

# EVALUATING APPRENTICESHIPS

## STRENGTHENING QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND POLICY LEARNING

A Guidance Note from the Interagency Group on Technical  
and Vocational Education and Training (IAG-TVET)



International  
Labour  
Organization



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# BACKGROUND



## DEFINING APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are a structured, well-established form of education and training that combine school-based and workplace learning. The workplace part usually accounts for a large share of the programme. They give apprentices the skills to gain a qualification and find work, along with the broader capabilities needed to contribute to innovation, the green transition and digital change. They also help young people and adults move through the many transitions they face in the labour market.

Apprenticeships strengthen links between education and employment by engaging employers' and workers' organisations, learners, educators, vocational institutions and government in a shared effort to develop a skilled and adaptable workforce.

Apprenticeship programmes are part of national apprenticeship systems shaped by labour and education regulations and policies, social and cultural traditions, and institutional capacities. This is why their structure and design vary considerably from one country to another.

Formal apprenticeships are governed by national laws or regulations and collective bargaining agreements. These frameworks can set out which companies and training providers are allowed to offer apprenticeships, what government subsidies are available, and the rights, entitlements and protections of the apprentices. They are based on a written agreement between the apprentice and the employer that sets out the conditions of the learning and working experience. Formal apprenticeships include proper pay or another form of financial compensation for learners.

Traditional apprenticeships in the informal economy work differently. They are based on a training agreement between an apprentice and a master craftsperson (the in-company trainer). In this agreement, which

is often spoken rather than written, the master craftsperson commits to teaching the apprentice all the skills of the trade over a long period, while the apprentice commits to contributing productively to the work of the business (ILO, 2011).

Countries such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland use apprenticeships as a major channel for delivering formal vocational education. In countries with large informal economies, including many in Western Africa, traditional and informal apprenticeships remain the main way young people acquire work skills (ILO, 2012a).

## BENEFITS OF EVALUATING APPRENTICESHIPS

Without evaluation, apprenticeships in both the formal and informal economy can miss chances to improve their quality and have a real impact. Evaluation produces the evidence needed to make the case for promising pilot models and to scale them up.

When inputs and outputs are monitored over time, evaluation can assess employment results, processes and satisfaction levels, and weigh benefits against costs to guide cost-effective improvement (Bajgar & Criscuolo, 2016). In international development cooperation, evaluation is a systematic process for examining the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of interventions (OECD, 2023). It can support progress towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on quality education<sup>1</sup>, and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 on full and productive employment and decent work for all<sup>2</sup>.

Evaluation generates the evidence for social dialogue on apprenticeships and helps improve the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of these systems. It is more than a technical tool for measuring outcomes. It brings practical, lasting benefits to everyone involved: learners, schools and training institutions, employers and trade unions, policymakers, and society as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> SDG4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

<sup>2</sup> SDG8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

## Learners

Learners are the immediate beneficiaries of apprenticeship programmes. For young people, an apprenticeship is often a first step into the labour market, one that can lead to long and gainful employment. Evaluations track what happens after training: whether graduates find work, how much they earn, and how stable their employment is (World Bank, UNESCO & ILO, 2023).

Evaluation also leads to better learning experiences. Regular monitoring spots early warning signs of dropout or exploitation, supports ongoing quality improvement, and strengthens collaboration between training providers and companies (ILO, 2023). Learners gain from better quality assurance, training that matches labour market needs more closely and stronger employability.

In countries where apprenticeship systems are well-structured, young people have smoother transitions from school to work and better employment outcomes. Switzerland keeps youth unemployment low and keeps its programmes relevant through systematic review and feedback. All VET ordinances require a partnership-based 'Commission for Development and Quality' to review the occupation every five years and keep it up to date and of high quality (SERI, 2020). In Germany, the VET Data Report provides continuous, standardised monitoring and is a central reference work for vocational education and training policy and practice (BIBB, 2022).

Through regular monitoring of training quality, evaluation helps protect apprentices from unsafe or exploitative conditions and promotes a learning environment where they gain real skills and develop personally (ILO, 2023).

## Schools and training institutions

Schools and training institutions are the main providers of the off-the-job training. They prepare learners for workplace tasks, coordinate with employers to arrange placements, and offer guidance and support throughout the apprenticeship. Evaluating apprenticeships shows how well these institutions carry out their role, particularly the quality of the education and training they provide, how well they prepare learners and how effective their collaboration with employers is.

Evaluations support quality assurance in apprenticeship programmes and the continuous improvement of curricula. In Austria, for example, TVET institutions must run a formal Quality Management System (QMS) that



embeds teaching evaluation tools and continuous cycles of planning, delivery and review. This allows quality requirements to be monitored on time and gives ongoing quality assurance for training providers such as TVET schools and employers (European Commission, 2025).

These insights help institutions improve their training and keep it aligned with labour market needs, which in turn helps graduates find work. In systems where performance indicators influence resource allocation, evaluation findings also help institutions meet accountability requirements and respond to funding conditions.

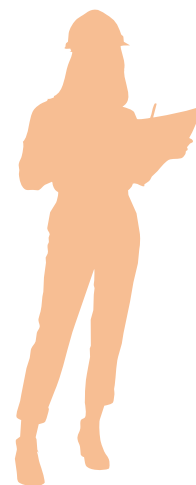
Evaluation also helps institutions sustain long-term partnerships with employers. By recording how satisfied employers are with learner preparedness, school responsiveness, and support during on-the-job training, it gives a basis for strengthening collaboration. This leads to more reliable placement opportunities and improves the institution's standing among local training partners.

### **Employers, employers' organisations and trade unions**

Employers play a central role in apprenticeship systems. They provide on-the-job training and act as partners in shaping learning that is practical and relevant. Their involvement in mentoring and supervision helps apprentices gain concrete workplace skills. At the same time, employers benefit from the productive work apprentices contribute and from a training culture that supports innovation and continuous improvement (OECD, 2017).

Employers' organisations help keep apprenticeship systems matched to labour market needs by coordinating employer participation, contributing to occupational standards, and supporting competency-based training design. Regular evaluation matters to these organisations: it provides evidence on programme outcomes, helps enterprises carry out cost-benefit analyses, and strengthens governance by feeding improvements through social dialogue.

Trade unions help safeguard apprentices' rights, promote fair working conditions, and protect training quality and fair access. Evaluation is important for unions because it produces the data they need to check whether apprenticeships deliver decent work, prevent exploitation, and improve learning outcomes. It also supports dialogue on strengthening regulation and closing systemic gaps in quality and inclusion.

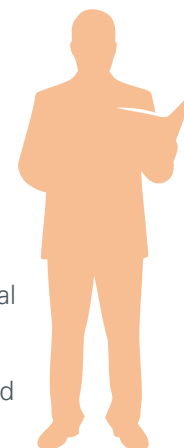


At the design stage, evaluations can address important questions. Who are the learners (age, initial qualifications, and so on)? What is the purpose of the programme and what learning outcomes are expected? How much time do learners spend in the workplace and in the classroom? What does the apprenticeship contract cover? How are apprenticeships financed and apprentices paid? Who is responsible for monitoring, supervising and evaluating? Evaluation helps answer these key questions repeatedly and adjust apprenticeship programmes and systems over time.

Evaluation lets stakeholders assess how effective and efficient their training investments are. The ILO notes that monitoring and evaluation of apprenticeships are needed to keep training relevant to industry needs and to make sure that both learners and employers get quality outcomes (ILO, 2023). Evaluation findings also give employers practical insights to improve recruitment, training design, and assessment practices. According to the ILO Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships, evaluations help enterprises identify effective methods for selecting candidates, structuring workplace learning, and providing feedback on apprentice performance (ILO, 2020). By documenting the short, medium and longer-term benefits for participating companies, evaluation can support efforts to attract more employers into apprenticeships (Cedefop, 2025).

Evaluation also supports workplace relevance by spotting mismatches between training content and employer needs, and guiding changes to the curriculum (World Bank, UNESCO & ILO, 2023).

Cost-benefit analyses also show that apprenticeships can be profitable for firms. In some countries they are first seen as a risky investment because apprentices are mobile and may choose to take their skills to another employer. But the cost is often recovered, either through the high productivity of apprentices or through lower costs of recruiting competent workers who are a good fit for the enterprise. When apprenticeships operate at scale, the risk of another employer poaching trained apprentices falls, because there is a large pool of potential replacement candidates. Training then becomes an investment for employers (ILO, 2010). Evaluation can produce this evidence and help employers make informed decisions about improving programmes and investing in training.



## Government

Governments play a central role in apprenticeship systems. They usually oversee national frameworks, regulate quality standards, and often fund incentives to encourage employer participation. They are responsible for the laws, policies, and institutional arrangements that define how apprenticeships are organised and run (ILO, 2023). Well-designed systems also allow governments to share the cost of skills development with employers through financial and fiscal incentives. This lowers the public burden while opening up more training opportunities (OECD, 2018).

The OECD (2020) notes that sound evaluation and data systems let policymakers “adjust incentives, improve funding models, and ensure training remains responsive to the labour market”.

Evaluation supports policymaking by showing how public investment in training translates into real results. When it is built into regular monitoring, review, and policy cycles, governments can respond well to new and evolving challenges such as digitalisation, the green transition, and demographic change (OECD, 2020; ILO, 2023).

## Society

Inclusive apprenticeships can be powerful tools for promoting decent work, social inclusion and diversity. By helping people gain skills that are relevant to the market and their own goals<sup>3</sup>, they support upward mobility and reduce inequalities of gender, geography, and social background. Evaluating equality should also account for the real opportunities and freedoms (capabilities) individuals have “to do what they want to do and be the person they want to be” (Robeyns, 2005). The ILO notes that quality apprenticeships contribute to “inclusive labour markets, social integration and equal opportunities for all groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities” (ILO, 2023).

Evaluation helps make sure these social benefits are achieved. Monitoring and evaluation systems make it possible to assess who takes part in apprenticeship programmes, who benefits, and who may be excluded. The ILO notes that measuring participation and outcomes

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<sup>3</sup> As stated in ILO Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142), “The policies and programmes shall encourage and enable all persons, on an equal basis and without any discrimination whatsoever, to develop and use their capabilities for work in their own best interests and in accordance with their own aspirations, account being taken of the needs of society.”

by gender, age, and socio-economic group helps identify barriers to access and design policies that promote equality and non-discrimination in training (ILO, 2023). Evidence on inclusion at the recruitment stage, during training, after assessments and in employment lets governments tune their support for under-represented groups, accommodate their needs<sup>4</sup> better, and make sure that apprenticeships support inclusion and fairness.

Evaluation also contributes to social cohesion and trust. Transparent evaluation processes show citizens how public investment in training turns into real opportunities and outcomes. According to the OECD, when governments make evidence and results publicly available, they “enhance transparency, accountability and citizens’ trust in institutions” (OECD, 2020). This visibility strengthens the social contract. It shows that apprenticeship systems are shared investments in people and communities, with value beyond their economic role.

More broadly, good evaluation helps link apprenticeship systems to national efforts towards the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality). By tracking progress on these objectives, evaluation makes it possible to match training policies with commitments to inclusive growth, social justice, and sustainable development (World Bank, UNESCO, & ILO, 2023).

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<sup>4</sup> As per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, “Reasonable accommodation means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;”

# OBJECTIVES OF APPRENTICESHIPS EVALUATIONS

The ILO Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation 2023 (No. 208) calls on competent authorities to monitor and evaluate apprenticeship systems and programmes regularly, and to adapt and improve them on that basis. The insights this produces keep social dialogue, and the employers' and workers' organisations that take part in it, informed and effective. Working across inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes, evaluation supports quality assurance and improvement, accountability, transparency, strategic management, comparability and benchmarking (ETF, 2021; OECD, 2018).

Effective monitoring comes first. Systematic monitoring picks up signals such as a fall in the number of firms offering placements (an input) or fewer graduates progressing (an outcome). These feed into evaluation, which then examines the causal links and guides corrective action grounded in evidence (ETF, 2021; OECD, 2018).

Evaluation then asks why this is happening. It can establish links between apprenticeship programmes and the results that learners and employers see: employment, earnings, job stability, career progression, productivity and recruitment efficiency. It can also test whether these gains are shared fairly, by breaking down results by gender, age, and socio-economic background to reveal gaps in participation and outcomes that call for corrective inclusion measures (OECD, 2018; ILO, 2023).

Evaluation of apprenticeship systems may examine how far they meet international labour standards, such as the ILO Quality

Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208). It can also look at the national market for apprenticeships: the supply of places by employers and training providers, learner demand, the regulatory and policy environment and the incentives it creates, and whether the market works well for everyone involved, including learners, employers, training providers and society (Cedefop, 2025). Evaluation of this kind clarifies the long-term value of apprenticeships compared with other measures and brings the education, training and employment agendas into closer step.

In every case, evidence from evaluation, fed back through tripartite dialogue, should reshape regulatory and policy frameworks, programme design and delivery (curricula, mentoring, workplace training, and learner support) and strengthen system governance and the way resources are allocated. The aim is to make sure public investment produces clear economic and social returns (ILO, 2023; ETF, 2021; World Bank, UNESCO & OECD, 2018).



# APPROACHES AND TOOLS FOR EVALUATING APPRENTICESHIPS

The choice of evaluation method depends on the aim, whether that is to assess impact, examine how a programme is being delivered, or weigh up efficiency and costs. It also depends on several practical factors:

- Data availability, such as administrative registries or tracer databases.
- Budget and time constraints that limit the scale or depth of the evaluation.
- Technical capacity, including access to statistical or econometric expertise.
- Institutional context, such as how mature the apprenticeship system is; and
- Stakeholder engagement, particularly how willing firms, apprentices, and training institutions are to share information.

The overview below sets out five core methods commonly used to evaluate apprenticeships, with their purpose, typical indicators, and real examples documented by recognised organisations.

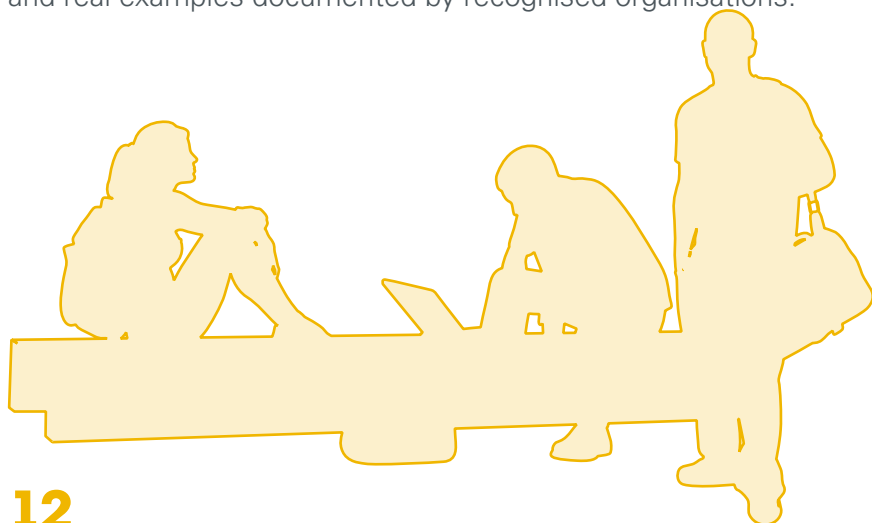


**Table 1. Main Evaluation Approaches and Tools applied to Apprenticeships**

| Tool / approach                                                                            | Purpose and Typical Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                 | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| R208 Checklist for the tripartite review of national apprenticeship systems and frameworks | Checks the status of a national apprenticeship system or programmes against the ILO Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), to identify priority areas for improvement through social dialogue. | This <a href="#">Checklist</a> used in tripartite social dialogue in Egypt, Ethiopia, Panama, Tonga, among other countries, helped identify areas for improvement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Tracer studies (graduate tracking)                                                         | Measure the employment and education outcomes of apprentices after they finish training. Typical indicators include employment rate, job stability, income, relevance of work to training, and further study.  | <a href="#">Australia's NCVER Apprentice &amp; Trainee Outcomes 2021</a> tracks completed apprentices and trainees nationally, with standardised indicators on employment, occupation match, wages and further study. It runs every year from a very large sample (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2022).                                                                        |
| Survey studies (apprentices, employers, providers)                                         | Gather feedback on satisfaction, learning quality, and perceived costs and benefits. Indicators include learner satisfaction, employer retention rates, and training costs and benefits.                       | Norway's report series on the <a href="#">Evaluation of the subject renewal in vocational education</a> , run by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, draws on surveys and interviews with TVET learners, apprentices and employers to capture their views on the recent subject renewal in vocational education, which affects apprenticeship programmes (Skálholt et al., 2024). |
| Impact evaluation (experimental or quasi-experimental designs)                             | Identify the causal effects of apprenticeships compared with non-participants. Indicators include employment probability, wage growth, and productivity outcomes.                                              | The <a href="#">OECD evaluation of the JOBLINGE Basecamp Programme in Germany</a> used a quasi-experimental design to estimate the impact of targeted mentoring and coaching on apprenticeship participation and completion among disadvantaged youth (Hofer, 2025).                                                                                                                                |

| Tool / approach                                    | Purpose and Typical Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                               | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cost-benefit / return-on-investment (ROI) analysis | Compare the economic costs of implementing apprenticeship programmes with their measurable benefits for firms, learners, and the public sector. Indicators include benefit-cost ratio, payback time, and net social returns. | Switzerland's 2025 study of <a href="#">company perspectives on cost, benefits and training quality</a> gives an up-to-date picture of company costs and benefits and the factors that shape them, based on a survey of initial vocational education and training (Gehret, Kuhn & Schweri, 2025). |
| Case studies (qualitative evaluation)              | Give an in-depth understanding of how apprenticeship programmes are designed and how they work in practice, looking at governance, funding, and stakeholder coordination. Indicators are context-specific and descriptive.   | The ETF's 2025 assessment <a href="#">Work-based learning in Serbia: an assessment against EU quality standards</a> , maps the governance framework, funding and benefit arrangements, and stakeholder coordination (European Training Foundation, 2025).                                         |

Source: Authors

### What data should be collected?

These methods need both quantitative and qualitative data, and a mixed-methods approach works best. Evaluations of apprenticeships commonly gather:

- Quantitative data such as number of apprentices and their socio-demographic characteristics, dropout rates, completion rates, time to completion, employment outcomes, career progression and upskilling, time spent in jobs, costs (e.g. wages), outputs and benefits for companies, subsidy amounts, retention rates, the number of training companies, and the mobility of apprentices.
- Qualitative data, such as how stakeholders view apprenticeships; perceptions of apprentices, employers, teachers and in-company trainers, and trade unions; the benefits of the programmes; the quality of the experience; the constraints on and motivations for offering and taking up apprenticeship training, the quality of supervision, and other non-quantifiable influences.

For apprenticeships to be inclusive, data must be broken down by relevant groups, including gender, age, disability, displacement status, socio-economic background, ethnicity, rural or urban location, geographic region, sector (public or private) and type of employer (e.g., small vs. large enterprises). Breaking the data down this way reveals disparities,

such as whether women or young people from marginalised areas benefit less, and supports targeted reform.

The types of data above shape what information evaluators collect, but the way data are gathered, analysed, and interpreted is what decides whether the results can be trusted. The next section looks at the principles and practices that keep apprenticeship evaluations credible, valid and comparable.

### Ensuring credibility, validity, and comparability

High-stakes decisions depend on evidence that is credible, valid, and comparable: whether to fund a programme and how, which models to scale, and where to target support. Credibility means the findings are believable and trustworthy for practitioners and policymakers (CDC, 2024). Validity means an evaluation measures real results, rather than mistaking correlation for causation (Picciotto, 2015). Comparability lets results be set meaningfully against one another across regions, time, and countries, so decision-makers can see what really works (WHO, 2023). Getting these three principles right prevents wasted resources, protects equity goals, and keeps reform guided by facts rather than anecdote.

To meet these criteria, the evaluation of apprenticeships should follow several recognised good practices that build trust in the findings and make them more useful for policymaking.

| Good practice                           | How it helps                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A clear theory of change or logic model | A well-defined theory of change or logic model links inputs and activities (training, mentoring, subsidies) to outputs (hours trained, skills gained) and outcomes (employment, earnings). These models keep an evaluation focused on the intended pathways and check whether they actually worked (ETF, 2021; CDC, 2024).                                                                  |
| Standard indicators and classifications | Using international standards such as ISCED for education, ISCO for occupations, EQAVET, and ISIC or NACE for economic sectors helps all actors measure results consistently. This comparability builds trust and allows apprenticeship outcomes to be benchmarked across countries and over time (UNESCO-UIS, 2012; ILO, 2012b; Cedefop, 2020; United Nations DESA, 2008; Eurostat, 2008). |
| Baseline and follow-up measurements     | Collecting data before, during, and after programme implementation shows the real changes over time. Baseline and follow-up data allow evaluators to determine whether observed effects persist and to avoid misleading "snapshot" results (OECD, 2014).                                                                                                                                    |

| Good practice                              | How it helps                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sound sampling and representativeness      | Reliable results need representative samples, meaning samples that reflect the key characteristics of the whole population, including gender, disability status, and other vulnerability criteria for apprentices, and sector, region, provider type, and enterprise size for employers. Planning for non-response and aiming to cover the full population also reduces bias and makes the findings more generalisable (CDC, 2024). Results broken down by gender, age, disability, location, and enterprise type help show who benefits less and where policy needs to change. Disaggregated data support fair decision-making and the design of inclusive and effective apprenticeship systems (ILO, 2023). |
| Triangulation and mixed methods            | Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, such as administrative data, surveys, focus groups, and interviews, builds a fuller and more credible evidence base. Triangulation lets the numbers and participants' experiences cross-check one another (CDC, 2024).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Counterfactual or comparison groups        | Where it is feasible and cost effective, evaluations should include counterfactual or quasi-experimental designs (matching, difference-in-differences, or regression discontinuity <sup>5</sup> ) to work out what would have happened without the programme. These methods strengthen the claim that the apprenticeship, and not something else, produced the results (European Commission, 2013; ETF, 2021).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Realistic benchmarks                       | To judge whether a programme works, the comparators need to be realistically ambitious and reflect how likely the targeted graduates are to find and keep a job, for example, with the qualification they have obtained. Benchmarks at sector or national level may not capture the vulnerabilities of these graduates, market fluctuations, or the particular challenges facing the private sector.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Transparency about methods and limitations | Setting out data sources, instruments, assumptions, and margins of error clearly lets others assess and replicate the analysis. Transparent reporting makes evaluations more credible and more useable in policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

<sup>5</sup> Matching: it compares participants and non-participants with similar characteristics to estimate what would have happened without the intervention. Difference-in-Differences: it estimates the causal effect of an intervention by comparing pre-to-post changes in outcomes between a treated group and a comparable untreated group, under the assumption that without the intervention both groups would have followed parallel trends. Regression Discontinuity: it compares those just above and just below a threshold, identifying causal impact where the status of the beneficiaries of the intervention changes abruptly.

## EVIDENCE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

International evidence shows that apprenticeship evaluations vary widely from country to country, yet successful systems share common features that make evaluations more reliable and meaningful.

Evaluations from different regions show that well-designed apprenticeship programmes can produce measurable benefits for learners and employers alike. Good data and credible and effective methods can help to highlight concrete results such as stronger employment outcomes, higher satisfaction, and better workplace learning. For example:

- **Australia:** National graduate tracking shows strong employment and satisfaction outcomes. After training, 94% of trade completers and 88.4% of non-trade completers were employed, while more than 90% of both groups were satisfied with the skills they learned on the job and with their off-the-job training (NCVER, 2025).
- **Germany:** An OECD evaluation of the JOBLINGE basecamp apprenticeship support programme finds the initiative is “promising”. It strengthens apprentices’ sense of security in their apprenticeship and gives them the skills to graduate successfully, while reducing thoughts of quitting and feelings of being overwhelmed for some participants (Hofer, 2025).
- **South Africa:** A process evaluation of the Dual System Apprenticeship Pilot (DSAP) finds participating employers generally positive about the model and keen on closer relationships with TVET colleges to bridge the gap between college-based and workplace training. Lecturers report gains from greater exposure to industry standards, and apprentices describe increased motivation, clearer career focus and valuable time in real workplaces. The evaluation also flags challenges in implementation around institutional capacity, employer recruitment and the wider regulatory environment (Hofer, 2025).
- **Mexico:** National monitoring of upper-secondary dual education (2022 to 2023) shows very high perceived benefits among participants. Some 95% of dual students and 88% of graduates say that dual education helped them understand their career better, and around 89% of students and 88% of graduates would recommend it to

other young people entering technical upper-secondary programmes. Employers and schools also largely agree that dual students are better and more fully prepared than students in traditional programmes (SEMS & GIZ, 2023).

- India: The all-India evaluation of the National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) reports that about 79% of surveyed ex-apprentices were employed (73% in wage employment and 6% self-employed), the great majority in the private sector. Around 68% considered NATS very useful for finding employment, while 69% of employers said apprentices help address staff shortages and reported a positive impact on productivity. Most education institutions and employers agreed that NATS helps close the gap between college education and industry needs (NILERD, 2019).

These examples suggest that successful apprenticeship systems tend to combine good programme design with strong employer engagement and sound monitoring and evaluation. The [Annex](#) describes each of the five cases in more detail with full references and links to the original evaluation reports.



## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Evaluation of apprenticeships works best when it does more than report outcomes and actively informs, through social dialogue, how systems are governed and improved. For evaluation to shape policy in any real way, it has to be built into the tripartite governance of apprenticeship systems from the start, not bolted on once a programme has been implemented.

### Making evaluation part of system steering

Evaluation feeds strategic steering when results flow directly into decisions on financing, programme eligibility, sector priorities, qualification standards, and reasonable accommodation of the needs of targeted learners. This calls for formal feedback loops that link evaluation findings to regulatory reviews, planning cycles and budgeting. Without them, useful evidence remains descriptive and never turns into action.

### Social dialogue from the outset

For evaluation to build shared ownership of apprenticeship systems, employers' and workers' organisations need to be involved from the start in defining what will be measured, how data will be collected and how results will be read. Governments, employers and workers' representatives should shape evaluation frameworks, indicators and data flows together, in line with the evidence they need for their decisions. When social dialogue leads the design stage, indicators are more relevant, expectations are clearer, and the evaluation has greater legitimacy with the people who have to act on it.

### Using evaluation to enable agile programme adjustment

Evaluation can support innovation when apprenticeship systems set up procedures for quick adjustment. When an evaluation reveals a mismatch between training content and workplace requirements, for example, there should always be ways to update curricula, change employer incentives or revise mentoring

guidelines without waiting for a major reform cycle. This kind of agility in the policy response matters most in fast-moving fields such as the digital and green sectors.

### **Generating a contextual analysis to support decision making**

Evaluations may reveal geographical differences in how well apprenticeship programmes perform, but financing decisions cannot be based on efficiency alone. Closing programmes in remote areas or expanding only the high-performers has to be weighed against the state's duty to ensure fair access, and the labour market's capacity to absorb graduates, among other things. Women, too, may face barriers to entering some occupations, and even small steps towards gender equality that apprenticeships can bring forward are worth encouraging. So it helps to set the evaluation results in context, taking account of state responsibilities, market absorption capacity, as well as social and cultural factors, in order to judge the levels of investment and the learner-centred support needed to improve performance.

### **Institutions and resources matter**

Good evaluation is not free. Data systems, tracer studies, cost-benefit analyses and stakeholder surveys require dedicated funding, specialised skills and protected time. Expecting strong evaluation without proper resourcing tends to produce low-quality data and undermine trust in results. Apprenticeship budgets should therefore set aside clear lines for collecting, analysing and sharing data. Building the capacity to do this may mean partnering with universities, research centres or independent evaluators. Where possible, e-survey tools can cut costs and widen reach.

### **Coordinating and aligning multiple actors**

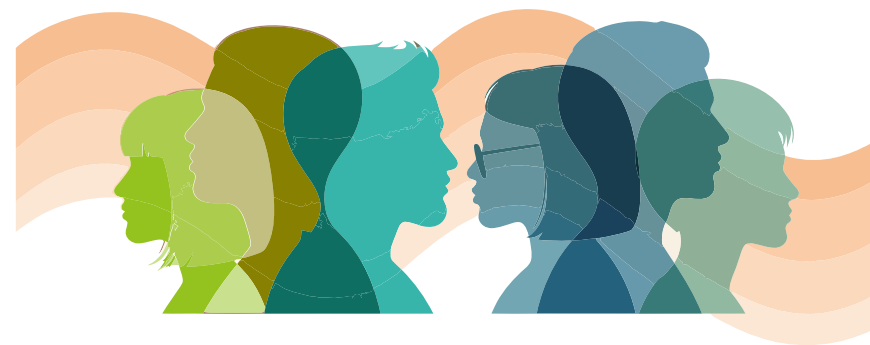
Fragmentation weakens the impact of evaluation. Apprenticeship systems often involve several ministries, sector bodies, regional authorities, training providers and social partners. Without shared data standards, systems that talk to each other, and a clear split of responsibilities, evidence does not turn into coordinated action. Stronger coordination is what allows monitoring findings to become coherent, lasting reform.



### **Transparency to build credibility**

Publishing evaluation findings, including limitations and any differences across regions or sectors, strengthens public confidence in apprenticeships. Transparency also spills over into collaboration: when stakeholders see clear and credible evidence of what works and what does not, policy learning speeds up, and people become more willing to change how they work.

Built into the system from the start, properly resourced, and anchored in genuine social dialogue, evaluation becomes a driver of continuous improvement rather than a compliance exercise. It lets apprenticeship systems adapt to economic change, support innovation and ensure that learners, employers and society all benefit from the shared investment in skills development.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation exists not only to assess programmes but to shape how apprenticeship systems develop. These recommendations focus on what countries can do differently so that evaluation drives real change.

## Make accountability for using evidence explicit

Evaluations have little effect if no-one acts on the results. Countries should set clear lines of responsibility for reviewing findings and acting on them, for example, by giving named decision-making roles to ministries, employers' and workers' organisations, and training providers when the evidence points to a gap or an opportunity.

## Build in incentives for continuous improvement

Funding, recognition and regulatory flexibility can encourage employers and training institutions to improve on the basis of evidence. Incentives might include:

- financial support for companies and employers' organisations that make training more inclusive and more effective;
- free technical support for that same work;
- performance-based grants for providers,
- public recognition of strong results through awards and competitions.

## Keep evaluation frameworks evolving with the labour market

Evaluation criteria should not stand still. Countries should review and update their evaluation arrangements regularly, so that indicators and benchmarks keep pace with new occupations, technologies and ways of working.

## Make evaluation a core part of social dialogue beyond the design stage

Social partners should do more than co-design indicators with government agencies at the outset. They should also help interpret the results and decide jointly how to adapt the system. This turns evaluation into a tool for shared governance rather than government-led reporting.

## Build capacity for data stewardship and ethical use of information

Countries will increasingly need skills not only in evaluation but in data governance, privacy protection, and responsible data sharing. Training and guidance for ministries, providers and employer associations should cover these areas too.

## Treat the evaluation of apprenticeships as a profession

Countries can build a community of experts by establishing:

- professional standards for evaluators,
- partnerships across academia, government and industry,
- practitioner networks that share evaluation approaches and findings.

## Promote international comparability without forcing uniformity

Countries gain from matching their indicators to international standards where it makes sense, while keeping enough flexibility to reflect national priorities. Peer learning and international reporting can speed up the spread of practices that work.

Countries make evaluation a lasting driver of innovation and continuous improvement by weaving it into the way government institutions and the social partners work together, take decisions, and build their own capacity. Set within system governance rather than treated as a technical add-on, evaluation helps apprenticeship systems stay relevant to labour market needs and to learners' aspirations, raise quality and inclusiveness, and improve employment outcomes. Used well and used regularly, evaluation helps apprenticeship systems do more than show results. It helps them build on those results over time and stay relevant, fair and effective.

|                                   | Germany                                                                                                 | Australia                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | South-Africa                                                                                                                                                                                                | Mexico                                                                                                                                      | India                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Name of the Evaluation</b>     | Evaluation of an Apprenticeship Support Programme for Young People in Germany (JOBLINGE)                | Apprentice and Trainee Outcomes Survey                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Dual System Apprenticeship Pilot Project (DSAP) Evaluation                                                                                                                                                  | Evaluación del Sistema de Educación Dual de Nivel Medio Superior                                                                            | Efficacy and Impact of National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS): All-India Study                                                                  |
| <b>Evaluation Approach</b>        | Socio-economic panel study using longitudinal labour market data to track apprentice outcomes over time | Annual national employer and learner satisfaction survey to assess programme quality and relevance                                                                                                                                        | Employer-organisation-led mixed-methods process evaluation, analysing experiences of participating companies, colleges and apprentices                                                                      | National monitoring and evaluation study combining employer, school, and student data to assess implementation and outcomes                 | National mixed-methods impact evaluation combining large-scale surveys and administrative data to assess employment, wage, and satisfaction outcomes    |
| <b>Commissioning Body</b>         | Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)                                                       | National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)                                                                                                                                                                                 | Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)                                                                                                                   | Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)                                     | National Institute of Labour Economics Research and Development (NILERD) under NITI Aayog, Ministry of Education                                        |
| <b>Type of Commissioning Body</b> | Government ministry                                                                                     | Public research agency (government-funded)                                                                                                                                                                                                | Employer organization and government partnership                                                                                                                                                            | Government–donor partnership                                                                                                                | Government research institute                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Year</b>                       | 2025                                                                                                    | 2023                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 2014                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2023                                                                                                                                        | 2019                                                                                                                                                    |
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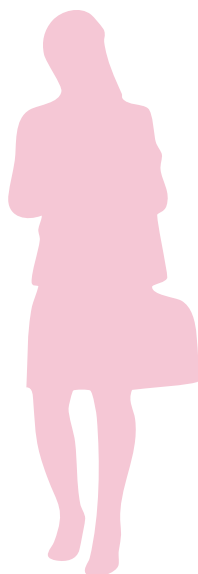
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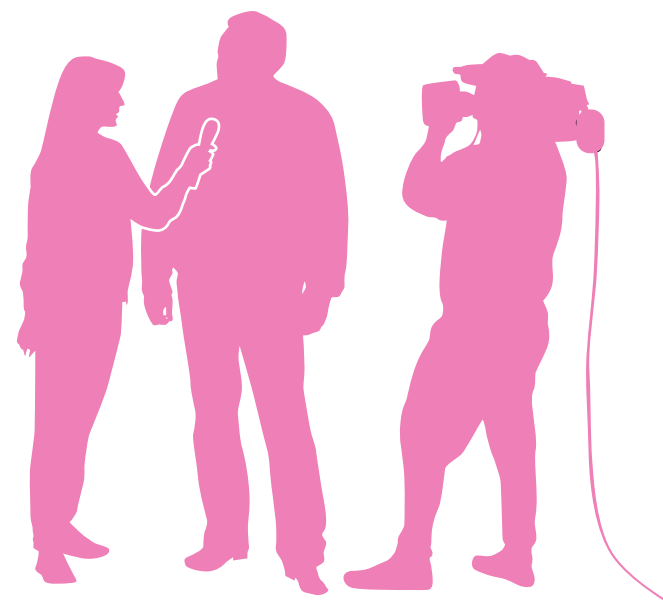
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