

# Dual education in terms of vocational and practical teaching

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## Abstract

The paper is focused on the currently very topical issue in the system of secondary vocational education in the Slovak Republic. It is a dual education in terms of vocational and practical teaching. The main aim of the paper is to provide a global overview of the issue of dual vocational education in Slovakia, not only in terms of theoretical knowledge but also in terms of practical experience. Effective cooperation of secondary vocational schools with employers means coordination of teaching at schools with the needs of an employer.

## Keywords:

Dual education  
Certification  
Quality of teaching  
Business sector  
Employment

## 1 Introduction

What is dual education?

At present, an initiative is being taken by the government, ministries and regional governments to strengthen the development of the dual education system. A close link between general and vocational education and practical training of the student at the workplace of the employer is promoted. This is due to expected higher employment, skilled workers and the filling of a workspace where these skilled workers are missing. Great emphasis is on employers and their initiatives, and for this reason, the governing bodies are adapting legislation to meet the needs of companies entering the dual education system and to improve practical training (Řádek, M. 2014).

## 2 Current legislation in the Dual Education System in the Slovak Republic

It is a necessity to maintain a functioning dual vocational training system nowadays. However, it is also a necessity to ensure the involvement of companies and a sufficient number of them, which is closely linked to a good quality of education. This requires simplification of the certification process for the dual education system, new better incentives for employers and the possibility of creating a common workplace for practical training. Normative financing of schools and other changes in legislation, which are valid from 1 September 2018 by Act No. 209 of 14 June 2018 amending Act No. 61/2015 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training. All this allows and creates new preconditions for expanding and improving the dual education system.

Employer benefits are considered to be very important. Based on a learning contract, the tax base is reduced to the employer for each student with a learning contract. Companies are provided with a financial contribution to provide practical training in the dual education system and to apply employer tax expenditure.

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Existing studies and analyzes sufficiently show that vocational training provides companies with high-quality skilled employees, so the operational continuity is supported.

As far as vocational schools are concerned, the reduction of the wage normative per student with a learning agreement is abolished and the school will receive the same amount of normative contribution for the student with the learning agreement as for the student without the learning agreement.

When the company enters the dual education system, the employer significantly reduces the time necessary to achieve the labour performance and work efficiency of graduates to the same level of performance and work efficiency as the employees with several years of experience have. It is important for the student that he acquires work habits in the production process directly at the workplace of employer, with his technological equipment. And the student learns how to be closely related to the working environment and working in a team. Then the probability of obtaining an employment contract from an employer is very high (Řádek, M. 2014).

If there is – for any reason - no employment contract between the trainee and the educational company, then trained and qualified workers may be transferred to other companies. Such “staff turnover” is possible with a free education system. This is realised by those companies investing in education that they are operating in favour of the economic and professional sectors where qualified and trained graduates are needed. Companies also take advantage of this by providing themselves with a workforce they need outside the company.

For each field of study, there is a curriculum that corresponds to model curricula according to the original legislation resulting from Act No. 61/2015 Coll. valid from 1 September 2018. Based on this, the student can be educated in the Dual Education System according to the School Curriculum which is prepared according to the framework curriculum, based on the current School Curriculum. And it is also following the model curriculum which is not obligatory, but only a recommendation since 1 September 2018.

Students of the first grade attend practical training at the workplace of practical training at school and this is how the contracts of dual education with the employer are processed. The dual education contract includes all the requirements for providing practical training, including financial reward. In the next grades, practical training is provided at the workplace of employer according to the valid legislation following Act No. 61/2015 Coll. and its amendments to Act No. 209 of 14 June 2018. In the first grade, practical training is provided to students in the school's workshop under the supervision of teachers of vocational training.

### **3 The employer and the education of in-company trainers/instructors**

In-company trainers/instructors have to have appropriate education, which includes General Certificate of Secondary Education, Apprenticeship Certificate and a specialised course for dual education instructors. In the dual education contract between the school and the employer, the number and the list of mentors who supervise the students during practical training at the workplace of the employer is specified. The grading and evaluation of the student's achievement during the practical training under the guidance of the instructor is done by the teacher of vocational training of the school. He evaluates the student based on the instructor's information. To establish a good cooperation between the school and employer, the school has a nominated teacher – a coordinator, who coordinates, evaluates and performs regular checks and cooperates with instructors in each company.

Practical training can be performed at the school workshop, at the workplace of the employer or the workplace of practical training following valid legislation under the guidance of:

- teacher of vocational praxis,
- VET school trainer,
- in-company trainer/instructor,
- the main instructor.

The extent of practical training expressed in the total number of teaching hours of practical training in the form of vocational training according to the school curriculum, specified for four-years fields of study and three-years fields of study, is given in Tab. 1 and Tab. 2.

Tab. 1

Grade	Total number of hours of practical training in the form of vocational training in four-years fields of study *
1st grade	495
2nd grade	577,5
3rd grade	577,5
4th grade	525

*\* Note: The actual extent of practical training provided by employers during the school year depends on the usage of the calendar weeks of each teaching month (holidays, school holidays).*

Tab. 2

Grade	Total number of hours of practical training in the form of vocational training in three-years fields of study*
1st grade	495
2nd grade	577,5
3rd grade	525

*\* Note: The actual extent of practical training provided by employers for the school year depends on the usage of the calendar weeks of each teaching month (holidays, school holidays).*

The employer provides practical training to the students according to the timetable prepared by the school in cooperation with the employer. The timetable is published in the school building and on the school website. The timetable includes the list of subjects and their order for each teaching day in a calendar week (Konečná Veverková, I., 2015). The timetable is divided into even and odd calendar week separately. The exact schedule of theoretical teaching and practical training is given in the School Curriculum or the School Educational Activity Plan for the relevant school year.

The organization of practical training, namely the beginning and end of the practical training day and the timetable of lessons and breaks for students during the day, is specified by the employer in the Internal Rules of the Practical Training Workplace following Decree No. 65/2015 Coll. on secondary schools, as amended. Every student must be provably informed about the internal rules of the practical training workplace by the employer.

The employer provides the students with material provision according to §26 of the Act and financial provision according to §27 of the Act to the extent of:

Material support for students:

- personal protective equipment,
- financing the nutrition during the practical training.

Financial support for students:

- corporate scholarship,
- financial reward for a productive work.

The employer provides material and financial support for students under the conditions specified in the internal regulations of the employer. Students' legitimate representatives and students are provably informed about them.

## 4 Prognosis and evaluation of the Dual Education System in Slovakia

A significant reform of the dual education system has succeeded in increasing the interest in dual education by both employers and students to the extent that the objectives of the national project should not be endangered.

*"The goal of the project was to involve 12,000 students in dual education by the end of 2020. The beginnings were very embarrassing, with the threat that we have to return large funds to Brussels. However, the measures taken have been successful and the project goal should be successfully met in the next school year. We need to reach 80 per cent of the planned target, which is 10,500 students.*

The dual education project has been implemented in Slovakia as part of the Human Resources Operational Program since 2016. In the first school year, 450 students were involved in the system, in the second year 1,200 students and the third year about 2,100 pupils. The average annual increase over the first three years was 1,200 pupils. *"It was clear that at this pace the project objectives could not be met. We have therefore made a significant reform of the dual education system, in particular through the setting up of new legislation".* The change consisted mainly in the elimination of bureaucratic barriers for employers when entering the system, in the introduction of direct payments that stimulate employers, but also in increased cooperation between employers when providing practical education and training. For students, the attractiveness of dual education has been increased by increasing the possibility of financial support in dual practice.

The introduction of these changes has resulted in 2,750 pupils enrolling in the dual education system this school year, which is a 130% increase over the previous school year and a 220% increase over the three-year average of the project's implementation period. *"In this project, we are approaching 7,000 students in the system, and new employers are still registered, offering more than 300 training places,"* the Minister of Education confirmed. *"Thanks to the new improved departmental information system, we can also say that another 4,500 pupils in the system are educated according to a new innovated state education plan for dual education. Now the Ministry of Education is examining how many of them also participate in practical training on the workplace of the employer, according to preliminary data, it should be at least 2,000 of them. So, together with them, 9,000 students are already involved in the dual education system,"* the Minister of Education confirmed. Nowadays 725 companies and employers offer training places in Slovakia, and 176 vocational schools are involved in the dual education system.

## Conclusion

Thanks to the specially educated and trained workers, companies can provide the innovations faster and of the higher quality both in the area of new technologies and higher quality of products. Opposite to education costs, which the current legislation regulates as tax expenses, which can be claimed by the employer, there is a productive work of students during the period their education and practical training. Educational benefits are an essential determinant for the increasing number of offers given by companies. Summarizing up, benefits to the company therefore cannot be qualified explicitly by productive work.

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