

Pilot Project

Company-internal Vocational Preparation **bevoplus**

Utilisation of potential for further education in SMEs in Eastern Bavaria:
 Promotion of heterogeneous young
 target groups on entering the German dual system

Preliminary note:

The pilot project **bevoplus** is active in the field of vocational and educational training. The project resides in Lower Bavaria, in the boroughs of Straubing-Bogen, Deggendorf, Regen and Freyung-Grafenau and supports the SMEs in the region in implementing strategic training schemes, in order to ensure the supply of skilled workers needed in the future.

Scientific guidance of the pilot project is implemented by the Institute for Socio-scientific Consultancy (ISOB) GmbH, Regensburg. The expert guidance of the pilot project is carried out by Ms Gisela Westhoff of the BIBB (Federal Institute for Vocational Training).

The Methods of the pilot project **bevoplus**: Orientation of potential in the bridging process between school and vocational training

The classic process for choosing a suitable vocation for young candidates is done by combining exam results or comparable standardised test results with a *generalised prediction of future performance* and general behavioural and self-representational attributes, and analyses of *probable attitudes* to further education, which are considered necessary in order to implement the training successfully in the workplace. In doing so, the responsible trainers or human resources employees in the company can assume they have made the right choice of candidate having used the normal company process for acquisition as well as using their experience and "gut feeling".

However, there is still reason to doubt the functionality, as the current state of affairs in the educational market shows:

- *Demographic change* has a long-lasting effect on the scope of the selection process: In light of the decreasing number of possible candidates looking for vocational training in future, the issue for companies will be to search for any possible candidates qualified for the job and to gain the interest of enough potential trainees by the ever-more-frequent use of *active marketing strategies* which promote the attractiveness of the trainee positions to a much wider sector of society, in order to attract people previously considered atypical for such positions, and secure the acquisition of appropriate and interested candidates.
- Despite noticeable differences between different trainee vocations, there is a clear need for qualitative improvement in the sector, as statistics show there is currently a *drop out rate*, Germany-wide, of 24,4 % of all traineeships. Considering also that the reasons named by the

trainees for dropping out of the traineeships tended to be "this traineeship wasn't really the right thing for me/didn't agree with me" as well as "there were problems with tutors, teachers, colleagues and other trainees", the issue on the side of the companies is finding possible improvements to their normal acquisition process and to the selection methods for staffing the trainee positions (the so-called "Matching" processes).¹

These circumstances require a **paradigm change** in which the composition of the matching process for the transfer between school and the German dual system, the realisations and the instruments of the new action-orientated vocational training are used: "In vocational training and education, a concept with the following new focal points has been established: The ability to make decisions and act on them in complex learning and working situations, and the capability for each individual to organise themselves and their actions independently".²

This puts the *learning competencies* and practical and relevant capability for action of the individual candidates in a more important position: The trainees will be seen as young people with the ability to learn and develop, and taken on and treated as such in the workplace. In order to find young people for the company who are motivated, ready to learn and suitable for the practical requirements of each job, companies must create practical experience and basic decision making principles, but also new competencies for a potential-orientated candidate selection process. **Orientation around potential** also means comparing the *vocational training competence of an individual* (practically definable capabilities and skills, which he/she already acquired before the traineeship) to *competencies acquired in the traineeship i.e. what can be or should be done for individual strengths and what must be taught to successfully train a skilled worker who is capable of the tasks given to them.*

With this, the *bevoplus* – guideline can initiate and implement *an equilibrium between requirements of the company and the competencies and learning potential of the young people* as a creative task and learning process for the company. This not only contains a new method in the transfer process between school and traineeships, but also sets a new course as an interface for training itself: training begins **before** training, and will become a continual interactive learning process for both the trainee and the company. This turns the "learning years", which are not traditionally seen as "earning years" for the trainees – **for both sides into learning years.**

The **innovative method** according to the *bevoplus* guideline promotes the recognition of relevant competencies in individual young people, before they go into traineeships and internships, to make the future prospects provided by learning in the workplace attractive and tangible thereby carving a new, pro-competency path in preparing for workplace learning. .

¹ **BIBB REPORT**, 7. annual, book 21, June 2013

² K.Hensge et al., Kompetenzverständnis und –modelle in der beruflichen Bildung; in: M. Bethschneider, G. Höhns, G. Münchhausen (Hrsg.), Kompetenzorientierung in der beruflichen Bildung, Berichte zur beruflichen Bildung (BIBB), Bonn 2011, S. 137

Aims of the guideline "Training-orientated Internship" (AoBp) bevo**plus**

The internet-supported *guideline "Training-orientated Internship" (AoBp)* is aimed at SMEs and is an action concept to secure strategic acquisition of skilled workers. The school internships should not only serve as orientation for the young people, but they should also be *educationally orientated*, in order to systematically attract suitable candidates for acquisition. The self-reflecting attitude of the company requirements and competencies becomes the foundation for the trainee selection process.

With a starting point in genuine company educational resources, the guideline integrates a practicable vocational educational method, *which accentuates the learning potential of the young people*, and at the same time also makes clear that their development and creative competencies still is connected to the conditions and framework of the company.

Description of the Guideline AoBp

The AoBp Circular Method

In order for AoBp to be successful, in order for it to become an instrument for future orientated staff acquisition through preparation for workplace learning, it needs to be systematically planned, implemented and guided in a results-orientated fashion. The *bevo**plus*** – Guideline for the AoBp is based on an *action model for the planning, Implementation and guidance of educationally-orientated internships for commercial and industrial vocations*.

All the actions described in the guideline are assigned logical, systematical "work steps", which - contain the appropriate instruments, as well as reasons and impulses to reflect on the practices used in training and the people responsible for the training in the company until now.

The guideline can therefore be represented as a circular method:



Designed as a circular method, the *bevo**plus*** - action model promotes the Competencies of the company to:

- design educationally orientated-development strategies,
- didactically endorse the educational and work processes in a competency-oriented way, and
- construct a "Learning Organisation".

The circular method consists of three so-called "action steps":

1. **In the action step "AoBp planning"**, those responsible for the training deal with the construction of the requirements profile which lays the foundations for the content and processes of the educationally-orientated internship. With reference to this, they design the AoBp : They decide on the processes and organisational elements.
2. **The action step "AoBp implementation"** contains the acquisition of interns who are chosen for their appropriate applications and adherence to selection criteria, as well as the actual implementation and on finishing, the evaluation of the educationally-orientated internship.
3. **The action step "AoBp guidance"** is related to the particular conditions possible in the company for the internship and their connection in the whole process: If the company offers are publicly available, is the contact to the young people after their internship carried out in such a way that encourages them enough to genuinely start a traineeship? How helpful is the contact to pupils and parents in this communication? The experiences with guiding AoBp have direct consequences on its implementation, and therefore also retroact on its planning as a part of preparation for implementation.

Planning the AoBp

The main aim of the action step "AoBp planning" is seeking **the working potential in** young people systematically. *bevo**plus*** is based on a potential-orientated applicant selection, to find suitable trainees who can contribute to solving the issue of sustainable, long term acquisition of skilled workers. Planning the educationally-orientated internship AoBp therefore means focusing on company training potential itself, and relating this to the knowledge and skills which the interns have already acquired. At the same time, the AoBp contains the evaluation of the young people for the - trainee positions offered. These are vocationally based, as well as orientated towards learning

potential and practical, educationally relevant competencies. Through this method, *bevoplus* differentiates itself from classical school internships, which only focus on a general vocational orientation.



The action step "AoBp planning" supports the tutors and others responsible for the training, to:

- evaluate potential and
- define, determine and develop the educational potential of the young people .

When those responsible for training have worked through all steps of "AoBp planning", the finished concept is created, which they can systematically implement in the phase "AoBp implementation". They then know what requirements are to be asked of the interns in the internship, how important the various categories are, and which internship process will be the result.

The planning of the AoBp comprises **two steps**:

1. **Determining potential for training:** In this step, those responsible for the training finalise which competencies they want to observe, and how they want to evaluate these, using the units of the step "defining requirements for the training" and by "checking" previous internships. With the help of guiding questions, they can better define the expectations they have of the interns. A checklist simplifies this process and the associated issues which are built on it.
2. **Appraisal of educational potential:** Here, the competencies defined in the first step can be appraised and evaluated during the AoBp.

AoBp Implementation

The main aim of the step "AoBp implementation" is to **find out** the educational potential of the young people . This is an *interactive process*: only in an active discussion between both sides (i.e. between the interns and staff) can this potential be reliably determined.



The step "AoBp implementation" supports the teachers and others responsible for the training by:

- structuring the training as an interactive learning process between trainees and tutors and to
- implement them as participative competency development planning.

The step "AoBp implementation" is divided into 2 smaller steps:

1. The step "AoBp guidance" is in principle a potential orientated appraisal of the young people. In order to find the right candidates, the **guidance** during the internship must be especially observed.
2. The step "AoBp evaluation" supports those responsible for the training in three smaller steps in **structuring the appraisal interview**, gives them recommendations for **certification of the AoBp** and provides the necessary tools to create a **training development plan** for the young people they would like to acquire as trainees.

AoBp guidance

The main aim of the step "AoBp guidance" is to ensure sustainable results from the internships and utilise **educational potential found** for the **good of the company**. This last step in the AoBp circular method spans across the framework of the internship where this is susceptible to influence, as well as their connection to the entire process, as well as including the experiences which the framework has gathered in planning and implementation stages of the AoBp. The scale for guiding the AoBp should be how successful the company has been in acquiring suitable candidates.



Through implementing the step "AoBp guidance", aimed at acquiring the potential candidates, those responsible for making the decisions are supported in:

- practicing potential-orientated educational marketing and
- integrating the management of the traineeships in the company competency development strategies.

In order to secure the results, the guide stipulates the following **three steps** :

1. **Acquiring the young people for the company:** If the young people have been successful at completing the AoBp, are interested in starting a traineeship in the company, and the company itself sees them as a potential candidate, then it is essential that contact does not cease between the end of the internship and the start of the traineeship. This continuation of the contact built up throughout the AoBp should strengthen the chances that the individual candidate chooses to strive for the place as a trainee in the company.
2. **Improving the AoBp:** In this step, those responsible for the training evaluate their experiences with planning and implementation and use this to continually improve the AoBp.
3. **Implementing further activities:** As well as keeping in touch with the successful candidates, and evaluating the experiences with the AoBp, there are many other fields which can be structured as supporting frameworks for securing sustainable successful results with the AoBp. The *Attractiveness* of the company as a learning company is dependent on the *quality of the training*. Have the possibilities for the degree of improvement to particular aspects of the results of the AoBp been identified? The best education and educational planning can only be of use to potential trainees if they are well-known to others. Is the public aware of the company offers? How helpful is contact with pupils in schools and other educational establishments or interested parties?

Management of the guideline

The Internet-supported instrument for the implementation of educationally-orientated school internships (AOB) shows, in 3 **steps**:

- How vocationally orientating internships (**BOB**) can be used to **acquire trainees**
- How the **educational potential** of young interns **can be recognised**
- How the companies can acquire **trainees** for their company.

The guideline is designed for a group of between 1 and 5 interns.

The length of the AoBp is 5 days.

These 5 days are systematically and thematically structured for a total of 5 interns, as follows:

Introduction	1 day	Seeking educational potential
Implementation	3 days	Finding educational potential
Evaluation	1 day	Securing educational potential

The guideline is not a standard instruction manual, but instead promotes the integration of **company-specific** needs in structuring the transfer process between schools and traineeships.

Final remarks

Through the guideline developed for the AoBp in the pilot project *bevoplus*, the practice of statistical opposition of job specifications from the company against suitability profiles of the applicants will be transformed from a matching process into a *learning process* for both sides: The consequent reflection and orientation of *educational potential* promotes the willingness of the existing staff in the company to improve their training competencies, as well as the willingness of the young people to use their initiative to strive for improvement of their own independent career-handling competencies..

Information about the pilot project bevoplus, as well as further information on the guidelines of "AoBp" for commercial and industrial vocations can be found at: <http://www.bevoplus.de/>.

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The pilot project "Heterogeneity in vocational orientation and education" welcomes your questions and suggestions.