

5. Conclusions – which model can we implement?

The comparative analysis is the tool used by SWORD to define a general "knowledge framework" according to which the consortium has to model the successive pilot phases. The pilots are meant to follow an integrated approach, which enhances the ways of learning in the employment context including also transnational elements.

In Italy³ and elsewhere there are signs of growing interest in the German dual system, considered by many as a way to treat the "problems" of the labour market (especially youth unemployment, but also the appropriateness of the preparation of the working force).

Sword is looking for ways to improve the transition between school and employment and its partners are increasingly turning their sights on the dual vocational training system.

The comparative analysis made in the context of the SWORD project reflects the different stages and approaches through which the dual system is put into practices currently. Once the collective, socio-economic, institutional, regulatory and cultural characteristics of the different regional and national contexts emerged from the comparative analysis (including the dominant pedagogical principles), the SWORD partners had to question themselves how to export the core of the dual system (work-based learning) and its articulated infrastructure in such a multifaceted and often profoundly different scenario.

The SWORD partners found a promising starting point in the work of Prof. Dr. Dieter Euler who, in a study recently commissioned by the *Bertelsmann Stiftung*⁴, has mapped out a viable model for all countries wishing to implement the dual system German elsewhere.

The very extensive research carried out on these issues by Dieter Euler have convinced him that the "German" dual system "is suitable as model but not as a blue print". In his opinion the idea of completely copying the theoretical and practical references of this model is a sort of wishful thinking, as well as a methodological error. Instead he suggests to make a selection of those mechanisms considered strategic and at the same time compatible with the existing education and training framework conditions of the country we are analysing⁵.

³ The reform bill entitled "la buona scuola/the good school prepared by the Italian Government under its Premier Matteo Renzi wants to "invigorate the Italian Educational System" introducing the apprenticeship as an opportunity students are given to become more tech-savvy and more in touch with the reality surrounding them. Furthermore traineeships are to become compulsory for students in the last three years of upper secondary education (at least 400 hours for students in vocational education and 200 hours for students in general education). They can take place either in the private sector or in the public administration.

EUR 100 million per year from 2016.

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Prof. Dr. Dieter Euler, *Germany's dual vocational training system: a model for other countries? A study commissioned by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh, 2013*

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("...The receipt for a successful and sustainable reform is to "select the features that best fit its own goals, structures and culture, adapting them as necessary." (...) Thus, the objective should be to prudently import adapted elements of another country's system, but not an exact copy of it". (...) A closer look shows that importing a system, or parts of it, involves more than mere duplication. It is a process of selecting and



For this purpose Dieter Euler breaks down the dual vocational training system in eleven “essential elements” presented on the next page and identified through careful analysis of the most recent scientific literature and regulatory sources available on the subject.


In principle each of these essential elements can then become the basis for a transfer project, provided that the selected element fits well into the education system in force in that country at that time.


In the framework of the SWORD project, the partner are particularly interested in three of the eleven elements. This is why the pilot phase will focus on testing the implementation of some elements of the dual model within the vocational training systems of the regions / provinces of the consortium partners. In particular the selected essential elements are as follows:


- 2) The main objective of vocational training: to produce skilled workers with flexible qualifications who are mobile and capable of working in their chosen fields
- 3) Alternating learning situations in accordance with the dual principle
- 4) Vocational training as a task to be carried out in partnership between the government and the business community


The exact implications of the elements in the pilots is presented after the scheme.


adapting certain components to suit the objectives and conditions of the potential importing country. In the case of a vocational training system, a country seeking to reform its existing system does not simply replace it with that of Germany or any other country.”


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1. Broad objective: vocational training as a means of achieving, economic, social and individual goals
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2. The main objective of vocational training: to produce skilled workers with flexible qualifications who are mobile and capable of working in their chosen fields
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3. Alternating learning situations in accordance with the dual principle
- 


4. Vocational training as a task to be carried out in partnership between the government and the business community
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5. Joint funding of vocational training
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6. Complementary programs run by schools or non-business entities
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7. Codifying quality standards
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8. Qualifications of teachers and training personnel
- 

9. Balance between standardization and flexibility
- 

10. Creating a solid basis for decisions and design
- 

11. Creating a solid basis for decisions and design

The eleven essential elements of the German dual system identified by Dieter Euler.
Illustrations: pixabay



Essential element 2:
The main objective of vocational training: to produce skilled workers with flexible qualifications who are mobile and capable of working in their chosen fields

Essential element 2:

“Training is designed to meet the practical needs of the labour market; Occupational skills enable individuals to work in their chosen fields; Skills are applicable to a wide range of settings within the field, which allows individuals to be flexibly employed in a variety of businesses; Skill profile makes trained workers more mobile; In some cases skills are developed in a fixed process, without separate steps or interruptions; Skill development may in some cases be combined with aspects of career and occupational development; A responsible agency (usually the chamber of commerce or crafts) administers a centralized examination to assess trainees’ skills, adhering to the principle that the teacher and the examiner should not be one and the same” (Euler, 2013)

- Benefit of the essential element 2:

“Benefits: skills enhance workers’; flexibility and mobility, reduce the danger of social marginalization and raise educational levels in a non-academic context” (Euler, 2013)

- Approaches to exporting the system in modified form:

“The focus is on the goals that have priority at the time, rather than on the entire range of objectives; Dual training programs should be introduced first in business sectors or industries where conditions are favourable” (Euler, 2013)

- Aims of the SWORD PILOT testing:

Some SWORD pilots activities will strive to test various forms of school-to-work transition pathways (training, study visits, project work, internships, etc.) and improve the readiness for work of students by strengthening transferable skills (social skills, cognitive skill, etc). Upon their entry into professional life, students should have a good basic school preparation and quite a knowing on what constitutes a good social behaviour and they should be aware of their personal qualities.



Essential element 3 Alternating learning situations in accordance with the dual principle

Essential element 3:

“Dual principle” refers to the integration of theory and practice, thinking and acting, systematic and case-based learning; The business setting is essential for learning, since it is the only place where learning can occur under real-life conditions; How well the dual principle is implemented depends on how well the learning site is utilized and cooperation at that site” (Euler, 2013)

- Benefit of the essential element 3:

“With the dual approach, occupational skills are developed that are relevant to the labour market but not narrowly focused on the requirements of individual businesses” (Euler, 2013)

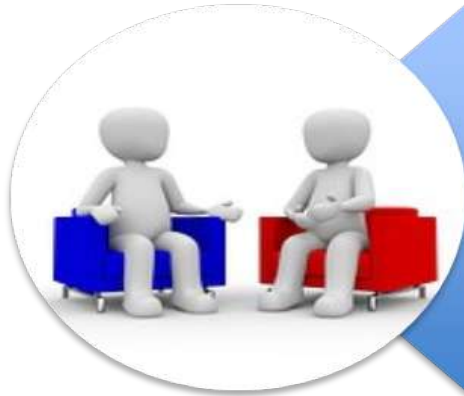
- Approaches to exporting the system in modified form:

“The dual principle can be implemented using various combinations of locations, with varying amounts of time spent at each; In different ways and to differing degrees, periods of practical training in the company setting can be integrated into an alternating training system” (Euler, 2013)

- Aims of the SWORD PILOT testing:

A) Dual Training and alternating learning (school-work-school experience) co-ordinated jointly by a team including schools, institutions and the employers that work “side by side” in the planning and implementation process. The current cooperation mode of these players is a structural weakness that the pilot tests of the SWORD wants to improve. The aim is also to shorten the distance, lamented by many, between schools and businesses, especially small and medium-sized. Despite the difficult economic environment, companies continue to have difficulty in find suitable candidates for some professions, because the skills learned at school are not useful because they are not defined with the companies. Here the SWORD pilots will test forms of co-design of school-to-work transition programmes.

B) The rapid change in the education and training systems creates disorientation among students and their families. At the same time the constant evolution has not left enough time to the system to reorganize internally. The school-work transition needs new ways of career counselling to be conducted before the end of the school, so as to better convey the benefits of the dual system and the characteristics of different professional profiles to the students. They have to experience the “world of business” already during the career guidance at school.



Essential element 4

Vocational training as a task to be carried out in partnership between the government and the business community

Essential element 4:

“Close cooperation between government and business (e.g. in formulating occupational profiles, administering examinations, finding training positions); Cooperation may take a variety of forms, ranging from codified co-determination, to the “consensus principle,” to informal agreements. “ (Euler, 2013)

- Benefit of the essential element 4:

“The relevant parties become active participants who are involved in implementing guidelines and agreements, which promotes social acceptance of vocational training”. (Euler, 2013)

- Approaches to exporting the system in modified form:

“Other models are possible, in addition to Germany’s social partnership approach, with graduated levels of responsibility (e.g. information, hearings, consultation, advice); Participation structures may vary in their division of work and responsibilities (e.g. instead of exporting a specific professional association, its responsibilities may be assigned to existing institutions in the respective country); As appropriate, existing avenues for participation may be utilized (at the national, regional, local and institutional levels)” (Euler, 2013)

- Aims of the SWORD PILOT testing:

Special attention will be paid to the set-up of methods and instruments that improve and enhance the involvement of companies in dual learning initiatives bridging the gap between school and the productive world. The topics are related to company scouting, financing training and internship (the governance of the system) and to the joint curriculum design.

In all pilots the transfer and process of exporting must follow a number of working steps suggested by Dieter Euler and illustrated below. The preparation of the current analysis (Intellectual Output 1) is already an integrated part of this process.

