

# PAFP SUPPORT TO WDA TVET INTERNSHIP PROGRAMM

## HOW TO ENSURE A QUALITATIVE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE FOR TVET TRAINEES?



PAFP  
Belgian Common TVET Support Programme



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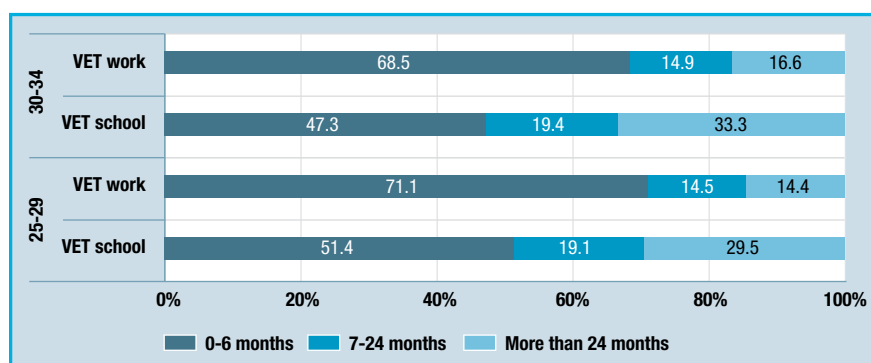
## Acronyms

CBA	Competency-based approach
CBT	Competency-based training
EU	European Union
IAP	Industrial Attachment Programme
IOF	International Organisation of <i>La Francophonie</i>
IPRC	Integrated Polytechnic Regional Centre
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
MIFOTRA	Ministry of Public Service and Labour
PAFP	<i>Programme d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle</i> (Common TVET Support Programme)
PSF	Private Sector Federation
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WBL	Work Based Learning
WPL	Work Place Learning
WDA	Workforce Development Authority

## 1. Introduction

Qualitative internship experience or any work-based learning experience in TVET are proved to be instrumental for TVET Trainees to access the labour market. Not only employment rates are higher for graduates of TVET programmes with work-based content<sup>1</sup>, but the speed of transition from education to work is faster for graduates of work-oriented programmes. On average, 70% of graduates of work-oriented programmes find employment within 6 months after graduation, as opposed to around 50% of graduates from school based programmes (figure 1).

Figure 1: Minimum duration of periods without employment after leaving formal education for the last time for medium-level VET graduates by type of VET and age, EU 27+, 2009<sup>2</sup>



It is on this basis that the Belgian Common TVET support programme (PAFP) of which the objective was that “the poorly qualified Rwandan population has more income opportunities thanks to their competences” supported the development of WDA TVET internship Programme and its experimentation in 10 pilot schools of the Southern Province of Rwanda.

This paper presents the rationale, the process, successes and failures of (PAFP support to) WDA TVET internship programme as well as recommendations for rolling out the TVET internship programme and development of any other work based learning scheme in Rwanda.

## 2. Background: Internships and work-based learning in Rwanda

“There is no single definition of what WBL entails beyond the notion that it implies two characteristics: learning in a work context and learning through practice. A distinction is typically made, however, between *learning for work* (e.g. during a work placement as part of an initial VET curricula) and *learning at work* (e.g. in-house company training).”<sup>3</sup> This paper focuses on the

<sup>1</sup> In EU27, employment rates of graduates of VET programmes with work-based content or a combination of school/ workplace is 1 to 6 % higher than graduates from school based programmes in CEDEFOP, From Education to working life, The Labour market outcomes of vocational education and training, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Source: CEDEFOP, From Education to working life, The Labour market outcomes of vocational education and training, 2012, p. 51

<sup>3</sup> European Training Foundation, Work-Based Learning, Benefits and Obstacles, A Literature Review for policy-makers and social partners in ETF Partners Countries, 2013

category of WBL for work, which is typically for initial VET programmes offered by WDA, as opposed to learning at work or continuous training.

There is a diversity of WBL schemes, which can be distinguished in three categories<sup>4</sup>:

- Alternance schemes or apprenticeship characterised by a high intensity or frequency of work integration or real-life work situations.
- School-based TVET programmes, which include on-the-job training periods in companies encompassing internships, work placements or traineeships schemes that are incorporated as a compulsory or optional element of VET programmes leading to formal qualifications.
- WBL integrated in a school-based programme, through on-site labs, workshops, or real or simulated business/industry project assignments. The aim is to create "real life" work environments, establish contacts and /or cooperation with real companies or clients, and develop entrepreneurship competences.

Work-based learning is not new in Rwanda. TVET was previously delivered through traditional apprenticeships in the informal sector. Traditional apprenticeship is defined as a more or less formalized training relationship between a traditional Master craftsperson and a young person, often based on a oral contract or implicit contract between the apprentice and the Master craftsperson. There were and there is still a multitude of crafts persons in Rwanda who informally train young people.

Formal and institutionalized (as opposed to traditional) work-based learning is however quite recent in Rwanda. It started in 2009 with the MIFOTRA programme providing internship positions to unemployed University/ College or Institute degree holders.<sup>5</sup> Most beneficiaries of the Rwanda Youth internship Programme were placed in public institutions, though.

It was only in 2011 that a formal WBL programme started for TVET trainees, under the coordination of WDA. The industrial attachment programme specifically targeted TVET trainees or graduates, but was not a compulsory part of the training programme. Its main purpose was work exposure.

This paper show, on the basis of the existing Industrial Attachment Programme, and through making the internship CBT compatible, how WDA (with the support from PAFP) has sought to improve the quality of internship for TVET Trainees.

### **3. Implementing internships according to CBT standards: the PAFP approach**

#### **3.1 The shift to modular curriculum and CBT in TVET in Rwanda**

As indicated in the Rwanda TVET Policy (2009), one axis of intervention is to provide the economy with qualified and competitive workers by ensuring the quality of TVET programmes through introducing a demand-led competency-based training model. Since 2011, the PAFP has been accompanying WDA in implementing the TVET Policy and especially the shift to competency-based

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission, Work-based learning in Europe, Practices and Policy pointers, June 2013

<sup>5</sup> MIFOTRA, Rwanda Youth internship Programme (RYIP), 2009-2012, p. 4

training (CBT). The PAFP has been instrumental in supporting WDA in the development of a modular competency based curricula and training of trainers in CBT.

WDA was trained in curriculum development by PAFP, following the IOF methodological guides to CBT curriculum development, which define the competence as “a group or an integrated assembly of knowledge, skills and attitudes making it possible to carry out, successfully, an action or group of actions such as a work task or activity.”<sup>6</sup>

**Box: The three fundamental lines of approach of CBT<sup>7</sup>**

- Taking into account the reality of the labour market;
- Developing the teaching material as such (training standards, standards for assessment, etc) to support local implementation and to promote a certain standardisation of the training ;
- A teaching approach centred on the capacity of each learner to mobilise his/her knowledge when using the competences associated with the job he/she wants to do.

CBT goes therefore beyond the strict acquisition of knowledge to include skills and attitudes that are required on the labour market. A building block of CBT is actually that it takes into account the reality of the labour market, by analysing a job (the occupational analysis) and the required competences to do it (job, duty, task analysis). The CBT is an approach that "consists essentially of defining the competences inherent to the performance of a job and formulating them into objectives within the framework of a study curriculum."<sup>8</sup>

Even though CBT intends to constitute an interface between the world of employment and that of training, it is “highly desirable” according to the IOF approach to add competences specific to training - which do not derive directly from the occupational competency-standards, in order to provide learning that is as complete as possible by promoting the individual's integration into professional life and his professional mobility. Internship together with competences covering job-hunting, preparing a curriculum vitae and attending selection interviews, are recommended<sup>9</sup> in order to facilitate TVET Graduates’ integration into employment.

This is the option that has been chosen in Rwanda; WDA has therefore opted to add an internship module to TVET curricula.

### **3.2 The shift to modular curriculum and CBT (2014) and its implication for WBL in Rwanda**

The shift to modular and competency-based approaches had several implications on the existing internship programme implemented in TVET schools in Rwanda:

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<sup>6</sup> International organization of la Francophonie, Methodological support guide for the implementation of competency based approach in vocational training, Design and production of sectoral and preliminary studies, Guide 1, 2009, p. 4

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem

<sup>9</sup> International organization of la Francophonie, Methodological support guide for the implementation of competency based approach in vocational training, Design and Production of Training Standards, Guide 3, 2009, p. 25

- The industry attachment or internship is made compulsory, as a module to be completed to get any TVET Certificate;
- The industry attachment or internship module should be assessed, which has 2 implications: assessment criteria and indicators should be developed and the internship module can be failed if the TVET Trainee does not fulfil the set criteria and indicators.

These changes had to be reflected in the existing Industrial Attachment Programme tools used as reference materials in the competency based curriculum. This was the main task performed by the PAFP after having conducted an assessment of problems of the original Industrial Attachment Programme.

### **3.3. Problem analysis of the original Industrial Attachment Programme**

In the initial stage, upon request of School Managers from the PAFP pilot schools, the PAFP organised field visits and a workshop to collect detailed feedback from school managers, liaison officers, TVET trainers and company supervisors on Industrial Attachment Programme implementation.

The main reported problem was the lack of cooperation between the TVET sector and the private sector. While school managers were complaining about companies being reluctant to take interns, companies qualified most TVET trainees as “non-competent” for the job. Even though WDA had signed a MoU with the Private Sector Federation (PSF), the enforcement of the agreement at the local level remained low. Interns were considered as cheap workforce and were given either repetitive tasks or tasks not corresponding to their training programme. It was also reported that TVET Trainees were requested to pay for consumables (esp. in tailoring) or to pay a guarantee or insurance (esp. in hospitality) to cover potential damages.

The implementation of Industrial Attachment Programme in TVET Centres was also facing many challenges, especially in regards to the roles and responsibilities of the school manager, the liaison officer and TVET trainers. The position of full-time liaison officer was not foreseen in the TVET schools’ organisation chart. A TVET Trainer was often assigned liaison officer in addition to his/her normal duties, without being specifically trained. Similarly school managers also needed to be trained to approach the private sector with a win-win attitude.

### **3.4. Proposed and Selected Solutions**

Against this background, a workshop was organised with school managers, company supervisors and other Industrial Attachment Programme stakeholders. School managers introduced some of their own practices in implementing the internship programme. On the basis of school managers’ recommendations and of existing Industrial Attachment Programme tools, and in close collaboration with WDA, the IPRC/South, school managers and the private sector, the internship programme and tools were revised to be made consistent with the CBT approach and to improve the quality of interns’ experience.

Figure 2: Work based learning schemes and their characteristics in the Rwandan context

	Wage	Legislative framework	Programme of learning	On the job training	In-School Training	Formal assessment	Recognised certification	Duration
<b>Alternance schemes or apprenticeship</b>								
Apprenticeship	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Fixed 1-4 years
<b>On-the-job training periods</b>								
Internship	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Variable 1-6 months
Industry attachment	Yes	Maybe	No	Yes	No	No	Maybe	Variable
<b>School based programmes</b>								
On-site training	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Variable

Defining the objective of the internship module i.e. “To mobilize acquired competencies on the workplace” was the first step to make the internship module CBT compatible. The objective of the internship module is different from that of the industrial attachment, since it is linked to in-school training. Similarly to apprenticeship schemes, the internship is preceded with in-school training, includes a programme of learning and is formally assessed (figure 2). As opposed to apprenticeship schemes, there is supposedly no new competence acquired during the internship period, but only elements of competences, such as communication, handling clients, etc. The objective of the internship is to get acquainted with the world of work through applying the acquired competences

The second step for making the internship programme CBT compatible was to define the Trainee’s assessment criteria and related indicators. As the main objective of the internship, the most weighted criteria (50%) is to “implement one’s competencies acquired throughout the training”. Since the internship period is often the first chance for TVET Trainees to get acquainted with the world of work, it was judged as crucial to give a large share on assessing attitudes of interns (30%). Soft skills such as punctuality, diligence, taking initiatives, teamwork, planning skills, etc are barely assessed in other modules and are considered as essential by the private sector. Soft skills are therefore assessed during the internship by the company supervisor. Eventually, during the workshop, the private sector representatives insisted to also assess the quality of work performed during the internship in order to assess the trainees’ respect for instruction, meticulousness and time management.

**BOX: The three assessment criteria of the WDA Internship module**

- Implement one’s competencies acquired throughout the training
- Appropriate attitude on the workplace
- Quality of the work



The third step for making the internship programme CBT compatible was to define the person in charge of assessing the trainee. Even though interns should be assessed by company supervisors, it was however seen as too risky by WDA to give this responsibility to company supervisors only. The internship module is therefore partly assessed by the company supervisor (55%) on the basis of an evaluation form and the TVET Trainer (45%) on the basis of monitoring visits (2) and the final interview that takes place at the end of the internship period.

To cope with the lack of cooperation between the TVET sector and the private sector, many awareness-raising sessions for the private sector were organised together with the IPRC/South and the PSF/South. The first awareness raising sessions were about how to use the internships logbooks. They were kept short (maximum a day) to adapt to the private sector representatives' time constraints.

These sessions were then followed by a more in depth training session of private sector representatives in charge of relations with TVET in the Southern Province (Members of the IPRC/South-PSF/South Committee). As ambassadors of the TVET - PSF relations, these representatives were in charge of spreading the information at the district level.

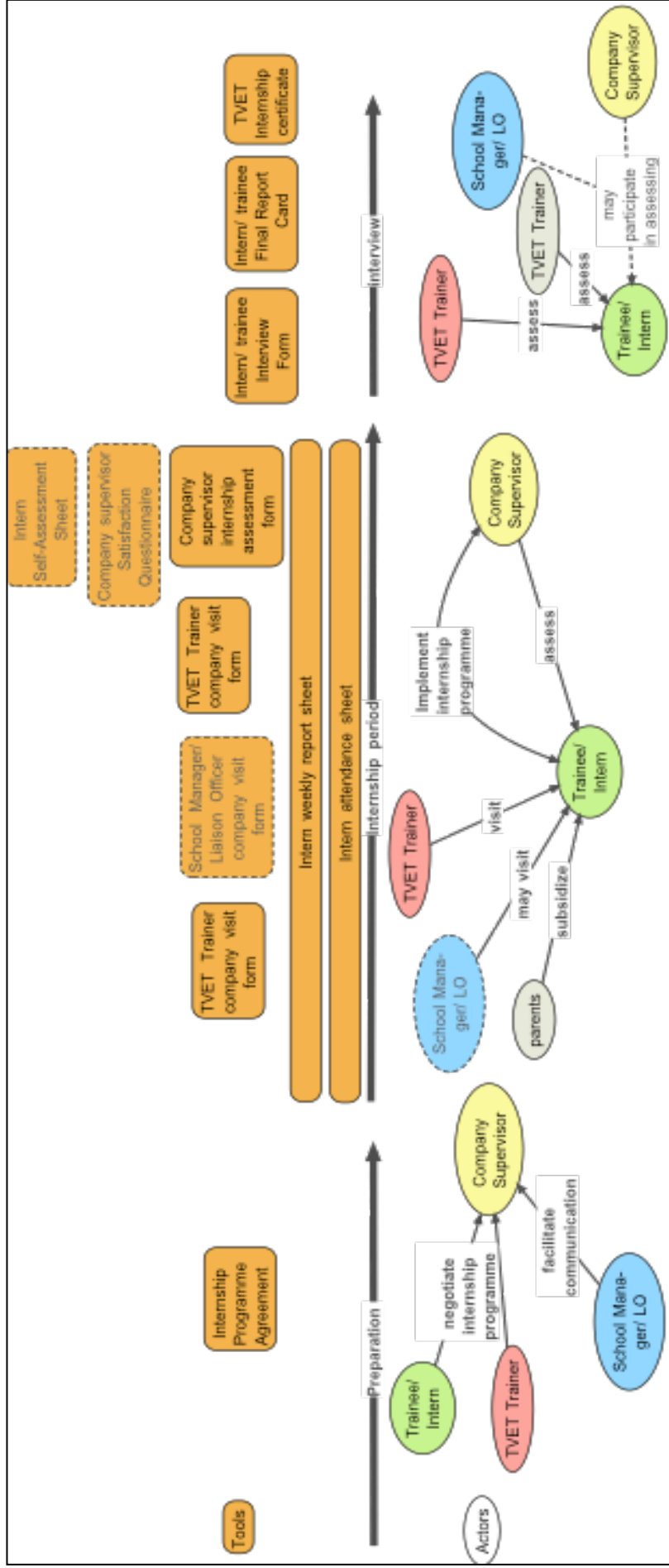
Results from these sessions were however not sufficient. Many schools still reported misunderstanding from the private sector of their role in the internship programme. In order to reinforce the TVET-PSF relations, a 3-day intensive training of influential entrepreneurs from the Southern Province was organised, which proved to be more effective.

To cope with the fact that interns were considered as cheap workforce and were given either repetitive tasks or tasks not corresponding to their training programme, a WBL contract "TVET internship programme" between the company supervisor and the school was added to the internship tools to ensure that specific competences of the curriculum were implemented during the internship.

Roles and responsibilities of internship stakeholders were also clearly defined (figure 4). School Managers and TVET Trainers were trained on how to "Coordinate relations between the labour market and TVET Institutions effectively". The training was not limited to internship management: School Managers and TVET Trainers needed to have the broader picture of TVET – private sector relations from the top to the bottom i.e. from skills needs analysis and the role of sector skills councils to involvement of the private sector in Schools Management Committees and trainees' external assessment.

Eventually, company supervisors' logbooks were streamlined to adapt to the stakeholders' request to keep it short: the only compulsory document to be filled in by the company supervisor, the intern assessment sheet, is a yes/ no questionnaire. Additional documents, such as the satisfaction questionnaire include open questions but are not compulsory. Eventually, all logbooks were translated into Kinyarwanda.

Figure 3: The TVET internship programme: Tools and Actors



Source: PAFP

## 4. Analysing the approach

### 4.1 The successes and failures of the approach

The main success of internship is for trainees to strengthen the acquired competences (according to trainers), to be able to practice (according to trainees) in order to be competent on the labour market (according to company supervisors). This is not specific to the WDA TVET internship programme but inherent to any work-based learning approach. The implementation of the WDA TVET Internship programme however broadened the target group exposed to WBL: the PAFP pilot schools' School Managers indicated that all trainees went on internship<sup>10</sup>. It was also noted that the internship, since made compulsory, has been more valued by all stakeholders. Interns indicated that they were welcomed and well integrated in the team of employees.

The second highlighted success of the TVET internship programme is that interns were monitored by their TVET Trainer/ Liaison Officer through visits to companies. It was highlighted by company supervisors as an innovative and very positive shift. The monitoring performed by TVET Trainers could have however been improved. Trainers should be given sufficient time in the company with the intern and the company supervisor to properly monitor the intern's activities and they should be coached to properly fill in the company visit form.

Another strength of the TVET Internship Programme is that tools have been improved and harmonised. The length and assessment approach of the internship have also been harmonised. TVET schools used to have their own specific internship tools and assessment methods. Harmonised/ streamlined tools allow TVET schools to speak with one voice to the private sector. The TVET internship logbooks are not always used to their full potential, though. Interns are still given irrelevant tasks or sometimes, the company does not provide activities linked to the taught curriculum. This reflects poor implementation of the TVET internship programme agreement that should be jointly defined by the trainer and the company supervisor along the trade's curriculum and the company's activities and workload.

### 4.2. The potentialities and obstacles of the approach

In order for the TVET internship programme to be used to its full potential in the future, adequate financial support should be provided by all actors (WDA, IPRCs, TVET Schools, teachers associations, parents, private sector and development partners). A major obstacle for TVET schools is the insufficient budget mainly composed of school fees that can be allocated to interns' monitoring. For TVET schools, costs include expenses of the visit to the company by the School Manager (optional), the 2 monitoring visits of the TVET Trainer during the internship period and the attendance of the company supervisor at the assessment jury at the end of the internship period. The minimum approximate additional cost is 50.000 RWF/ trainee (approx. 60€<sup>11</sup>), which has been covered by the PAFP in its 10 pilot schools.

Implementing roles and responsibilities as defined in the TVET internship programme represents a major potentiality for ensuring a qualitative experience to TVET interns. School Managers and TVET Trainers who were trained in implementing the TVET internship programme should be coached to lead the process. An adequate planning of internships, especially to search for and secure internship

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<sup>10</sup> In comparison with 80% of trainees from PAFP pilot schools who went on internship in 2010/13 (before the implementation of WDA TVET Internship Programme).

<sup>11</sup> Official exchange rate on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015: 1.000 RWF = 1,22€

placements for interns, is necessary. Indeed, a major obstacle for interns is that the internship implementation period is not flexible. There is therefore high competition among TVET trainees who are all looking for an internship placement at the same period of the year (October- December).

The limited number of companies and low involvement of companies was an obstacle to the proper implementation of the TVET internship programme. A large internship programme awareness campaign would unlock the potential of the TVET internship programme, to both mobilize companies to offer internship positions and also to train company supervisors in coaching and assessing interns.

Ultimately, another obstacle in implementing the TVET internship programme is discrimination mainly in the hospitality sector. Several cases of physical discrimination were reported. Some cases of sexual harassment were also reported, especially against girls in male dominated trades, and in hospitality.

## **5. Conclusion: Lessons learned and Recommendations**

The financial costs incurred by the TVET internship programme have been a major barrier in the implementation stage. A financing strategy of the TVET internship programme should be defined, whereby MIFOTRA, WDA, IPRCs, TVET schools via their production units, the Private Sector Federation, Professional Chambers and Associations, Parents, and development partners, have all a role to play.

Second, in order to have the full involvement and commitment of the private sector, a TVET awareness campaign towards the PSF and potential employers should be organized to introduce what they can get out of the « new TVET Offer » in Rwanda. In parallel to a large-scale campaign, possibly through the PSF and professional chambers and associations, potential company supervisors should be trained by WDA in coaching and assessing interns.

Experience has shown that TVET Trainers do not necessarily have the soft skills to approach private sector representatives and to keep track of potential contacts. A staff member dedicated to establishing and strengthening the relations with the private sector and potential employers should be available in each school. It is hereby recommended to add a full-time liaison officer to TVET Schools' organisational chart. In addition, TVET Trainers should also be trained in ensuring the coordination between the labour market and TVET institutions effectively.

Rwanda only has a limited number of private companies that are able to welcome interns while the number of TVET Trainees is on the rise. It creates a massive competition among trainees to access internship positions at the same period of the year (October – December). TVET schools should be accompanied to apply the modular approach, desynchronised from the annual calendar, in order for TVET schools to roll out internship modules throughout the year. A second solution can be sought in internships in semi-formalised companies, upon prior assessment and approval of the TVET Trainer/ Liaison Officer.

TVET schools - employers collaboration should be strengthened at the local level, through school managers' visits to companies and data recording, organizing open days, signing MoUs, organizing trainees' visit of companies and offering trainings to companies' staff an vice versa (TVET Trainers trained in/ by private company experts). School managers should be trained and stimulated in using the internship programme as the spearhead and flagship of structuring their relations with the private sector.

Eventually, it should be kept in mind that if an employer requests an intern to pay for an internship, either through a "guarantee" or "supervising costs", it is likely to mean that the employer does not see the benefits of contributing to skills development and therefore that the training might not be relevant to the labour market needs. It also means that the private sector must at least be involved

in work based learning schemes and, at best be in the driving seat to increase relevance, accessibility (less costly) and quality of internship or any work based learning experience.

The recently approved National Policy on Workplace Learning to prepare Rwandan Youth for Employment (Workplace Learning Policy), seeking to harmonize and coordinate workplace learning schemes in Rwanda, takes most of these recommendations on board and foresees to use existing tools. The implementation of the policy should luckily improve further the quality of internships for TVET Trainees.

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