



The Voice of OECD Business

**BIAC Education Committee Survey
Synthesis Report**

The Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC) is the voice of Business at the OECD – the world's foremost purveyor of cross-cutting statistics and fact-based policy recommendations. The BIAC network includes national business, industry and employers associations from OECD member and observer countries, as well as international sector-specific associate experts.

June 2013



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The following pages provide a synthesis of results from the BIAC Education Committee Survey, highlighting key findings and providing relevant information (such as illustrative examples of developments in different countries). However, the synthesis is inevitably a non-exhaustive account of the Survey responses; detailed country responses have been submitted separately to the OECD Secretariat for its internal use only.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION.....	6
PART II: PRIVATE SECTOR INCLUSION IN EDUCATION POLICY-MAKING	8
PART II: PRIVATE SECTOR PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION POLICY	14
SCHOOLS	15
HIGHER EDUCATION.....	18
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING	20
PART III: PRIVATE SECTOR-LED INITIATIVES FOR EDUCATION	22
PART III: PRIVATE SECTOR SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE OECD EDUCATION ANALYSIS AT NATIONAL LEVEL.....	25
CONCLUSIONS.....	27

BIAC EDUCATION COMMITTEE SURVEY SYNTHESIS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between autumn 2012 and spring 2013, BIAC launched a survey of its national member and observer organisations' priorities, perspectives and activities on education issues. BIAC received a high response rate from both BIAC member and observer organisations, suggesting that education and skills issues are important priorities for national business and employers' organisations in OECD economies and beyond.

The survey sought to gather both qualitative and quantitative data on the nature of collaboration and participation between private stakeholders and policy-makers, on education policy and reform. Quantitative data identified the extent of private sector inclusion in policy-making, together with general trends in education policy reform priorities. Qualitative data both extended this content and sought to highlight private-sector led initiatives for education, together with private sector suggestions for future OECD education analysis at national level.

The survey results indicate that only around half of the participant countries have some sort of legal framework in place for collaboration between education policymakers and the leading national business and employers organisations. Nevertheless, all of the respondents indicated some form of participation in education policy discussions, but through a mix of different channels. For the large majority of respondents, the perceived success of their interaction with education policymakers tends to be mixed. In a few countries, however, the national business and employers' organisations indicate that their views are rarely taken into account by education policymakers. Furthermore respondents also indicate a relatively high level of collaboration with higher education institutions and VET programmes. Collaboration is more limited with schools, although the data does suggest a strong desire from employers to foster closer co-operation.

Data indicates that respondents shared many of the same priorities for education policy reform, in schools, in higher education, and in post-secondary vocational education and training. It is evident

from the survey responses that one of employers' top priorities for policy reform in each area is the need to improve co-operation with employers. A strong trend also emerges concerning the need to link education more closely to labour market needs. Furthermore, at school-level, employers indicate that curriculum reform is a top priority.

Numerous examples of private sector-led approaches being carried out by national business and employers organisations to improve various aspects of their national education systems are also presented in this synthesis report, demonstrating the proactive leadership of business on education policy issues. The survey results also clearly show that a large number of national business and employers organisations consider that the OECD could usefully contribute its expertise and analysis to certain aspects of their respective national education systems.

INTRODUCTION

1. Following a decision by the BIAC Education Committee at its 25 April 2012 meeting, BIAC launched a survey of its national member and observer organisations' priorities, perspectives and activities on education issues from autumn 2012 to spring 2013¹. The BIAC Education Committee Survey (hereafter called the "Survey") was designed to serve as initial BIAC input to discussions underway for the proposed OECD Education Policy Outlook series, as well as other relevant ongoing and planned OECD activities.
2. Thanks to the active participation of BIAC member and observer organisations, and at the time of writing this synthesis report, a total of 28 organisation responses have so far been received from 27 countries² (two were received from Turkey).
3. While the majority of responses have been received from BIAC member organisations (i.e. from OECD member countries), a number of responses has also been received from BIAC observer organisations from the following "non-OECD" economies: Brazil, Colombia, India, Latvia, and South Africa.
4. BIAC member and observer organisations consist of the major representative national business and employer organisations in OECD and several partner countries, which specialise in policy advocacy. Given the national-level focus of this Survey, BIAC did not attempt to seek the participation of individual companies.
5. The Survey invited participants' responses to the following themes:

¹ The Survey was launched in two stages: the first (2012) consisted of five open-ended questions allowing for qualitative analysis, while the second (2013 supplement) consisted of structured questions to permit quantitative analysis.

² Respondent countries are as follows: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Hungary, India, Israel, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States.

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- i. The legal framework (if it exists) for dialogue between employers and government in education policy discussions, including different ways of interacting, and the perceived degree to which the views and policy recommendations of employers are sufficiently considered by policymakers.
 - ii. The key positions and top priorities of each organisation for education policy in its respective country in: (i) primary and secondary education (schools); (ii) higher education (universities); and (iii) post-secondary vocational education and training.
 - iii. The major reforms implemented (or still being implemented) by the government in each country since 2007 in: (i) primary and secondary education (schools); (ii) higher education (universities); and (iii) post-secondary vocational education and training.
 - iv. Examples of successful initiatives being carried out by each organisation in its respective country in the field of education (e.g. collaborating with schools, company training programmes for employees, partnerships with university research departments, and so on).
 - v. Specific aspects of the education system in each country that the responding organisation feels would merit OECD analysis.
6. This synthesis report shall therefore follow the same structure as the themes listed above, except for the third theme on key national education policy reforms since 2007³. The synthesis report is therefore divided into four chapters as follows:
- I. Private sector inclusion in education policy-making.**
 - II. Private sector priorities for education policy.**
 - III. Private sector-led initiatives for education.**
 - IV. Private sector suggestions for future OECD education analysis at national level.**

³ Information provided by respondents about key national education policy reforms is included in the individual survey responses which are intended for internal OECD Secretariat Use only.

PART II: PRIVATE SECTOR INCLUSION IN EDUCATION POLICY-MAKING

7. The results of the Survey show that in just over half of respondents' countries there exists no legal framework for collaboration in education policy discussions between the government and respondent organisations⁴. This indicates that legally recognised channels of co-operation between policy-makers and employers are not as geographically widespread as might be expected⁵.

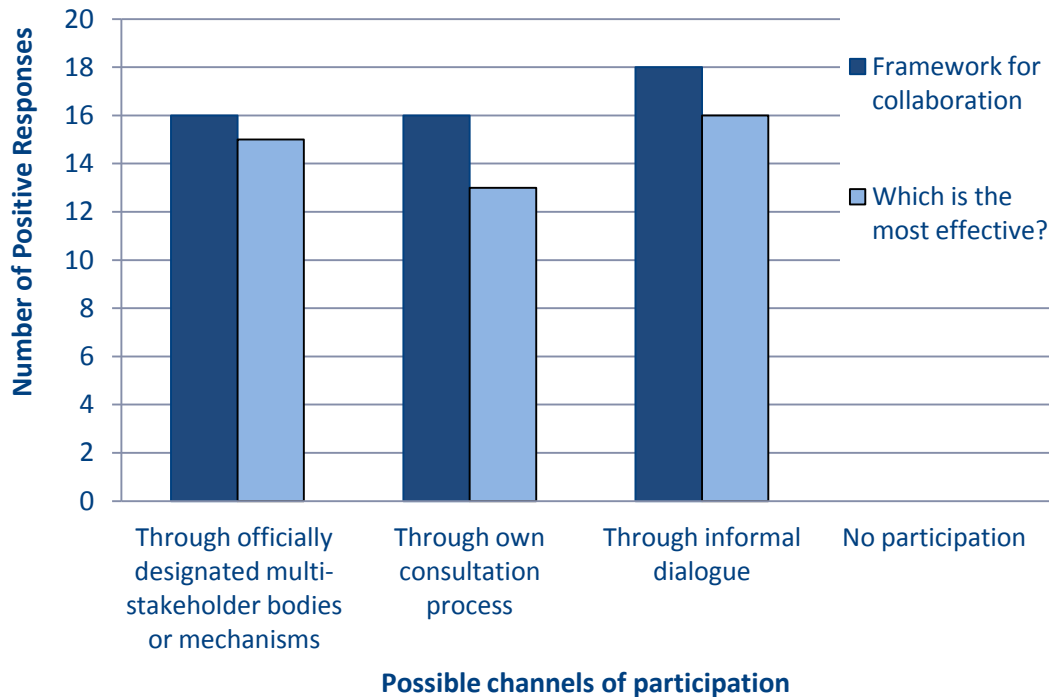
8. Nevertheless, other channels of interaction exist and are commonly used by business organisations in order to engage in education policy discussions. Chart 1 shows the types of channels that business organisations use in order to participate in the education policy reform process, together with the perceived effectiveness of these channels⁶. The chart shows a relatively even spread between the types of channels commonly used by business organisations. These channels consist of officially designated multi-stakeholder bodies or mechanisms if available (bringing together governments, employers, unions and education institutions), internal consultation processes within the business organisation itself, and informal dialogue with the government and other relevant stakeholders. No business organisation responding to the survey indicated that they had no participation in the education policy reform process.

⁴ This finding is based on a total of 19 responses from participating organisations.

⁵ Interestingly, one national business member organisation in Turkey appears to benefit from a recognized legal framework while another respondent organisation does not, suggesting that different business associations within countries can sometimes enjoy different levels or channels of cooperation with the public sector according to their respective mandates or structures.

⁶ In both questions, participants were permitted to select more than one option and it should be noted that fewer responses were offered for the question concerning perceived effectiveness.

Chart 1: Types of participation in education policy discussions and their perceived effectiveness

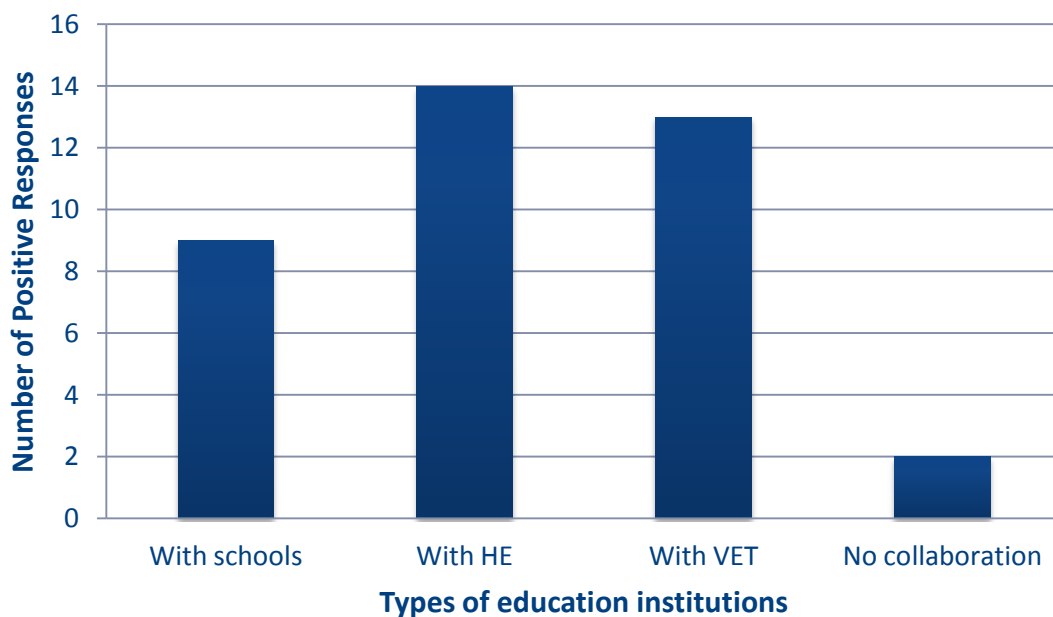


9. In terms of the perceived effectiveness of these channels, again the spread is quite even. However, we can see that relying only on internal business organisation consultations is generally perceived to be slightly less effective than other channels of engagement in terms of being able to influence education policy discussions in countries. This would seem to indicate that co-operation with other stakeholders, whether through official mechanisms or informal dialogues, is considered very important.

10. However, several participating organisations reported that internal consultation among their company and association members is nevertheless an essential channel of engagement in education policy discussions. It provides up-to-date information on employers’ needs and views and also helps to ensure the legitimacy of the views expressed by the national business and employers organisations. Therefore internal consultation is a vital part of the process and tends to accompany the other channels of participation in education policy discussions, recognising that all channels are important.

11. Interestingly, informal dialogue with government and stakeholders is perceived to be roughly as effective as officially designated bodies or mechanisms. This suggests that even in countries where there may be no legal or official framework for collaboration, business organisations may nevertheless effectively engage in education policy discussions with government through informal dialogue processes.
12. In addition to engaging in policy discussions with governments, business and employers can also positively influence education systems by collaborating directly with education institutions. Chart 2 shows the extent of collaboration between the national business and employers organisations with different types of education institutions: primary and secondary schools, higher education (HE) institutions such as colleges and universities, and vocational education and training (VET) programmes at secondary and post-secondary levels⁷.

Chart 2: Collaboration between national business and employers organisations with education institutions



13. As shown in Chart 2, the most common collaboration appears to take place with higher education institutions and with VET programmes. This might be expected as businesses may seek to develop closer links with young people who are readying to complete their formal

⁷ Chart 2 is based on responses from 19 participating organisations.

education and subsequently about to transition into the labour market. Nevertheless, a significant number of business organisations also appear to collaborate with primary and secondary schools. Two national business organisations reported that they did not have any collaboration with education institutions, because either the collaboration is only informal at this stage and/or because the collaboration takes place at the level of the organisations' members (i.e. companies and sectoral associations) rather than with the organisation itself.

14. None of the national business or employer organisations responding to the Survey felt that their views and policy recommendations were always considered to a sufficient extent in their respective countries' education reform discussions.
15. A large majority of national business and employer organisations (25 out of 28 - i.e. close to 90%) indicated that their views and recommendations to their respective countries' education policy reform discussions were sometimes considered to a sufficient extent by policy-makers (i.e. some recommendations are considered, while some are not). See Box 1 below for a selected list of examples provided by respondents of both successful and less successful inclusion of private sector views and recommendations in national-level education policy discussions.
16. Only 3 national business and employer organisations expressed that their views and recommendations were rarely considered to a sufficient extent in their respective countries' education reform discussions (Brazil, Poland, and Slovenia). For instance, one of BIAC's member organisations in Poland responded that policy-makers in charge of higher education and post-secondary vocational training did not adequately consult BIAC's member organisation when making reform decisions. In the case of Slovenia, BIAC's member organisation reported that the needs of the national economy are rarely considered in education policy-making at national level, but acknowledged that there have been some successful attempts taken by individual education institutions to cooperate with and adapt to the needs of local companies. The private sector response in Brazil, which also fell into this category, nevertheless noted that the views and recommendations of employers now appear to be increasingly considered in education policy discussions.

Box 1: Selected examples of successful and less successful inclusion of private sector views and recommendations in national-level education policy discussions

Successful examples:

In Austria, the views of BIAC's national member organisation were sufficiently considered in the following policy decisions: (i) compulsory and government-funded final year of pre-school, (ii) implementation of universities of applied sciences, (iii) transformation of universities from state institutions into "private enterprises" with management boards, boards of trustees, elected presidents, etc., (iv) centralisation and standardisation of the final examination at the end of secondary education ("Matura") in order to serve as a more comparable qualification for university entrance, and (v) implementation of an apprenticeship diploma and certificate of secondary education ("Lehre mit Matura").

In Denmark, the recommendations of one of BIAC's national member organisations were sufficiently considered whereby policy-makers introduced higher admission criteria for young students into vocational education and training⁸.

In Germany, one of BIAC's national member organisations reports that its recommendations were sufficiently considered in the areas of pre-school education as well as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education.

In Italy, two recent reforms of schools and universities were reported to have largely taken into account the views of BIAC's national member, the leading employers' organisation in the country.

In Japan, representatives of industry, including BIAC's national member organisation, participate in the discussions of the Central Education Council of the Japanese government, and their views are reportedly reflected to a sufficient extent. However, there is reportedly less contact between BIAC's member organisation and the Japanese government in the areas of primary and secondary education.

In Latvia, BIAC's national observer organisation observes that the formal tripartite consultation process works very well, whereby employers are involved in all working groups and are invited to almost all public discussions. That said, the implementation process appears to move slowly and appears to often follow the government's own considerations, rather than following all recommendations made by social partners.

In Norway, BIAC's national member organisation recognised that its influence in education reform discussions is greatest in cases where its role is not only that of a social partner, but where it also functions as an independent actor within the education system. The Norwegian vocational training scheme is one relevant example in this regard.

In Turkey, one of BIAC's national member organisations reported that the recommendation of employers for the creation of the vocational qualification system was successfully accepted by all related parties, leading to the establishment of the Vocational Qualifications Board in 2006.

In Israel, BIAC's national member organisation has been warning the government about the growth of a

⁸ However, implementation of the criteria was less successful, as just as many persons with low qualifications as before were enrolled in the VET system. Currently a new round of discussion with the social partners is going on so that higher admission criteria can be properly implemented.

significant skills gap in the industrial sector and the parallel growth of graduates who cannot find jobs in their disciplines. While the relevant government departments have recognised the problem, it is reported that little has been done to address the issue. BIAC's national member organisation is therefore calling for an entirely new strategy.

Less successful examples:

In Austria, the private sector call for a reintroduction of tuition fees was not successful.

Similarly in Germany, the private sector positions on financing higher education and tuition fees were not sufficiently considered.

In India, one of BIAC's observer organisations notes that while there is serious discussion involving employers in educational reforms, actual implementation of employers' views appears limited. It is reported that part of the problem appears to be the very different types of educational attainments required by different sectors of the Indian economy, meaning that perceptions about employers' needs tend to follow temporary "fashions".

In South Africa, despite being engaged in the National Economic and Labour Council (NEDLAC) which is recognised as a best practice example of organised social partner consultation, BIAC's national observer organisation reports that it is not always possible to reach consensus. Thus the government faces a challenge in trying to consider the views of employers, or for that matter labour, to a sufficient extent.

PART II: PRIVATE SECTOR PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION POLICY

17. The impressive number of responses to this Survey from North America, Latin America, Europe, South and East Asia and Australasia, indicates that education is an important priority for many national business and employers organisations around the world.
18. According to the Survey results, approximately 7% of the responding organisations' central secretariat staff is on average specifically assigned to work on education issues. This is of course a rough indicator and can depend very much on the different mandates and structures of national business and employers organisations, as well as several other factors. Nevertheless, 7% is a non-negligible figure when one considers the many other aspects of the economy that a national business and employers organisation typically needs to address, such as trade, investment, employment, environment, finance, anti-corruption, and so on.
19. The Survey invited respondents to indicate their respective organisations' top priorities for education policy reform in three parts of the system: pre-primary, primary and secondary schools; higher education (universities and colleges); and vocational education and training at post-secondary level. In each of the three areas, respondents' were presented with a range of possible priorities and asked to select the five most important, or to suggest alternative priorities of their own if desired. It should be noted that the following paragraphs only seek to document the broad trends in respondents' priorities.

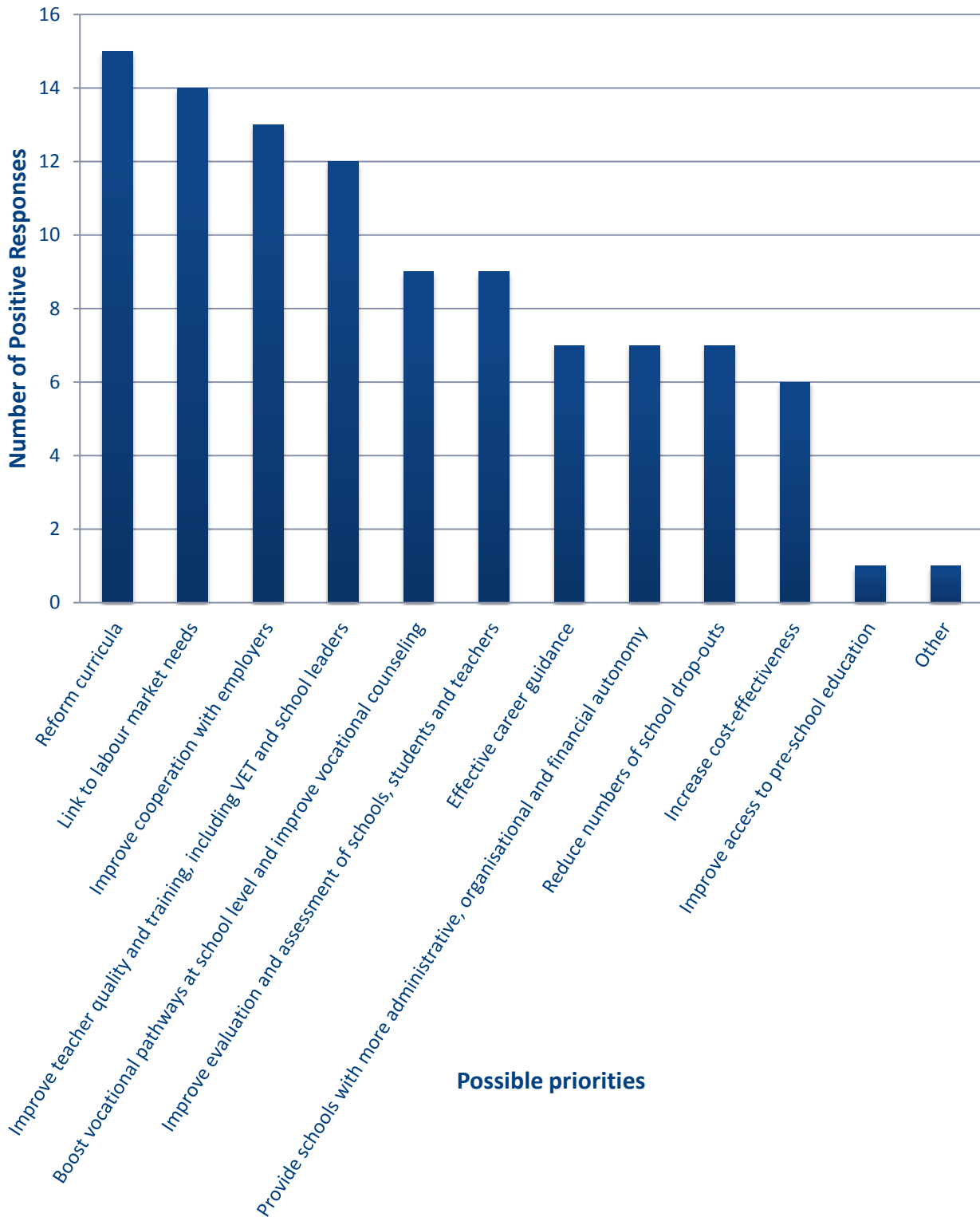
Schools

20. Chart 3(a) shows the respondents' top priorities for education policy reform in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools⁹. It is interesting to note that the most commonly selected priority is school curricula reform, closely followed by linking education to labour market needs and improving co-operation with employers. Considering that Chart 2 showed comparatively less collaboration between employers and schools (compared to higher education and VET programmes), it is interesting to note in Chart 3(a) that many business and employers' organisations do wish to build closer co-operation at this level of education. Improving teaching quality and training, including VET and school leaders, is also a high priority for employers in many countries according to the Survey results.
21. Given the attention attributed to curriculum reform, the Survey requested specific details from respondents about which elements of the curriculum should be strengthened in their respective countries. The results are shown in Chart 3(b)¹⁰. According to the responses, it appears that employers most commonly believe that more emphasis is needed on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in national curricula. This is closely followed by enhancing focus on core skills such as numeracy and literacy, as well as critical thinking and communication skills. In some countries, business and employers organisations also attribute importance to enhancing language skills, as well as basic economics and personal finance.

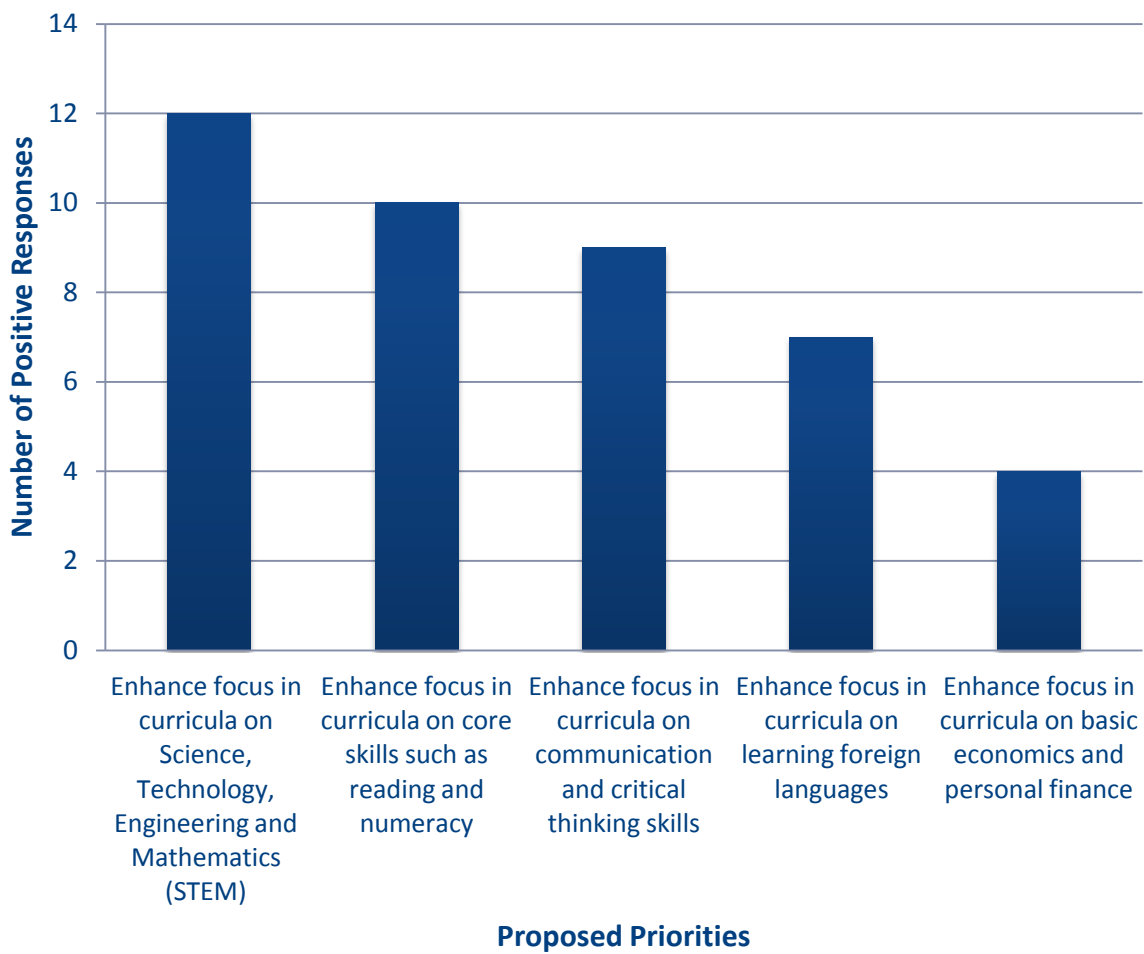
⁹ Based on responses from 20 participating organisations.

¹⁰ Based on responses from 15 participating organisations.

Chart 3 (a) Employers' Top Priorities for Education Policy Reform in Schools



Graph 3(b) Employers' Priorities for Curricula Reform

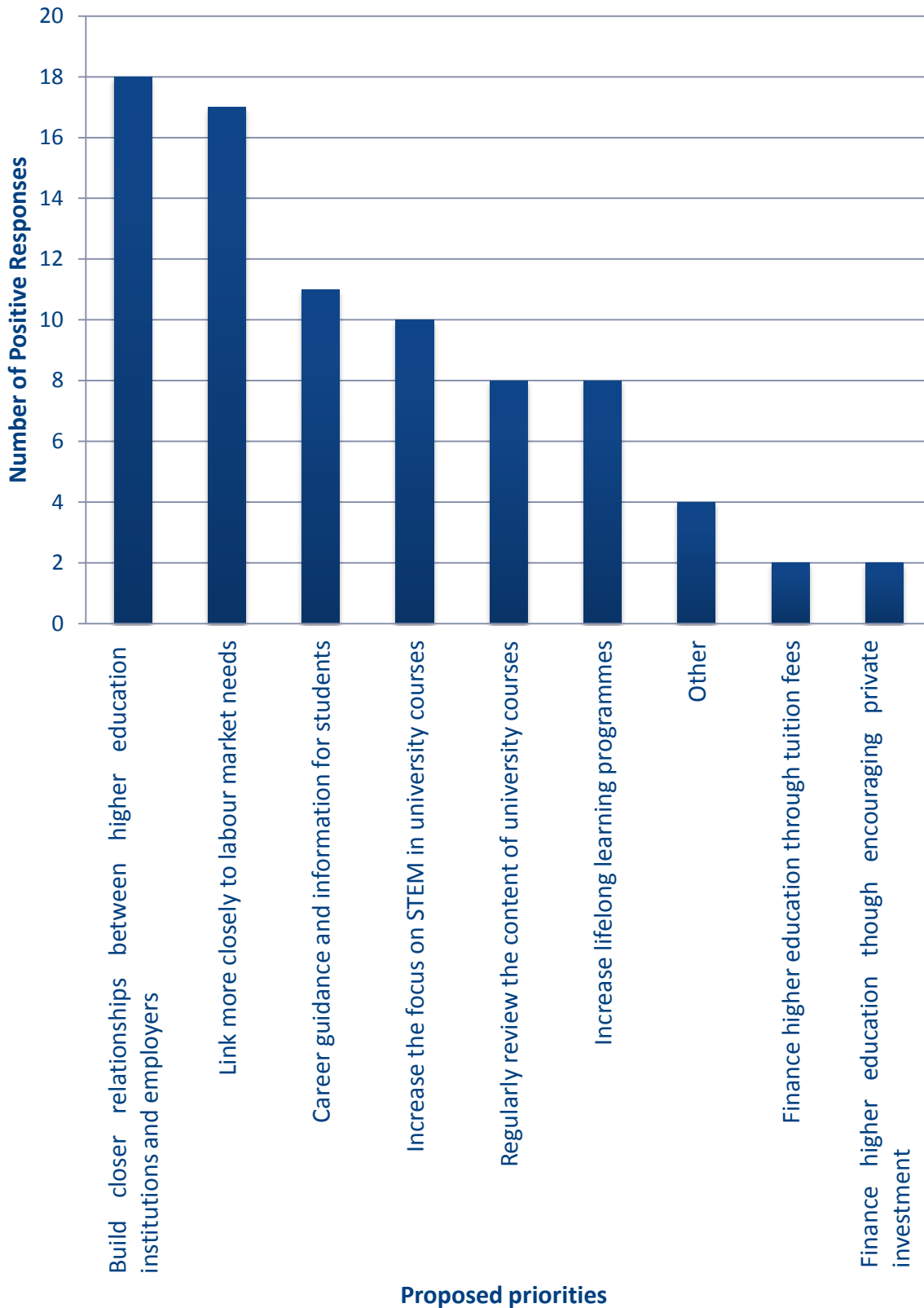


Higher Education

22. Chart 4 shows respondents' top priorities for education policy reform in higher education¹¹. Interestingly, two clear priorities emerged: the need to build closer relationships between higher education institutions and employers, and the need to link higher education more closely to labour market needs. Again, these priorities echo two of the top priorities in Chart 3(a). Furthermore, respondents in many countries also felt that career guidance should be stepped-up for students.
23. While there is no national curriculum at higher education level, respondents nevertheless also prioritised the need to increase the focus on STEM in university courses and some stressed the importance of regularly reviewing the content of university courses.
24. In terms of “other” priorities which do not feature in Chart 4, respondents believed that the following are important (in no particular order): increase higher education cost-effectiveness, improve evaluation systems in order to demonstrate learning outcomes and employability, and step-up the internationalisation of higher education.

¹¹ Based on responses from 20 participating organisations.

Chart 4: Employers' Top Priorities for Reform in Higher Education

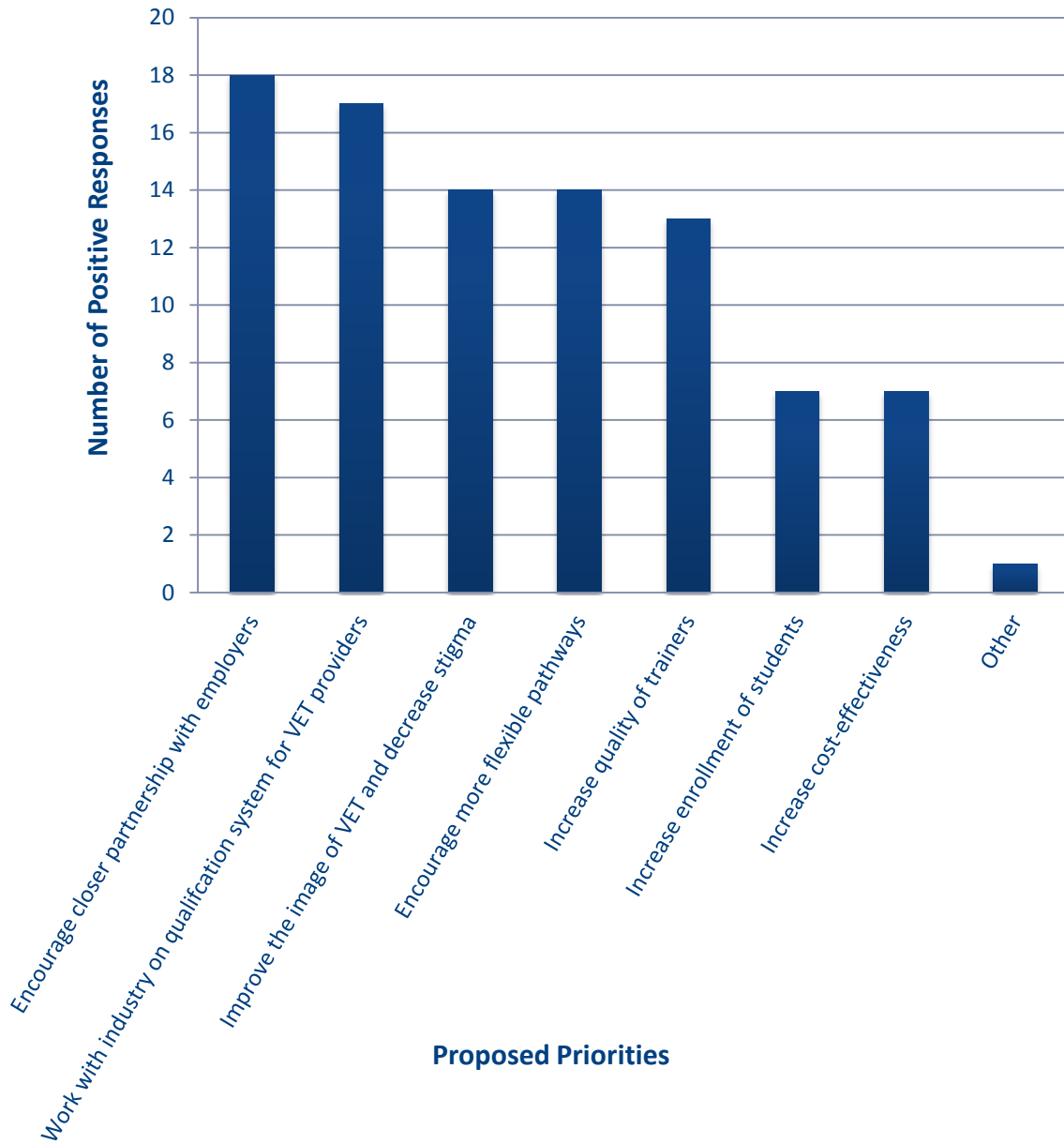


Vocational education and training

25. Chart 5 shows employers' top priorities for reform in post-secondary VET programmes¹². Consistent with top-trending priorities in Charts 3 (schools) and 4 (higher education), a common top priority is to encourage closer partnerships between VET programmes and employers. Interestingly, another top priority is to work closely with the industry to develop qualification systems for VET providers. Other high priorities include the need to improve the image of VET, encourage more flexible pathways and increase quality of trainers.

¹² Based on responses from 20 participating organisations.

Chart 5: Employers' Top Priorities for Reform in VET



PART III: PRIVATE SECTOR-LED INITIATIVES FOR EDUCATION

26. The Survey responses have revealed many ways by which national business and employers' organisations take proactive approaches in improving education and skills in their countries.
27. In **Austria**, for example, the Federation of Austrian Industries launched a national STEM strategy ("MINT-Strategie") in 2007, in order to address the STEM-skill shortage in the country. The project subsequently carried out industry-led actions in five areas: raising public awareness about R&D; innovating the education system; improving the general conditions for jobs in the field of innovation; including more women in science and technology; and fostering mobility and migration. For example, STEM projects at school level included funding programmes for students, collaborating with governmental organisations, and introducing industry professionals as "role models" for students.
28. In **Finland**, the "Oivallus" project (literally meaning "insight") was launched by the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) in 2008 and ran until December 2011. The project, financed by EK, the European Social Fund and the Finnish National Board of Education, focused on future competence needs of businesses. Bringing together representatives from companies, academics, teachers and other experts, the project examined the underlying premise that working life in 2020 will be even more networked. The outcomes of the project emphasised that working as a network, learning from one another and building on existing ideas, are skills that require practice and that should be developed from early on throughout education.
29. A STEM initiative was launched in **Germany** by the Federation of German Employers (BDA) in partnership with the Federation of German Industries (BDI), called "Initiative MINT Zukunft Schaffen". This initiative was started in 2008 in recognition of the growing STEM skills gap in the country, but also in recognition of the reduction in years spent in school (from 13 to the standard 12), meaning that between 2009-13 there was an expected doubling of cohorts

leaving school for post-secondary education. Employers perceived this substantial increase in school-leavers as an opportunity to help address the STEM skills gap. Thus a website platform was built which provides details of over 1,100 STEM programmes in the private sector in Germany. It works as a search engine allowing students or other stakeholders to search for specific training courses by region, sector, content, etc. In addition, over 8000 professionals from STEM disciplines act as "ambassadors" of the BDA-BDI initiative to help mentor students and to encourage entry to STEM disciplines. Furthermore, the initiative has started a labeling system whereby applicant educational institutions can be awarded the initiative's own label (approved by a panel of experts). In terms of impact, while not possible to show direct causality, it is nevertheless encouraging to note that between 2007 and 2011, the relative percentage of first year post-secondary students enrolled in STEM disciplines (compared to other disciplines) reportedly rose by almost 4%.

30. In **Hungary**, BUSINESSHUNGARY and the National Association of Entrepreneurs and Employers carried out a multi-year research project which aimed to describe the various labour market needs of Hungary's regions, based upon thousands of questionnaire responses completed by companies and education institutions, as well as hundreds of conferences. Consequently, the Hungarian Government established Regional Committees for the Development of Vocational Education and Training, which have had success in shaping the orientation of Hungary's VET schools to better address regional skills needs.
31. In **India**, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is undertaking several initiatives in the area of education and skills. For example, the CII is carrying out a survey of engineering institutes in collaboration with the All India Council for Technical Education, and has been supporting the vocationalisation of schools through the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework. The CII has also undertaken skills gap analyses in five sectors and twelve states in India, and has prepared a White Paper on establishing sector skills councils in the country.
32. In **Japan**, the national business organisation Keidanren is working with 13 universities participating in the Japanese Government's new "Global 30" project, in order to offer scholarships for undergraduate and post-graduate students to study abroad for one year. Keidanren provides pre-departure orientation for the students, advice on their study plans and future careers, and also holds a job fair upon their return in order to help integrate them into the labour market. As part of the same "Global 30" project, Keidanren is working with the 13 participating universities to develop specific courses with lectures by corporate executives.

33. In **Latvia**, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia (LDDK) started a project in 2010 in cooperation with the government, unions, and other stakeholders, called "Safe School - Safe Job". The project aims to promote work safety in VET, internships and during work in order to reduce the number of school and workplace accidents. This consists of an annual "Safe School" competition, a "Safe Company" competition, and visits of teachers to companies to learn about work safety systems.
34. In **Turkey**, several sectoral employer organisations have been engaging in providing education and training opportunities. For example, the Turkish Employers' Association of Metal Industries has jointly implemented a project with its social partner to improve employees' personal and occupational development. The Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (TISK), which represents these sectoral organisations, contributes to national occupational standards and qualifications in VET. Meanwhile, the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD) has published secondary education textbooks in various disciplines as a sample for a contemporary curriculum, and has created a project in Ankara called "These Young People Have the Potential", in collaboration with university student clubs, in order to raise university students' awareness on youth unemployment and to encourage entrepreneurship.
35. As for all sections of this synthesis report, the initiatives mentioned above provide only an illustrative overview of different national employer-led initiatives.

PART III: PRIVATE SECTOR SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE OECD EDUCATION ANALYSIS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

36. Nearly all respondents to the Survey indicated that there are specific aspects of the education system in their respective countries that would merit OECD analysis. Some examples are provided in **Box 2** below.

Box 2: Selected suggestions by national employers' and business organisations for OECD analysis in their respective countries

In Australia, the Australian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) believes it would be interesting for the OECD to compare education and training outcomes in countries which have a federated system, versus those where the central government (or alternatively the local or state government) can implement policies in their entirety. One of the biggest barriers to efficiency and effectiveness of education outcomes in Australia, according to the ACCI, is that the delivery of services is substantially delivered by the state governments (particularly in schools and VET), and nationally agreed policies are difficult to implement.

In Brazil, the National Confederation of Industry (CNI) believes that the OECD could usefully contribute to national discussions regarding the secondary level education curriculum, as well as new teaching technologies and practices.

In Colombia, the National Business Association of Colombia (ANDI) observes that several aspects of the education system would benefit from a thorough OECD analysis, including issues relating to quality, curriculum, teaching and research methodologies, etc.

In Denmark, the Confederation of Danish Employers (DA) uses OECD analysis on a daily basis, and would like to see more country benchmarking in the areas of: dual education (e.g. does it contribute to a smoother transition into the labour market?); the combination of PISA studies with further education, school-to-work transition, use of social benefits, etc.; how and where to spend resources in the educational system; and the combination of PISA results with forthcoming PIAAC results.

In Italy, Confindustria recommends OECD analysis would be valuable to examine: the assessment of teachers' performance, the recruitment of effective school leaders, and a comparative evaluation of universities.

In India, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) believes the OECD could apply the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project, as well as PISA, though bearing in mind the considerable economic and cultural diversity in India. The CII also believes that the OECD could examine the productivity benefits of investing in skills.

In Israel, the Manufacturers' Association of Israel (MAI) believes that OECD cooperation could be useful in a new VET reform currently underway. The reform includes improving the public image of VET, particularly technological education, as well as rewarding employers that collaborate with schools.

In Mexico, COPARMEX suggests that the OECD could usefully study how to achieve closer cooperation between employers and unions, and how to build an effective programme of continuous training.

In New Zealand, BusinessNZ believes that OECD analysis could help to improve accountability in the school system, to gather data at the system level in order to help inform teacher and learning practice, and to evaluate the skills mismatch, as well as several other possibilities for OECD research.

In South Africa, Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) suggests that the OECD could study the relationship between the supply and demand of skills in the country, recognizing that unemployment has reached a crisis level. BUSA notes that the dynamics of the labour market are changing rapidly, while the education system has remained the same, making it difficult for new graduates to enter the labour market.

In Spain, the Confederation of Employers and Industries of Spain (CEOE) encourages OECD analysis to examine drop-out and issues of quality. For instance, it notes that Spain is one of the OECD member countries with strong investment in education (6% above average) but obtains mediocre educational results (12 points below average).

CONCLUSIONS

37. The responses of the BIAC Education Committee Survey allow us to draw the following conclusions:
- a. The strong response rate from both BIAC member and observer organisations suggests that education and skills issues are important priorities for national business and employers' organisations in OECD and several emerging economies.
 - b. We note that not all countries (approximately half of those included in this survey) have some sort of legal framework in place for collaboration between education policymakers and the leading national business and employers organisations. Nevertheless, national business and employers organisations participate in education policy discussions through a mix of different channels (officially designated bodies/mechanisms, internal consultation processes and informal dialogues) which are all considered to be necessary and effective.
 - c. National business and employers organisations appear to undertake more collaboration with higher education institutions and VET programmes than with schools. However, there appears to be a strong desire from employers to foster closer co-operation with schools.
 - d. For the large majority of national business and employers organisations, the perceived success of their interaction with education policymakers tends to be mixed, i.e. some business/employers' recommendations are sufficiently considered by policymakers, while some are not. Recognising the variety of stakeholders involved in education policy discussions in many different countries, this result is perhaps what one would expect. In a few countries, however, the national business and employers' organisations perceive that their views are rarely taken into account by education policymakers.

- e. We note that many national business and employers' organisations share many of the same priorities for education policy reform, in schools, in higher education, and in post-secondary vocational education and training. We also note, as would be expected, that the expressed priorities of Survey respondents echo the views regularly expressed in BIAE Education Committee statements. For example, curricula reform is a top employers' priority for schools, with particular attention to enhancing STEM, reading, numeracy, communication and critical thinking, as well as foreign languages, basic economics and personal finance. Employers also attach much importance to improving quality in education, such as teaching quality in schools and in VET programmes.
- f. It is evident from the Survey responses that employers' top priorities for policy reform at the level of schools, higher education and post-secondary VET consistently include the need to improve co-operation with employers. Strong emphasis is also put on linking education more closely to labour market needs.
- g. There are numerous examples of private sector-led approaches being carried out by national business and employers organisations in order to improve various aspects of their education systems in their respective countries. This shows that, in many countries, the private sector is not only an important voice in education policy discussions, but is also a proactive leader on education issues.
- h. Finally, the Survey results clearly show that a large number of national business and employers organisations consider that the OECD could usefully contribute its expertise and analysis to certain aspects of their respective national education systems. This also infers that OECD expertise and analysis in the area of education policy is valuable to national business and employers organisations. The responses provide several ideas to the OECD in terms of orienting its future country-specific work, and BIAE would be pleased to facilitate dialogues between the OECD Secretariat and Survey respondents in order to further explore the possibility for carrying out such analysis.



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