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EUROPEAN CASE STUDY

High-quality dual vocational learning in Spain: the Alliance for Dual Vocational Training



Clara Bassols and Guillem Salvans
Fundación Bertelsmann

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Fundación Bertelsmann is a Spanish foundation linked to the German Bertelsmann Stiftung which, under the slogan 'For youth employment', develops initiatives to provide youth access to the labor market. The first project is related to promoting a better career guidance to teenagers during school and includes a series of activities focused on schools, parents and families, teenager and companies. The other project aims to promote and develop a high-quality dual VET in Spain through a partnership between different stakeholders.

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ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper was produced as part of a pan-European programme of work managed by IPPR (the Institute for Public Policy Research). This case study is part of a series of analyses that are being conducted in 2015/16 on aspects of European skills issues and labour markets. These case studies will be compiled in a format that allows for cross-country comparisons to be made and lessons to be drawn for both policy and practice.

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1. Introduction

This case study presents The Alliance for Dual Vocational Training (Dual VET), a new, collaborative body that was established in Spain during 2015.

Its aim is to promote and refine the system of Dual VET that has been developing in Spain since 2012. This system is struggling due to excessive regional variation and too diverse quality standards that undermine its prestige.

The fact that Dual VET is a completely new system in Spain represents a great opportunity to introduce a high-quality Dual VET system in the country; the Alliance has been established in order to achieve this. Notable features of the Alliance are the wide range of partners/collaboration, the sophisticated working group structure that brings together non-members with outside experts, and its provision of tailored technical support to companies that wish to engage in Dual VET.

Better training is a critical requirement in Spain, a country that suffers from disproportionately high youth unemployment. Although it is too early to judge the performance of the Alliance, all indications are that it has made a very strong start.

2. Youth in Spain: A brief overview

As one of the five largest economies in the EU, Spain has been notorious in recent years for its extraordinarily high unemployment rate. This reached a peak of 22.7% during the first quarter of 2015, double the average unemployment rate in the European Union (11.1%) and strikingly higher than some other major EU countries, such as Germany (4.7%).¹

As is true for most countries, the unemployment rate for young people in Spain is much higher than the general unemployment rate: at the peak in 2014, 55% of those under-25s who wished to work were unemployed. Although there was a slight improvement during the first part of 2015, youth unemployment rates remain extremely high, at 49.6%, compared to an EU-average of 20.7% (EU-28).²

A large percentage of young people work on temporary contracts (almost 70% for those under 25³) often within sectors that require low levels of qualification and that are especially vulnerable to economic crises – and subsequent job contraction (e.g. the building sector, commerce, services). However, the youth unemployment problem in Spain is not only due to

¹ Eurostat April 2015

² Eurostat April 2015

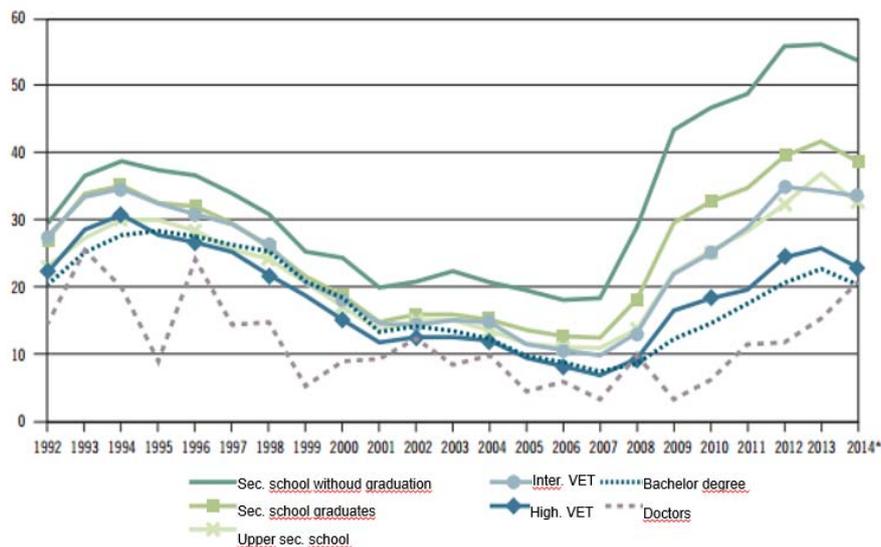
³ Eurostat 2014

the latest economic crisis: it has been well above 15% for the past three decades. This may be partly due to the fact that Spain has the highest percentage of early school leavers of all EU countries (22% as compared to the European Union average of 11%).⁴ At the same time, though, it has already – indeed surpassed – its target for university graduates as laid down in the Europe 2020 growth plan.⁵

Overall, there is a strong preference for higher academic education in Spain, despite the fact that the employment outcomes for university graduates are not much different to those for graduates of higher levels of vocational training, as the figure below shows:

Unemployment rate by level of studies completed.

Population aged 16 – 34. 1992 – 2014 (percentage)



Unemployment rate by level of studies completed. Population aged 16 – 34. 1992 – 2014 (percentage)

Source: Labour Force Survey (INE, several years)

One of the issues is how appropriate the different types of training are. There is already a gap between the education that young people receive and the skills that companies demand. In spite of the very high unemployment rates, companies in Spain continue to have difficulties in finding workers with appropriate professional qualifications.

⁴ Eurostat April 2015

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

3. Vocational Educational and Training (VET) in Spain

Two vocational training (VET) systems currently coexist in Spain; both include elements of Dual VET (ie. combined classroom and workplace training).⁶ The first is led by the Ministry of Employment and regulates training for adults who are already working or unemployed. The other one – the focus of this case study – falls under the remit of the Ministry of Education and regulates vocational training for young people.

Depending upon the level of those entering the system, two types of training are offered:

- (i) Intermediate-level VET for those who enter after completing compulsory secondary education.
- (ii) Higher-level VET, for those who have already completed their intermediate-level VET or have finished upper secondary school. This enables direct access to university.

Both last 2 years and offer 2,000 hours of teaching. Both are also part of the dual VET system.

Despite the strength of the programmes, and the relatively favourable employment outcomes for VET graduates, Spanish youth still tend to see VET as a second-class education (although this perception is slowly changing as a result of the great recession and the high unemployment figures amongst university graduates).

Dual VET in Spain

Although the Spanish Dual VET system is broadly modelled on the German system, there are significant differences between the two, as the table below shows.

Table 1: Comparing the Spanish and the German Dual VET systems

	Spanish Dual VET Models	German Dual VET Model
Youth access to Dual VET	Young people enrol in the educational centre and apply to pursue dual vocational training. The educational centre is responsible for finding	Trainees contact companies directly to apply for a trainee position. Once they have secured a trainee contract, they gain an automatic place in the educational

⁶ Following on from Royal Decree 1529/2012 of 8 November 2012, a state law of minimums that requires greater regulatory development at a regional level.

	companies willing to offer apprenticeship places.	centre to pursue Dual VET.
Selection of trainees	Trainee selection is unregulated. In practice, the educational centre makes a first selection. Companies sometimes play a role in selecting their trainees.	The company selects its trainees from the outset with a full selection process.
Contract with the company	There is no specific contract for Dual VET. In some cases an employment contract is signed and in others the company awards a scholarship. In both cases the student is covered by Spanish Social Security.	There is a specific traineeship contract to regulate the relationship between the company and the trainee.
Trainee remuneration	In most cases, trainees receive some form of compensation for the time they actually work in the company, although this is not compulsory in all regions. They are not paid for the time they spend at the educational centre.	Trainees receive a minimum wage throughout their training, regardless of whether they are at the educational centre or are being trained and working in the company.
Curriculum and accreditation of educational content taught by the company	There are no general regulations regarding what content is taught in educational centres and what is taught in the company. There is no final exam to accredit the training received in the company. Only the educational centre can accredit training, even if training is provided by a company.	There is a clear definition as to which part of the training is taught in educational centres and which is taught in the company. There is a test at the halfway point of the course and a final exam. This test is offered by chambers of commerce and trade organisations.

Tutor training	One region has established minimum requirements for the training of tutors; there are no regulations in place in the other regions. No accreditation exams are planned for tutors.	Tutor training is fully regulated. A company can only offer apprenticeship places if it has tutors who can demonstrate specific training. Chambers of commerce are responsible for examining and certifying tutor training.
Adapting the content of the curriculum to the needs of companies	There is sufficient flexibility to adapt the content of the curriculum to the needs of companies. Adaptations have to be approved by the relevant Education Authority.	The BIBB (Federal Institute for VET) together with the trade unions and employers' associations are responsible for deciding the necessary changes and adaptations to the content of the curriculum.
Relationship with traditional VET students	In many cases, Dual VET students share the same classroom with other students taking traditional VET. Teachers are the same for both training models.	There are two completely different VET systems.

Conclusion 1: The Spanish Dual VET system is presently underdeveloped. It needs to be refined and improved to ensure that it is genuinely capable of providing young people with the necessary professional skills and thus employability. Differences between Spain and Germany are such that the two Dual VET systems will never be exactly the same, nevertheless the comparison with Germany reveals that the Spanish system lacks some of the defining strengths of the German system. The fact that the Spanish Dual VET system is so new should be viewed as an opportunity to make changes before it becomes too entrenched.

Regional variation

Under Royal Decree 1529/2012, the 17 regions into which Spain is territorially divided are responsible for the regulatory development of the Dual VET system. The pace of development of Dual Vet has varied across Spain with the result that there are now many different models of Dual VET in existence. These are of varying quality: some diverge quite strongly from the core concept of dual vocational training as a shared responsibility between

educational centres and companies. A key reason for this is lack of experience with the development of Dual VET within the regulating bodies, the educational centres and companies, and also insufficient collaboration between all the organisations involved.

Some examples of the most relevant regional differences are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Regional variation in Dual VET

Trainee remuneration (compulsory or voluntary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some regions (e.g. Catalonia and Madrid), Dual VET projects are not approved unless they provide for payment of trainees for the time they spend working in the company. • In other regions it is not permitted to pay the trainee at all (e.g. Canary Islands) while in others (e.g. Andalusia and Asturias) only travel expenses can be paid.
Contractual instrument used (Employment contract vs. scholarship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some regions (e.g. Basque Country, Galicia) trainees must sign employment contracts. • In many regions trainees are awarded scholarships and do not become part of the staff of a company.
Course duration (2 or 3 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In most regions courses run for 2 years, but in some they can extend to 3 years.
Allocation of time between company and educational centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some regions trainees alternate between the company and the educational centre from the first year. • In others trainees spend the first year in the educational centre and alternate between this and the company in the second year. • There are also regions where trainees spend the entire first year at the educational centre and the entire second year at the company.
Training of company tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some region, there is a minimum training requirement for company tutors (e.g. Catalonia). • There is no regulated tutor training in most regions.
Dual VET start dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some regions educational authorities only approve Dual VET projects during specific periods of the years. • In others it is possible to start a Dual VET project at any time of the year.

This regional variation means that a young person who takes a certain Dual VET course in one Spanish territory will not necessarily receive the same training and acquire the same professional skills as a young person who takes the same course in another territory. Similarly, a company that has different workplaces in various regions, and wishes to develop common Dual VET projects for all its sites, must comply with a different regulation in each region.

Conclusion 2: Putting in place a Dual VET framework that applies across Spain and that establishes the necessary characteristics of an effective system while allowing for regional room to manoeuvre is an urgent priority. Cooperation is key.

At present there are many different public and private initiatives to introduce and promote Dual VET in Spain. Although this is in some ways good, it also represents a threat, as many do not meet the minimum quality standards required to maintain the prestige that Dual VET requires to flourish. There is a risk that this could lead to Dual VET being viewed as just another form of low quality training, helping to reinforce the poor image of vocational training in Spain.

Conclusion 3: The many disparate Dual VET initiatives that exist in Spain should be brought together. Cooperation and collaboration should be encouraged in order to exploit synergies and avoid duplication of efforts.

The role of companies in Dual VET

Dual vocational training is a complex form of training in which the responsibility to 'train' is shared between actors in the educational system and companies. Without companies that are willing to participate in this system, there will be no Dual VET. The responsibility therefore lies with the public authorities to devise a global strategy to attract companies to Dual VET, especially at the outset.

So far Spain has focussed on quantity of traineeships provided above the quality of the training. When it comes to incentives for companies it has focussed on easing the costs companies face, rather than providing other types of support. For example companies can benefit from Social Security rebates, incentives to permanently hire trainees once they have completed training and minimal credits to offset the cost of the working time that a tutor needs to dedicate to trainees. In some regions the fact that trainees are not paid by companies also helps to lower the cost.

But in order for Dual VET to develop into the high prestige vocational training system that is needed in Spain, other incentives are required. For example, technical support might be provided to companies, especially SMEs, to ease the administrative burden that this training model imposes on them. The aim should be for Dual VET to effectively add value and competitiveness to companies while providing high quality education and training to young people. It would be interesting in this context to analyse which clusters or economic sectors

are currently generating jobs and to create tailored incentives for these clusters or sectors to participate in Dual VET.

Conclusion 4: Governments and public authorities should create a range of incentives to ensure a high-quality Dual VET system, instead of merely offering companies incentives to offset economic costs.

Other Dual VET challenges

The following are some of the other challenges that the Spanish Dual VET system faces.

1. For the Dual VET system to function effectively a minimum critical mass of participating companies and educational centres is essential. We believe that, undoubtedly, the biggest challenge facing Dual VET in Spain is that Spanish society as a whole is not aware of Dual VET: many companies do not know of its existence or of the benefits that this model may bring. Spreading the word is critical.
2. Trainees only become more employable and achieve higher rates of employment if Dual VET teaches those skills that companies require. Unfortunately Dual VET training courses in Spain are quite general and there are many sectors in which there is no specific VET course that really meets the sector's skills needs. Dual VET academic curricula must have the necessary flexibility to enable them to be adapted to the specific needs of a company but they must also ensure that all trainees acquire comparable vocational knowledge and skills.
3. Training courses need to reflect companies' skills needs and be able to respond quickly as these needs change. It is important that the system is streamlined to enable this to happen. It is also important to expand the number of courses provided: there are only 150 categories of training course in Spain (in other European countries there are double that number, for example about 330 in Germany).
4. The choice of an unsuitable educational centre as a Dual VET partner may be a stumbling block to the success of Dual VET in companies. The role of educational centres is critical to the success of Dual VET. To be effective, there must be strong involvement and commitment of the centre's management and teachers and a lasting relationship between the educational centre and the company. Educational centres must be willing to undertake the organisational changes that Dual VET requires and teachers must be willing to acquaint themselves with what the trainees learn in

companies and keep track of placements. Not all educational centres have the necessary willingness to change. This can lead to the failure of the Dual VET project. It is therefore essential that companies identify a partner educational centres that meets their needs. Companies are seldom able to compare different educational centres and they may therefore need advice and guidance in order to select the most appropriate partner.

5. With Dual VET the company becomes the trainer. However, the role of the company tutor is still unclear in Spain. A challenge for companies is to choose suitable company tutors and provide them with the necessary tools and training, motivate them and give them the recognition they need to perform their role well. There are many cases in which tutors do not know what their role is and what is expected of them. There is also no regulated training for tutors.
6. As in many European countries, most Spanish companies are SMEs or micro-enterprises. If Dual Vet is to expand in Spain, these companies must become part of the system. This can pose a challenge, for capacity and other reasons. Options include working through the value chain of large companies or through trade associations or intermediary organisations.

Conclusion 5: Greater information and technical support is required for companies in order for them to participate in Dual VET. This is particularly important in the case of SMEs and microenterprises.

4. Alianza para la FP Dual

From the description above, it is clear that much closer cooperation is required between companies, educational centres and other social partners in order to ensure the successful development of Dual VET in Spain. In particular efforts need to be made to refine the model, to provide specific support to companies and educational centres and to publicise the benefits of Dual VET.

For this reason, the Bertelsmann Foundation, together with the Princess of Girona Foundation, the CEOE-CEPYME (Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organisations-Spanish Confederation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) and the Spanish Chamber of Commerce, has promoted a state-wide network of companies, educational centres and institutions committed to the development of a high-quality Dual VET system in Spain under

the banner “*Alianza para la FP Dual*” (Alliance for Dual Vocational Training). To date 61 companies have joined the Alliance and around 40 more are in the process of joining.

Box 1 charts the progress of the Alliance.

Box 1: Development of the Alliance

Mid-May 2015: The Alliance was formally established. Since then, the Executive Committee has defined the main guidelines for the functioning of the Alliance and the leaders of the various working groups have been chosen.

Between **June and September 2015** working groups were established and leaders appointed. These leaders invited other companies or institutions to join their groups. Some of the working groups held their first meetings and planned their activities. It is anticipated working group activities will go on for at least one year in order to improve and develop the various critical aspects of Dual VET in Spain.

The Alliance’s **Technical Support Office** has begun to provide technical support to companies in order to implement Dual VET projects and the Alliance’s **website** has been established in order to raise awareness and the profile of the Alliance. Additional technical advisors have been hired in order to ensure that technical advice can be given to all companies who join the Alliance and participate in Dual VET.

19-20 October 2015: The Alliance’s first **Annual Conference** took place with the working groups reporting their preliminary results to the Executive Committee.

It is worth highlighting that the CEOE-CEPYME is the Spanish state employers’ organisation which brings together regional and local employers’ organisations from throughout Spain and that the Spanish Chamber of Commerce, in turn, includes all the Spanish Chambers of Commerce. Having these two organisations as partners ensures that the Alliance is business-led. We feel that this is essential to the successful development of Dual VET in Spain.

One of the Alliance’s objectives is to get as many companies as possible to join. However, in order to ensure compliance with minimum quality standards in the development of Dual VET, companies wishing to join the Alliance must commit to follow three basic quality principles:

1. Trainees must be paid for the time they work in companies.
2. Company tutors must be provided with special training.
3. Dual VET must be positioned at a strategic level within the company (higher level managers must be involved in the decision to join).

More and more companies, institutions and vocational schools are expected to join the Alliance, thus ensuring the further spread of Dual VET. It is also expected that, in due course, other social partners, such as trade unions, will be invited to join the Alliance.

The Alliance offers technical support to participating companies to help them implement their first Dual VET projects (through a team of technical consultants hired specifically for this role). The Alliance also acts as a network of companies and educational centres, in which participants can exchange information, experiences and success stories. Through the Alliance website members have a dedicated space to present their Dual VET project, share knowledge and gain visibility around their efforts to promote Dual VET. They can also participate in various events organised by the Alliance and gain access to studies and publications on Dual VET.

Governance and structure of the Alliance

The Executive Committee of the Alliance is the governing body responsible for shaping the Alliance’s strategy. It consists of the four founding members, as well as 10 large companies that are especially interested in the development of Dual VET.

Ten working groups have been established within the Alliance in order to address specific issues that are crucial to the proper development of Dual VET in Spain. A member company or institution leads each working group. Members also participate in other working groups and external institutions or experts are invited to join working groups to add value. This reinforces the idea of necessary cooperation between all stakeholders involved in Dual VET and underscores the fact that consensus among different positions is the driving force for change.

Table 3 shows the current working groups and leadership.

Table 3: Alliance Working Groups

Group	Leader	Objectives
Communication	Planeta (company)	This group develops strategies to raise the profile and improve the image and prestige of Dual VET in Spain. It also raises awareness of the Alliance itself and helps encourage more companies, institutions and vocational schools to join.
Regulatory proposals	CEOE (nationwide employers’ organisation)	This working group is tasked with identifying those legal elements that are currently hindering the proper implementation of Dual VET and proposing the necessary changes to the legal framework. In

		addition to companies, educational centres and institutions, experts from the Education Ministry are members and participate in this work group.
New diplomas and educational programmes	Agbar (company)	This group's task is to study how to simplify and tailor the bureaucratic procedure for adapting the content of existing diplomas to the real needs of companies. It also assesses which diplomas are missing in Spain and should be introduced.
Vocational schools	Nestle (company)	This group promotes close long-term relationships between companies and vocational schools and identifies the critical elements that are hindering the smooth development of Dual VET from the perspective of vocational schools.
Tutors	Robert Bosch (company)	This group promotes the interchange of experiences, models and best practices between vocational school tutors and company tutors. It raises the profile of the tutors, gives them public recognition and facilitates the interchange of methodologies, best practices and tools, thereby creating a stable network of VET tutors. The CET (Center for European Trainees), an institution belonging to the government of the German state of Baden-Württemberg, participates as an active member of this group.
Quality	Aldi (company)	The goal of this group is to identify which elements have been critical to ensuring a high quality VET system in other European countries with greater experience of Dual VET. It then advises on how to adapt these to Spanish circumstances and needs.
Small companies	Frit Ravich (company) and Camara de España (national umbrella chamber of	This group's goal is to identify what it is that makes it particularly difficult for small companies to implement Dual VET. It proposes collaboration models that make it possible to spread Dual VET in small companies and provides small companies with greater support in the development of Dual VET.

	commerce)	
Knowledge and innovation	Bankia (bank)	This group aims to promote knowledge and innovation within Dual VET, identifying the critical elements of the system as well as opportunities for innovation.
International	AHK (German Chamber of Commerce in Spain)	This group identifies best practice around Dual VET from other countries and promotes the adaptation and incorporation of elements that are deemed transferable to Spain. It also identifies opportunities for the Alliance to participate in different international initiatives to promote Dual VET.

The **Technical Support Office** of the Alliance helps companies and vocational schools adhere to the quality standards identified by the working groups and established by the Alliance. It helps companies to identify the specific training courses that fit their needs as well as the most suitable training partners (educational centers), and it eases the administrative burden they face by helping them coordinate their relationship the educational authorities. In addition it works to inform and raise awareness among companies, clusters, business associations, educational centers, etc. of the advantages of the Dual VET system.

Company experience to date

The boxes below detail some examples of companies that have put in place apprenticeship schemes with the help of the Alliance. It is early days, but the experiences are generally very positive.

Box 2: Interview with Victorino Anguera, Head of Gas Natural Fenosa Corporate University

Under Spain’s new regulations - in place since 2012 - Gas Natural Fenosa (a company in the energy sector with around 21,500 employees and a presence in over 25 countries) is launching its first Dual VET project, with the help of the Alliance's Technical Support Office.

In the first phase of the project 30 Dual VET apprentices will be recruited for a Training Course in the Maintenance of Thermal and Fluid Installations, conducted in cooperation with the “Illa dels Banyols” Vocational Training Institute near Barcelona.

Why is Gas Natural Fenosa considering offering apprenticeships in your company?

Working in the energy sector we have to continually update, especially on issues around safety, about which we care a great deal. Gas Natural Fenosa offers a lot of internal retraining; it has done so in the past and will continue to do so. Working with vocational training centres under the dual model is a very interesting option for us because of our replacement needs (replacing people who are retiring) and also because we expect to need new staff as we fully emerge from the economic crisis.

How would you describe the Dual VET project that you have designed?

As part of our pilot phase, which we may extend to other areas of Spain, we have an agreement with the educational centre as to which parts of the training our company can take on and how this will work (timetables, remuneration of apprentices, etc.). Gas Natural Fenosa has installed technology in the educational centre for the apprentices to experiment with.

During the project's development we have found that the opportunities around Dual VET extend well beyond our role as a training company; establishing a stable platform for cooperation with an educational centre also enables things like connecting vocational training teachers to our internal training teams.

Following the apprenticeship we intend to hire those apprentices who have performed well during their time with the company.

What support have you received from the Alliance's Technical Support Office?

The support has been crucial for several reasons. In the first place, the Alliance's advisers clarified how the model works in Catalonia. In Spain, there are significant differences in Dual VET models between regions and even within each region. Having a clear understanding of this from the outset is key. Together with the Technical Support Office we evaluated the initial stages of the project. Following on from this they have assisted us in our work with the Education Administration in Catalonia and also in publicising the project. In the industrial sector it can be hard to attract students to apprenticeships; Gas Natural Fenosa had to put in place an advertising campaign to attract talent. Finally, they are helping us to consider the feasibility of extending the project to other centres and other regions of Spain.

How would Gas Natural Fenosa assess this support?

Very positively. Gas Natural Fenosa has joined the Alliance for Dual Vocational Training, which is promoted by the Fundación Bertelsmann and three other institutions. We hope to be able to contribute in the future so that other companies choose quality apprenticeships as an option to attract talent. We are particularly happy that this support has come from institutions

that have no interests beyond contributing to the fight against youth unemployment. As you would expect, in spite of this valuable support, Gas Natural Fenosa has always been the one taking the final decisions.

What would Gas Natural Fenosa recommend to other companies that wish to participate in this new training system?

We recommend that they try it, and that they try it with the support of the Alliance. There are almost 20,000 vocational training students studying in Spain under the dual model. At this scale it is possible, especially for larger companies, and not too difficult to implement a project in a company. We would also recommend that they choose a high quality educational centre where they can develop a good relationship with the management team; without this it is impossible to overcome the difficulties that arise. And, finally, we recommend that all companies do a lot of in-house work on the project so that it is understood for what it is: a way to create a pool of future skilled workers for our companies.

Box 3: Interview with Toni Miret, CEO of TIMTUL

TimTul is a start-up founded in Barcelona in July 2015. It offers a platform for fostering loyalty in associations, making communication between members and managers easier and more effective.

TimTul and the Alliance's Technical Support Office are promoting a dual vocational training project within the technology sector. The project will offer two apprenticeship places for Web Application Development. It is currently in its definition phase; talks with the educational institution where it will be implemented are underway. Through this initiative TimTul is attempting to attract talent as well as train its future employees according to its requirements.

Why is TIMTUL taking on apprentices under the dual vocational training system?

TimTul is start-up and, as such, it has limited resources. We have decided to go down the internal growth route by seeking out young, mouldable talent that does not involve high fixed costs. This strategy can be carried out in various ways, but dual vocational training is a very attractive option for a number of reasons. First, the young people involved approach their studies from a practical, rather than an academic, perspective. They display an interest in undertaking work from the outset. Second, the long-term perspective offered by dual vocational training (1,000 hours of learning compared with 350 hours in the previous system), creates the space for the apprentice to adapt to the company's way of working and acquire the knowledge required to be able to perform their role effectively at a relatively low cost. This is especially relevant for companies such as TimTul which have specific needs (we use the Python programming language, which is still relatively uncommon and not taught at educational institutions) that can otherwise demand high salaries.

Describe your dual vocational training project

The project is currently in the design phase: we are working alongside the educational institution which will provide the apprentices in order to ensure their learning in the school and the practical training they will get at our company fit together. We will begin with two students who are currently on the Web Application Development course. Both will undertake 1,000 hours of training in the company. Our expectation is that all the apprentices brought in through the dual VET project continue working at the company once they have completed their apprenticeships.

What kind of support have you received from the Alliance's Technical Advisory Office?

The Alliance's primary role has been to explain what dual vocational training consists of and to show us that it is suited to companies of our size. It has also guided us throughout the process of defining our project, helping us understand its impact and the steps we must take in order to implement it successfully. Without the Alliance we might not have dared to launch a project of this nature, since as well as providing information the Alliance's Technical Support Office has accompanied us through each and every phase from initial explanation to identifying the best vocational school to suit our needs and accompanying us at meetings in order to ensure that the process runs smoothly. This has enabled us to position ourselves alongside large companies, which is very important for a start-up.

Do you think it makes sense to take on apprentices under the dual vocational training system within the technology and start-up sectors?

As I have already mentioned, I think dual vocational training is very appealing to start-ups; it is always difficult to attract talent and highly-qualified candidates are usually expensive. Basing growth on internal promotions rather than expensive external hiring, is very appealing from a financial perspective; moreover, you are able to influence the academic curriculum, introducing subjects that are important for the company. Limited resources mean that start-ups must be adaptable and versatile, which is why their employees regularly perform various roles. For the apprentice, working at a start-up means they will not be neglected or under-utilised. Plus, since there are fewer people, a strong relationship is established with the team. I would stress, though, the importance of developing a clear understanding of the investment in time that dual training requires.

Box 4: Interview with Joan Roget Alemany, President of FedeQuim

FedeQuim is a non-profit organisation whose objective is to defend the rights and interests of companies within the chemical sector, especially in Catalonia. It offers a permanent information and advisory service to its associates (chemical companies) around issues such as European and national legislation: at present it works with over 600 companies in total.

FedeQuim has subscribed to the *Alliance for Dual Vocational Training*, and is actively working alongside the Alliance's Technical Support Office so that companies within the sector can recruit apprentices on the Dual VET scheme.

Why is FedeQuim considering promoting Dual VET among its associate companies?

Dual VET has not been around for very long in Spain and companies within our sector do not fully understand its potential. Sometimes they confuse it with other training options. As

an Association, we want to help our associates understand the schemes that are already in place. Second, we believe Dual VET makes good business sense for some of the job profiles in our sector, such as laboratory analysts. Our companies need increasing numbers of qualified staff who can adapt to the peculiarities of each company; this is where Dual VET comes in. Third, many of our companies will face a generational handover in the coming years; being able to guarantee a successful transition will be vital to them. Finally, some of the companies within our sector originate in Central Europe, for example in Germany: they have advised us that this is the right direction for the sector as a whole.

What are working on within the Alliance for Dual Vocational Training framework?

We are starting to work on identifying companies within the chemical sector that are open to adopting apprenticeship schemes. The Alliance's Technical Support Office created an online survey for all our associate companies which helped us identify those that had already had students taking part in vocational training (under the previous model) and which of them would be interested in recruiting apprentices under the dual scheme. The Alliance has been following up with these companies and we already have one success story from the sector. We expect this to be important in encouraging other companies to join the initiative. In a few months' time we anticipate seeing a number of companies embarking on Dual VET projects. We will then conduct a communications campaign to raise awareness of these activities.

What difficulties do companies within the sector face when it comes to Dual VET?

The majority of FedeQuim companies are medium or even small companies. Given their limited size it can be difficult for them to access information about Dual VET and also to find the time and resources to get projects underway. Their day-to-day activities are complicated, and planning is no mean feat.

Another difficult aspect is the relationship between companies and the education system; companies work at a different pace and speak a language that educational institutions sometimes find hard to adopt and vice versa. In the field of vocational training, however, there is already a good relationship as companies within the chemical sector have recruited students on vocational training schemes for over 20 years.

How would FedeQuim evaluate the support provided by the Alliance's Technical Support Office?

Positively – they are the ones that have closely studied the Dual VET schemes that can now be applied in Spain. They are also able to resolve any doubts arising among our companies: splitting the syllabus between the institution and the company, ways of hiring apprentices, the role of the company tutor and the companies' obligations regarding the dual approach

etc. It is the help of the Technical Support Office and the Alliance that makes us willing and able to bring Dual VET to our associate companies.

5. Conclusion

For the Dual VET system to flourish in Spain, there needs to be a dual emphasis on increasing the number of participating companies and trainees while also ensuring that quality is maintained.

Widespread lack of knowledge and awareness as well as poor coordination between the different actors involved and between different education authorities, has meant that many different Dual VET models have developed simultaneously. Each has different characteristics and different quality standards. As a consequence, a young person's experience with Dual VET can be completely different depending upon the region in which the training takes place.

It is therefore urgent and very important to create a framework that establishes a common denominator for all regional models and contains all the elements that are essential to the concept of Dual VET. Given the situations that Spain finds itself in, this will only be possible through cooperation between all stakeholders leading to a consensus among all interests.

The Alliance project offers an important example of collaboration as it succeeds in bringing together precisely those actors who are key to the positive development of Dual VET. It underscores the importance to the system of companies – the organisations that we believe are the key players in the development of Dual VET – so that they themselves contribute to defining which elements of the system need to be developed, modified or optimised. The Alliance's working group structure provides a remarkable opportunity for collaboration, not only between Alliance members but also with other with other key organisations or individuals (such as scientists, academics, members of the Ministry of Education and even representatives of institutions from other countries, such as the Center of European Trainees). Another critical feature of the Alliance is its Technical Support Office. This not only provides information on Dual VET and spreads the model, but also offers tailored practical support to companies in the development of their first Dual VET projects.

Being such a recent cooperation platform, it is impossible to know for sure if the Alliance will consolidate its position in the coming years and achieve the profile and influence needed to encourage a transformation towards high-quality Dual VET models in Spain. However, everything suggests that it is moving in this direction.

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