive about their ability to provide adequate personnel for the program and didn't find practical collaboration with the educational center particularly challenging — though teachers were sometimes criticized for not being up to date.

Yet it isn't so simple for trainees to subsequently enter and adapt to the workforce. Some organizations felt recent recruits would need further training — up to 12 weeks — before they could be transferred to real production environments due to initial training being insufficient.

Designing the training cycle can also be challenging. In theory, educational centers have the flexibility to design it jointly with companies. However, timetables don't always coincide with labor needs, and more adaptability is called for.

The selection of students is up to the center, and some companies commented that student quality was uneven. They also found they had to anticipate how many places they could supply by up to two years, which isn't always feasible.

Most challenging, from the companies' perspective, was guaranteeing specialization in training programs. Finding students with the correct specializations wasn't easy, and their knowledge was often out of date.

Beyond the nitty-gritty of the program itself is the elephant in the room: the fact that in many

industries, it remains difficult for vocational training graduates to access positions and job opportunities at the same rate as university graduates. Despite advances in vocational training and its importance in today's economy, prejudice still limits vocational graduates' potential and mobility.

Going forward, the authors highlight the need for a focus on greater equity in recognizing talent and skills, regardless of the educational path a candidate has taken to get there.

About the research

The study is based on a questionnaire and personal interviews with the heads of Human Resources, Talent Management and Professional Training in 14 participating companies: Airbus, BASF, BBVA, Cementos Molins, Ficosa, Fluidra, GSK, Iberia, Mango, MAPFRE, Nestlé, Repsol, Telefónica and Werfen. Collectively these firms employ more than 130,000 people in Spain.

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