Initial and Further Technical Education in the Czech Republic from the Perspective of Schools

Partnership between Schools and Employers How Schools Collaborate with Employers Schools and Employers

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Introduction

The study you are holding in your hands is one of the outputs of the Partnership and Quality project co-financed from the European Social Fund. The main goal of this project is to follow up on the system projects Pilot S, UNIV, and NSK with a view to promoting communication between the educational sector and employers on the basis of the outputs of the projects. At the same time, the study Partnership between Schools and Employers responds to the need to promote partnership with businesses in connection with the implementation of the curriculum reform – in other words, with the development of school educational programmes and the preparation for their practical use.

It is generally accepted that schools of any kind should not work out of touch with their environment. On the contrary, they should make efforts to develop cooperation with social partners, such as local government authorities, businesses, local institutions, or pupils' parents. Without such cooperation, there is a risk that schools might apply their own views and criteria only, which may be different from those required for real life outside school premises, in other words, different from the life for which they have been created. The partners for collaboration, however, are not the same for every school. For nurseries, primary schools, and gymnáziums, whose pupils and students usually continue in education after completing these schools, it is particularly important to work with parents and the institutions helping develop specific skills in pupils, such as libraries and other cultural institutions and sports clubs, whereas employers are the most significant partner for schools whose graduates enter on the labour market, i.e. secondary technical schools, secondary vocational schools, higher vocational schools, and higher education institutions, because businesses are where school education turns into value most. If well-designed, school education can bring benefit not only to the graduates and businesses that employ them, but also to the whole society.

For that reason, this study deals with the collaboration between employers and schools in respect of the 'labour market relevant' schools mentioned above and referred to as technical schools, rather than all schools. Given the scope and diversification of this already restricted segment of schools, this study focuses on technical schools of the secondary sector, i.e. the schools providing post-primary education completed by the maturita exam or the apprenticeship certificate exam.

The source data for this study were obtained by a questionnaire survey carried out on a sample of the above mentioned segment of technical schools. The survey focused on three principal aspects of collaboration between schools and employers, namely collaboration objectives and the degree of their accomplishment, tools to achieve these objectives, in other words the ways collaboration is carried out, and, lastly, the problems come up against during such collaboration. Some survey results are completed with experience from other surveys and sources which had investigated the views of employers. The closing sections of this study sum up the most interesting survey results and outline the possibilities for collaboration support at both the central and regional levels, in the meaning of not only individual schools and businesses, but also the whole educational and commercial sectors.

This study is to be one of the source documents for discussions between Czech and international education and social partnership experts during the Czech Republic EU presidency. As the agenda of collaboration between schools and employers is different in different countries and reflects country-specific conditions, it is important always to take account of the specific social and economic context and development and, for that reason, this study opens with describing the context of the Czech Republic. It may be the case that this context is similar to that in other countries, especially those having seen the fall of totalitarian regimes in the late 1980s and undergone an extensive economic and nation-wide social reform. It is as well likely that certain common or analogous models creating conditions for the collaboration between schools and employers also exist in other EU countries, which is certain to provide a considerable space for sharing experience.

This study aspires to be a contribution that would raise and support, through its factual content, a discussion on the collaboration between schools and employers, rather than describe any universally valid facts or bring universally applicable solutions. A discussion on a topic which is a vital part of the whole strategy of lifelong learning.

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1.1. DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT OF SOCIAL-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AFTER 1989

As late as 1989 collaboration between technical schools and employers continued to be characterised by aspects which had formed in the previous decades. As far as technical secondary schools are concerned, their educational goals and curricula were defined in official documents, such as curriculum guidelines, prepared at national level, and these guidelines were followed by all the schools of a given type or field of study. Although the autonomy of higher education institutions allowed them to define their own educational goals and curricula by themselves, they were limited by the ideology at the time. Although it was generally accepted that teachers needed to collaborate with employers in defining educational goals and curricula, such collaboration was only a matter of form. This was also influenced by that the vast majority of businesses were run by the state and that there was no real labour market.

Documents for secondary technical schools contained instructions stating that students were to receive a certain amount of practical in-company training. Consequently, the preparation, course, and assessment of this practical in-company training for schools was the focal point of their collaboration with employers. As practical in-company training only amounted to a tiny portion in educational programmes of secondary technical schools, this collaboration could not influence the whole educational policy.

Much more intense and extensive was the collaboration between secondary vocational schools and employers. Its scope followed from the fact that practical training plays a more important role in secondary vocational schools than in other types of schools because the former put greater emphasis on developing practical skills.

Consequently, approximately one third of the total teaching time was, and continues to be, allocated to practice, usually in the form of practical training. The fact that secondary vocational schools were usually part of associations of companies (referred to as industry directorates) had played before 1989 a still more important role than the number of practical training classes, this resulting in employers sponsoring apprentice practical training to a considerable degree and being directly responsible for it.

The changes in society after 1989 fundamentally influenced the overall educational environment, and thus also the collaboration between schools and employers. For technical schools and higher education institutions the major changes lay in more autonomy and less adherence to educational objectives and content defined at a central level while for secondary vocational schools these social changes additionally led to the transformation of all the fundamental conditions in which they were run. The companies associations fell apart during privatisation, which was part of the post-1989 transformation of the whole economy, and the new owners had first to tackle the fundamental issues related to the economic survival of their businesses.

Accordingly, their priorities included the restructuring of product lines, customers, and financial resources, while the importance and role of human resources tended to be underestimated, with many companies even disbanding their human resources department to save money. This was further underlined by sufficient manpower available on the labour market due to a major industry slow-down and the resulting lay-offs. The logical effect was that businesses discontinued their involvement in apprentice education and their collaboration with schools was given minimum preference. The repeal of Section 227 of the Labour Code, which had regulated the economic and employment relations between businesses and the students of secondary vocational schools and their graduates, laid down a legal basis for the de facto discontinuation of the links between companies and these schools. This led to an increasing lack of interest of the commercial sector in providing support to technical (and prevailingly vocational) schools, which in turn further aggravated the fading partnership between schools and businesses.

For vocational and, in fact, all technical schools the discontinued association with companies resulted in economic problems that affected their material and especially human resources potential. Thus, their equipment was becoming obsolete and their educational programmes were losing edge and innovation potential. This trend was also due to teachers being in touch with new industry technologies, materials and innovations to a very low degree. Moreover, technical training was deprived of the opportunity to experience a real work environment because the key part of job specific training shifted from businesses to school workshops.

Consequently, the only way out of this situation was that the state would take charge of vocational schools, now in changed, democratic conditions free of command planning of student numbers and allowing the existence of vocational schools not run by the state.

That the collaboration between technical schools and employers was useful and of benefit for both parties continued to be recognised, although the idea failed to be implemented. However, the situation progressively grew better. With a view to promoting employers' interests, umbrella employers' organizations began to be established, such as the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, the Czech Confederation of Commerce, and the Union of Employers' Association of the Czech Republic. The Economic Chamber of the Czech

Republic has been established, operating a network of regional chambers and industry associations, along with other entrepreneurs' associations such as the Association of Building Industry Entrepreneurs. Although their priorities were primarily targeted at business, the existence of these organizations created the necessary background to discuss further strategic action leading to things such as improvements in collaboration with technical schools, including higher education institutions.

From as the early 1990s the responsibility for secondary vocational school education was transferred from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to the Ministry of Economy, which then prepared and implemented two educational policy related steps influenced by both the internal need at the time and the European educational policy. One of these steps resulted in the establishment and development of integrated upper secondary schools (IUSSs), which began to teach various educational programmes that had been taught by secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools separately until then. The second step was an attempt to apply the principle of life-long learning by establishing Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), i.e. technical schools providing both initial education to young people and further vocational education to adults. These schools were to become the foundation of a network of future regional educational institutions. Both these steps had been prepared in association with employer representatives. In connection with this mention should be made of the initiative of a group of vocational schools which in 1993 founded a continuing tradition of national 'life-long learning' workshops held in Kroměříž. The fairly revolutionary idea at the time of local and regional prosperity in relation to education developed into a concept of modern life-long learning, which is discussed in the presence of representatives of education providers and employers in Kroměříž every year. This year's 15th annual event took place under the title of The Role of employers, labour offices, and technical schools in developing skilled manpower.

Although the efforts of the Ministry of Economy to re-establish the severed ties could not effect any significant changes in that period of the privatisation and restructuring still under way, at least they brought a halt to the process of technical schools lagging behind.

In 1995 the Centre for Educational Policy, Faculty of Education of Charles University prepared a report The Changes of the Czech Educational System upon the prior assignment by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and a group of OECD experts, who visited the Czech Republic, made use of this report in drawing up their assessment for an examiners' report. The OECD experts expressed many recommendations for improvements in the Czech educational system. Among other things they observed no enhancements in promoting relations between schools and local communities and they recommended that schools should be obliged under the law to found school councils as advisory bodies comprised of representatives of stakeholders, including employers.

A four-year Phare project titled Vocational Education Reform, one of the most important (and still undervalued) projects to improve vocational education, was implemented in the Czech Republic in the mid 1990s. Its principal objectives included recommendations as to the collaboration of technical schools with social partners. These recommendations were expressed in the project's final output document published under the title From Pilot Schools to Reform Strategy in 1997. One of the main recommendations in this document was a suggestion to establish regional councils for vocational education. The missions of these councils were defined with respect to not only the tackling of specific educational issues, such as by providing

in-company training to students, but also the overall practical role of schools in their regions. According to the recommendations, these councils were to map out the needs in their regions in terms of occupational structure and the numbers of graduates, propose changes to the school network, address selected issues of school funding, and take part in developing and amending curricula. These councils were planned to be comprised of representatives of employers, industrial associations, labour offices, local government bodies, and trade unions.

A strategic document Prosperity through Education – A Path to Learning Society was prepared on the basis of the recommendations in the final output of the project and contained suggestions that a comprehensive system of how social partners and other stakeholders should participate in the changes to the curriculum, structure, funding and quality assurance of vocational education at central, regional, and local level should be developed and phased in collaboration with the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, the Czech and Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions, and the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic. There were suggestions that a National Council for Vocational Education should be established at national level and schools councils at school level. Also, preparations were under way to establish the Academy of Trades and Services with the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic.

In 1996 the responsibility for education at secondary vocational schools, integrated upper secondary schools, and vocational training centres was transferred back to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports as a result of a new competence bill passed that year. The above suggestions and recommendations for improvements in the collaboration between schools and employers failed to be implemented. Moreover, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports prefers and promotes especially general theoretical education. Yet there are schools and enlightened companies who have never stopped collaborating with each other, and there are few firms which continue to have their own secondary technical or vocational school.

Another phase of decline in vocational education began in the late 1990s, because of the declining population curve. The negative image of vocational education presented in the media and the idea that manual labour is inferior and not needed any more are also factors which both have an impact on the educational demand by parents and children. This deepening trend has also affected the current critical shortage of manual workers and tradesmen in the labour market. The declining interest in trades is also attributable to the conditions in companies and unsatisfactory wages, and thus many graduates from vocational schools do not continue to work in their fields of expertise.

A National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic, also known as the White Paper (published a year later), was prepared in 2000, as the key strategic document for the next period. The text of this document led to 36 recommendations, with one of them suggesting 'creating a structure of communication with social partners at all levels of management'. The core of this structure was to consist in the National Council for Education and Human Resources Development, regional councils as partners to regional governments, and school councils as partners to school management. The White Paper suggested that these councils should facilitate the participation of social partners in all fundamental education-related decisions, from developing long-term school development plans and educational plans to school leaver employment. These intents failed to be implemented in the upcoming years, with the exception of the National Council for Education, which, however, came to an end shortly after its establishment.

A document titled Strategy of Human Resources Development for the Czech Republic was prepared in the same period as the White Paper. Strategy was a strategic document by an expert group coordinated by the National Training Fund. Unlike similar previous documents, Strategy focused on education in broader terms (including the education and training outside the schooling system) and in the context of economy development, innovations and competitiveness. Partnership and collaboration were among the principal ways of achieving the strategic goals. Strategy was approved by the Czech government at a later point, and some plans in the document, such as the establishment of the Council for Human Resources Development, began to be implemented. A promising start, however, was followed by a slow-down and this initiative came to a halt in the end.

The next years saw some further attempts to establish a continuous collaboration between employers and schools, but it was usually schools and other educational organizations that were proactive. This led, for instance, to the establishment of field groups with the National Institution of Technical and Vocational Education as a platform for joining together representatives of education and training providers and those of employers with a view to enhancing vocational education and aligning it to the real job requirements. Also, appropriate ways of collaboration were discussed in these field groups. The first attempts consisted in more or less formal attendance of employer representatives at final examinations, but developed into joint work on the defining of goals and content of education, which has recently been demonstrated in the development of framework educational programmes and the new design of final examinations. In 2001 regional governments became the statutory authority to run technical schools after a public administration reform. This put management closer to regional aspects and resulted in the umbrella employers' organizations playing an increasing role in education and training. Regional governments respond to the pressure of businesses by considering it in their strategic documents (especially their long-term plans) and establishing regional human resources development councils (even though the national Government Human Resources Development Council was disbanded at a later point, despite the protests by the umbrella employers' associations).

Further motivation for collaboration between schools and employers was provided by the development of economy. The economic growth over recent years has brought about an increased demand for skilled manpower, but technical schools are unable to meet this increased demand for school leavers given the already mentioned drop in the number of young people studying and leaving secondary vocational schools. The discrepancy between employers' demand for labour and the capacities to meet this demand has been recently encouraging the interest of employers in collaboration with schools. This interest, however, is focused on finding ways how to recruit school leavers, who are becoming a scarce commodity, such as by financial benefits to young people learning the trades where learners are sparse.

The activities of employers' associations aimed at in-school education focus on expressing their recommendations or willingness to discussions with representatives of education and training providers. The opinion of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic of the Higher Education White Paper may be an example. In its opinion the Confederation agrees in principle with both the analysis of higher education issues and the solutions proposed, while suggesting that specific action including relevant indicators should be specified to address the issues and that an implementation team, in which the Confederation is willing to take part, should be set up.

Although collaboration with employers has been developing, it still shows several flaws, which become particularly apparent when comparison with most EU member countries is drawn. Weak legislation support is one of these flaws, with the effect being that collaboration is based on a voluntary principle, which indeed promotes informal contacts but is unable to ensure enough collaboration in the absence of proactive action. Another weakness is the rather for-effect interest of employers' associations in collaboration with technical schools at national level. These weaknesses plus the insufficient financial motivation of employers along with the non-existence of the Council for Human Resources Development pose a challenge to further development of collaboration between schools and employers in the following years.

1.2. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS IN EUROPEAN DOCUMENTS

An important impetus not only to the EU educational policy was the 2000 Lisbon Strategy defining the Community's development objectives up to 2010. Shortly after the announcement of the Strategy a strategic document Lifelong Learning Memorandum was published, containing several principles the employment of which has had a positive impact on the development in this field, and emphasis on collaboration between stakeholders and the education and training providers is among them. Such emphasis can also be found in other documents with impact on the development of the EU educational policy. Among them, it is the 2002 Copenhagen Declaration, for instance, which particularly underlined the need of collaboration in developing vocational education along with the need of coordinating such collaboration. Mention to it is also made in the Maastricht Communiqué of December 2004 and the 2006 Helsinki Communiqué.

Collaboration between technical schools and employers is also treated in a range of specific studies by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) or the European Training Foundation (ETF). Besides analyzing the benefits from collaboration between technical schools and social partners in the context of the EU educational policy, these studies present good practice examples from various EU countries. Mention should be made to a 2004 CEDEFOP study titled Vocational Education and Training – Key to Future. One section of this study deals with the involvement of stakeholders and partnerships in the development of vocational education and training while paying attention to the activities of education and training providers as well as those of social partners; in this context reference is made in the study to Framework for Action Aimed at Lifelong Learning and Skills and Competencies Development, a document prepared by a social partners association at the EU level. This study contains statements to the effect that closer collaboration between social partners and sector bodies is needed especially in the new EU countries.

The position of collaboration between technical schools and social partners is clearly demonstrated and accordingly emphasised in the documents on the EU educational policy and other documents by the relevant EU institutions. These documents influence the national education and training policies of the member countries by presenting these countries with suggestions as to which direction further development should take. For the Czech Republic, these documents are among the factors which should also have effect on the Czech educational policy and the policy of Czech social partners; these factors should be reflected not only in the documents dealing with this policy, but also in specific practical steps taken by the relevant bodies of employers and education and training providers.

Partnership between Schools and Employers in Initial Vocational Education

2.

2. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS IN INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The current state of collaboration between schools and businesses or other employers has been investigated by a questionnaire survey. The NUOV project execution team set up a questionnaire with two separate sections – Section A for initial education and Section B for further education. The questionnaire specified collaboration objectives and the tools for accomplishing these objectives. The purpose of the survey was to find out how schools assess their success in achieving the collaboration objectives and in employing the specified tools. A total of 173 technical schools across all the regions of the Czech Republic were asked to take part in the survey, and the information about the survey was communicated to the heads of training and education departments of Regional Authorities. Eighty-three questionnaires returned by the specified deadline were processed statistically.

These were completed and returned prevailingly by schools with which NUOV has been working on various projects and which had been expected to have some experience with partnership with employers. The opinions of these schools, expressed in the questionnaires, give a picture of what importance these schools attach to various kinds of collaboration and express their views on the results produced by such collaboration.

2.1. INITIAL EDUCATION COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS: OBJECTIVES AND THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT

The following collaboration objectives were surveyed:

- Aligning instructional content and employer needs
- Employer assistance in instructional quality improvements

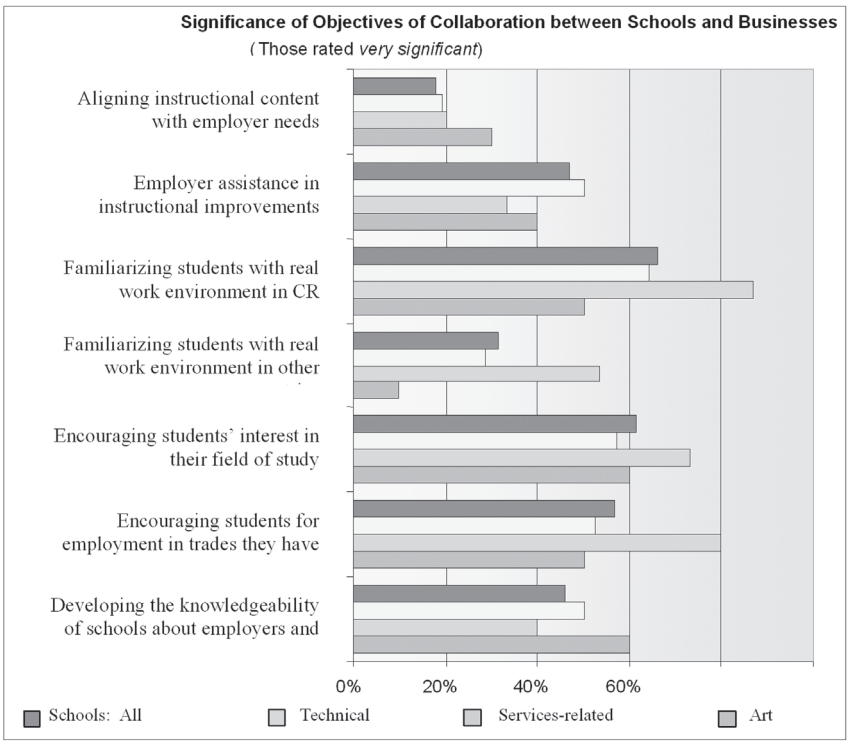
- Familiarizing students with real work environment in the Czech Republic
- Familiarizing students with real work environment in other countries
- Encouraging students' interest in the field of expertise they are taught
- Encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for
- Developing the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa.

2.1.1. OBJECTIVES TO WHICH SCHOOLS ATTACH THE HIGHEST SIGNIFICANCE

The survey has shown that schools see all the objectives listed as important. Six out of seven objectives were rated as very significant or significant by more than 80% of respondents, and more than half of the rest of the respondents did not rate the given objective rather than identify it as of low or no significance. Only Familiarizing students with real work environment in other countries was identified as a significant or very significant objective by 68% of respondents, which is still more than two thirds.

Respondents differed in which objectives they saw as very significant, so this parameter can be regarded as the most relevant criterion of priority attached by schools to the objectives. The following charts show the percentage of respondents regarding the given objective as very significant; answers are broken down into technical, services-related, and art schools.

Figure 1



The chart shows that most importance is attached to the 'encouragement' objectives, where most respondents identified the following objectives as very significant: Familiarizing students with a real work environment in the Czech Republic (66%), Encouraging students' interest in the field of expertise they are taught (61%), and Encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for (57%).

Most importance is attached to the listed encouragement objectives by both the total sample of respondents and each of the school type. The services schools prefer these objectives most, having identified all the three objectives as very significant in more than 75% of cases, while the least preference of these objectives is seen in technical schools, although more than 50% rate them as very significant. The objectives which follow in the significance rating are: Employer assistance in instructional quality improvements (identified as a very significant objective by 47% of respondents) and Developing the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa (46%). These are preferred more by technical and art schools than services schools.

The objectives seen as of the least significance are Familiarizing students with real work environment in other countries and Aligning instructional content with employer needs, where the latter was marked as very significant by 18% of respondents only. This information is rather disturbing in the context of vocational education.

2.1.2. PERFORMANCE IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES

The survey results clearly show that schools are usually successful at accomplishing these objectives to some extent at least, with the exception of Familiarizing students with a real work environment in other countries.

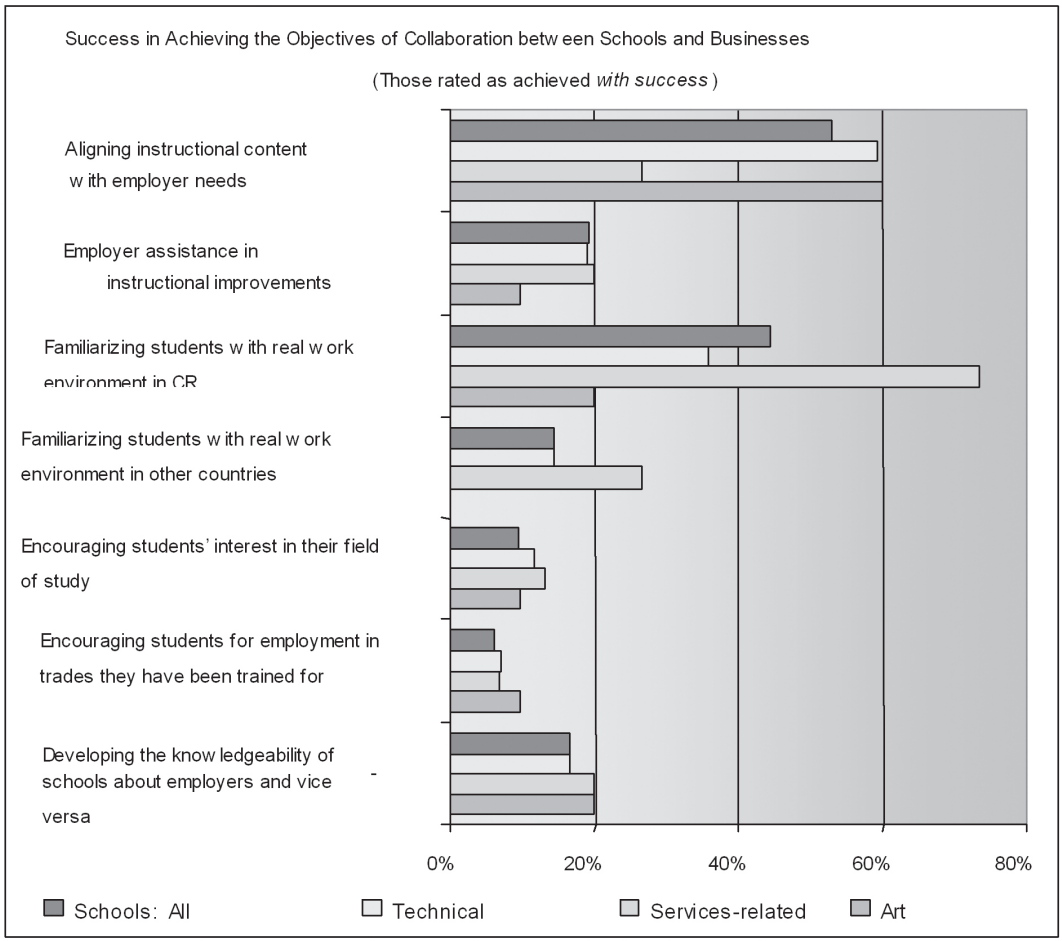
Respondents see themselves most successful at Aligning instructional content with employer needs (53% and 42% of respondents see themselves as successful and successful to some extent, respectively, in respect of this objective). It seems that schools consider their instruction as satisfactorily aligned with employer needs, which is not always what employers think. The schools with prevailingly technical or arts subjects regard themselves as successful at achieving this objective in considerably more cases (60%) whereas the schools with prevailingly services-related subjects in considerably fewer cases (27%).

The second best performance is associated with the objective Familiarizing students with a real work environment in the Czech Republic (45% of respondents see themselves as successful at achieving this objective while 35% as successful to some extent), and this objective shows the opposite distribution among the types of school than the previous objective. The schools with prevailingly service-related subjects regard themselves as successful at achieving this objective in 73% of cases while those with prevailingly technical and arts subjects in 36% and 20% of cases, respectively.

The high performance rate in respect of this objective agrees with the results obtained in a survey among employers, in which employers stated educational visits and practical training of students in their businesses as the most usual cases of collaboration with schools. This kind of collaboration is much more often stated by manufacturing and large companies than service providers and small businesses, which is contrary to the fact that service-related schools report better performance than technical schools. This could be attributed to that technical schools may feel a more intense urge to get familiar with the real conditions in businesses than the service-related schools, so that the performance self-assessment may be different.

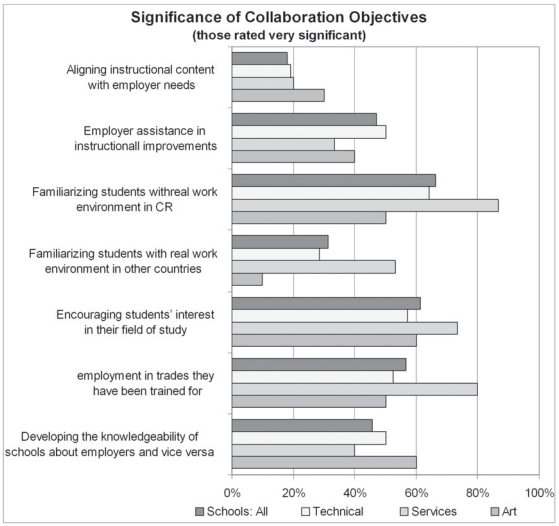
These discrepancies show that the ties between familiarizing students with real work environment and aligning instructional content with employer needs are not tight and suggest that familiarizing students with real work environment has not only a content-wise, but also (and perhaps especially) motivating function. The discrepancies may also suggest that familiarizing with a real work environment is easier in service-related than technical fields. The following chart shows the comparison of objectives by how successful respondents rated themselves as to achieving the objectives.

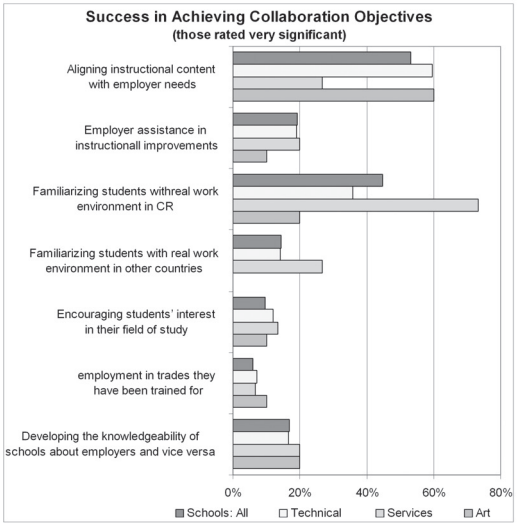
Figure 2



It is obvious that schools see themselves as best performing in achieving the objectives Aligning instructional content with employer needs and Familiarizing students with a real work environment in the Czech Republic. It is also clearly shown that the next two places in respect of performance are associated with the objectives related to students' interest in the field of study and their motivation to pursue their trade after leaving the school, i.e. Encouraging students' interest in the field of expertise they are taught and Encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for. All three types of school show fairly similar results in respect of the with success rating and the two objectives mentioned above. When we take the ratings with limited success and with no success, the worst performance is reported in technical schools, while the relatively best performance in service-related schools, which corresponds to the problems with the shortage of students and employees in these fields. As regards the other objectives, all three types of school show a similar performance rating for Employer assistance in instructional quality improvements and Developing the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa, with the with limited success rating prevailing. The objective Familiarizing students with real work environment in other countries shows different results, with the service-related schools reporting considerably better performance, and art schools reporting no success at all.

2.1.3. COMPARISON OF OBJECTIVE SIGNIFICANCE AND OBJECTIVE ACHIEVEMENT





It is obvious that inverse proportion applies in most cases to the relation between the importance attached to an objective and the success at achieving it. The most considerable inverse proportion between the relatively high objective importance and relatively poor performance is shown in the two main motivation objectives, i.e. Encouraging students' interest in their field of study and Encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for. Therefore, about these two objectives, it can be concluded that given the importance attached to them, schools are unsuccessful at achieving these objectives.

This kind of inverse proportion is also obvious (through to a less extent) in Developing the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa, even though this is an objective that can be achieved by setting up a system of communication, which should not be a burden to any of the parties. Similarly, reality lags behind expectations in the objective Employer assistance in instructional improvements. This objective is undoubtedly very important, although difficult to achieve, and is a matter of continuous networking in the long-term.

A similar contradiction is shown in Familiarizing students with real work environment in other countries, but this is quite understandable given how demanding this objective is to achieve.

The most inverse proportion between relatively low objective importance and relatively high performance is shown in the objective Aligning instructional content with employer needs. This disproportion should receive more attention, and confrontation between school and employer representatives would certainly be useful.

Familiarizing students with real work environment in the Czech Republic is the only surveyed objective which appears to show concord between importance and performance. As already stated, there is also a concord with the views of employers. Thus, this objective can be regarded as a good basis for further development of collaboration between schools and employers.

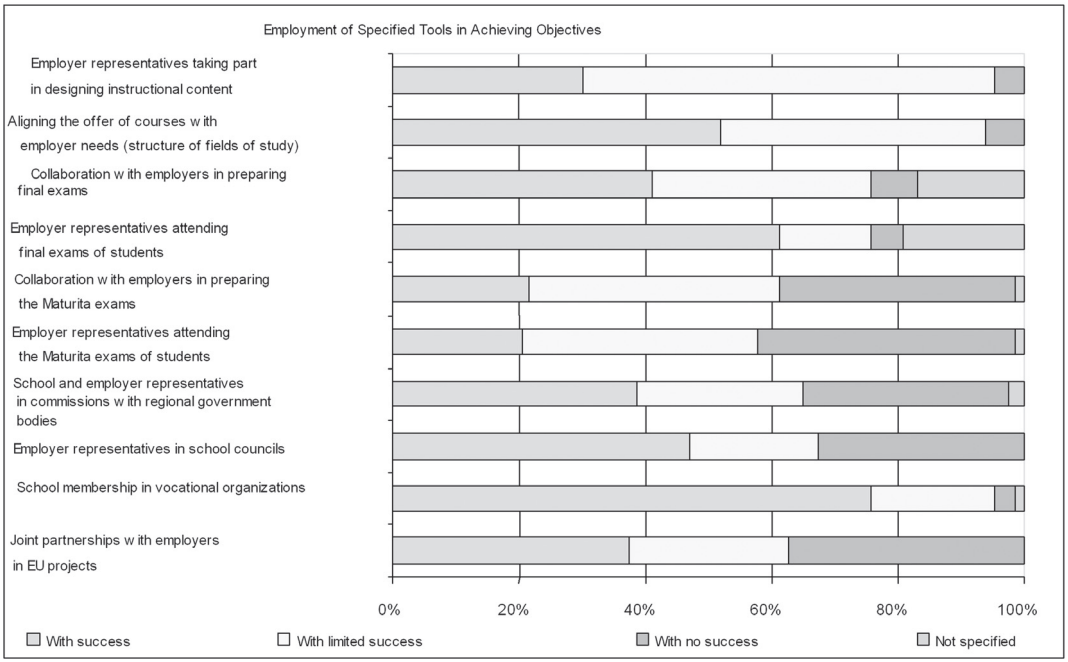
2.2. TOOLS AND ISSUES IN RESPECT OF EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS

2.2.1. ALIGNING INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT WITH EMPLOYER NEEDS

The following tools were surveyed in order to obtain data about the performance in achieving the objective Familiarizing students with a real work environment in the Czech Republic:

- Employer representatives participating in designing instructional content (school educational programmes, etc.)
- Aligning the offer of education and training with employer needs (fields of study structure)
- Collaboration with employers in designing final examinations
- Employer representatives participating in final examinations of students
- Collaboration with employers in designing the Maturita examinations
- Employer representatives participating in the Maturita examinations of students
- Membership of school and employer representatives in joint commissions with regional government bodies
- Employer representatives appointed in school councils
- Membership of schools in vocational organizations
- Partnership in EU projects together with employers (except projects related to student stays abroad – these come under objective 4).

Figure 3



The percentage of the rating with success for the above tools ranges from 20.5% (tool 1.6) to 75.9% (tool 1.9). Taking a more general view, it can be concluded that most schools try to establish collaboration with employers especially by being members in vocational organisations (75.9%).

The participation of employer representatives in designing instructional content is rated in rather positive terms: only 4.8% (four schools) rate their performance as no success, with the remaining almost 95% confirming such participation. 30% of schools employ such participation with success, 65% try to employ it but are not fully satisfied with the results. This state cannot be regarded as ideal because the prevailing performance rating is with limited success. No school omitted to rate this tool.

The tool Aligning the offer of education and training with employer needs has received a better rating: Like with the previous tool, only 6% of schools give rating the failing to employ. This tool is successfully employed by 51.8% of schools, while 42.2% of schools report limited success. Again, no school omitted to rate this tool.

Employer representatives participate in students' final examinations in quite many cases (61.4% of schools indicated rating with success, only 14.5% with limited success, and 4.8% (four schools) with no success). Participation in the preparations of final examinations is reported in fewer cases (41% of schools indicated rating with success, 34.9% with limited success, and 7.2% with no success).

As there are projects under way for some time to promote partnership between schools and employers, such as the Quality I system project testing the new concept of final examinations and the IQ Auto project, in which many schools and employers are involved, we expected a higher ratio of with success answers in respect of these tools. When comparing these two tools with the rating of the eight other tools, it is very difficult to explain the significantly higher ratio of schools (19.3% and 16.9%, respectively) which omitted to rate their performance in using these two tools.

A considerably less favourable rating was indicated in respect of participation of employer representatives in the Maturita examinations (20.5% of schools indicated rating with success, 37.3% with limited success, and 41% with no success) and collaboration with employers in preparing the Maturita examinations (21.7% indicated rating with success, 39.8% with limited success, and 37.3% with no success).

There are likely to be several reasons for this: Maturita exams seem to be more demanding for preparation than final exams, and the reform of the Maturita exam has not yet been implemented; along with that, employers seem to agree with the view widely adopted in the past that providing education in these fields of study is the domain of the educational sphere rather than the sphere of work. An influential factor seems to be the fact that many employers continue to apply the practice of 'initial on-the-job training', whereby schools leavers get familiar with working routines and the company's organization and gain the required experience at various workplaces before they are assigned to their permanent job position.

The rating of participation of school and employer representatives in joint commissions with regional government bodies is almost evenly distributed among the rating levels (38.6% of schools indicated the rating with success, 26.5% with limited success, and 32.5% with no success). Two schools gave no answer.

Employer representatives appointed in school councils were rated by all schools. These representatives are members of the school council in 47% of cases, 20.5% of schools reported a somewhat problematic rating of with limited success (you either are or are not a member) and 32.5% indicated with no success.

The highest percentage of undoubtedly successful collaboration between employers and schools is reported in the tool schools being members in vocational organizations; such membership has been acknowledged by more than three quarters of schools (75.9%), with 19.3% stating only partial success in spite of their efforts to develop collaboration with businesses. No success in respect of this tool has only been reported by three schools (3.6%), with one school having indicated no answer.

Rating distribution in respect of joint partnership of schools and employers in EU projects is similar to that in respect of membership in joint commissions with regional government bodies (37.3% indicated with success, 25.3% with limited success, and 37.3% with no success.

Table 1

	With successs	With limited success	No success	Not specified
Employer representatives taking part in designing instructional content	30,1 %	65,1 %	4,8 %	0,0 %
Aligning the offer of courses with employer needs (structure of fields of study)	51,8 %	42,2 %	6,0 %	0,0 %
Collaboration with employers in preparing final exams	41,0 %	34,9 %	7,2 %	16,9 %
Employer representatives attending final exams of students	61,4 %	14,5 %	4,8 %	19,3 %
Collaboration with employers in preparing the Maturita exams	21,7 %	39,8 %	37,3 %	1,2 %
Employer representatives attending the Maturita exams of students	20,5 %	37,3 %	41,0 %	1,2 %
School and employer representatives in commissions with regional government bodies	38,6 %	26,5 %	32,5 %	2,4 %
Employer representatives in school councils	47,0 %	20,5 %	32,5 %	0,0 %
School membership in vocational organizations	75,9 %	19,3 %	3,6 %	1,2 %
Joint partnerships with employers in EU projects	37,3 %	25,3 %	37,3 %	0,0 %

Reasons why some schools experience limited/no success in aligning instructional content with employer needs

Where rating their performance in using the tools as with limited success or with no success, schools were asked to specify the reasons they see as having negative impact on their situation. They were given six reasons to consider (those in the left column in the following table) and asked to choose no more than three reasons for each tool. The following table shows the percentage distribution of the reasons indicated, both in terms of total percentage and type of school breakdown.

Table 2

	Schools	Schools with a majority of the following branches		
	All	Technical	Service-related	Arts
Tool (activity) not important for us	7,2 %	4,1 %	6,9 %	11,9 %
Employers not interested (or some only show insufficient	45,0 %	45,6 %	41,6 %	34,5 %
Employers are difficult to communicate with	14,7 %	11,6 %	12,9 %	16,7 %
Employers have insufficient funds	5,4 %	5,8 %	9,9 %	3,6 %
Employers want more favourable legislation (e.g. tax concessions)	12,4 %	15,8 %	10,9 %	10,7 %
Other reason	15,3 %	17,0 %	17,8 %	22,6 %

The differences in absolute indicator values attributable to the school type are not fundamental; for that reason, we consider the values for the whole sample. In all the tools, problems are attributed to the lack of interest on the part of employers, and the other three reasons indicated also relate to employers: employers are difficult to communicate with, employers have insufficient funds, and employers would need more favourable laws.

Aggregating these four reasons into one, we obtain the following reasons for all the schools in aggregate:

- School does not regard the tool as important 7.2%
- Employers 77.5%
- Other 15.3%

This rather clearly shows that according to what the schools think employers have the decisive share in the current state of collaboration.

Free answers

Other possibilities for achieving the objectives or contributing to achieve them by improved collaboration with employers can be obtained from reading the free answers provided by some schools. The following is the most mentioned suggestion, which can be useful for the objective Aligning instructional content with employer needs:

- Carrying out practical training and providing internships in businesses – however, only in rare cases do internships take place in a clearly defined and agreed period and at a company's workplace where students are allowed to carry out skilled work while supervised by the company's employee.

Collaboration often takes various forms such as:

- Lectures by practitioners, presentations for students and teachers of a company's new products and technologies, using top experts of companies and professional associations as technical teachers and trainers;
- Using practitioners as technical teachers, and providing conditions for teachers to be able to do internships;
- Membership in professional associations and unions, school representatives in the governing bodies of these associations and unions, school representatives in project advisory bodies or sector councils;
- Collaborating with businesses, communicating information about the ongoing vocational education curriculum reform to social partners, involvement in preparing school educational programmes, and setting up merged web environments (SPŠS Vsetín);
- Working with professional associations and businesses in preparing project plans – development of training centres for the development of practical technical competencies of students.

Free answers were meant to serve as a source of good practices examples. We might mention the Secondary Vocational School of Electrical Engineering in Plzeň (SVSEE) to provide a concrete example. It is important that all the school's activities are focused on education and training results, and student performance and knowledge. Paying regular monitoring visits to companies where students are receiving their internship, the SVSEE teachers are able to obtain valuable information as to the requirements of a real work environment on school leavers.

Also, the social partners help increase professional competencies of teachers and offer students temporary jobs. According to the SVSEE experience, collaboration with medium to large companies is likely to run smoother than that with small businesses.

Some answers, though, reveal a critical sound and point out shortcomings such as:

- The most pressing issue of vocational schooling is how to ensure quality internship for students. The basis for it should be provided for by legislation granting employers tax concessions whereby to co-fund the studies (reference to tax concessions for businesses is made in various forms repeatedly).
- Collaboration is largely dependent on networking.
- Businesses have been recently showing an increasing interest in providing practical training. This training, however, tends not to meet the desired standard, and in many cases students are perceived as a filler to compensate for a shortage of regular manpower, without respecting the training requirements.
- In our field (secondary vocational school of fishery), we have to cope with financial cuts, which have negative impact on the vocational training of our students (we do not have sufficient funds to buy and renew machinery, attend technical courses, promote our trade, etc.).
- We would appreciate if employers were more willing to provide vocational training (this is related to more favourable laws), including assistance in the provision of material and equipment.
- Social partners understand the provision of practical training to students as physical aid, where students are well able to replace regular employees even though they do not perfectly meet their standard. Employers allow for a certain loss which is associated with letting students do internship in their businesses. On the other hand, they create conditions for responsible work performance. The absence of students from work during the holidays and when students have no classes is an issue, but productive process must be ensured (Secondary School of Hotel Industry in Kroměříž).

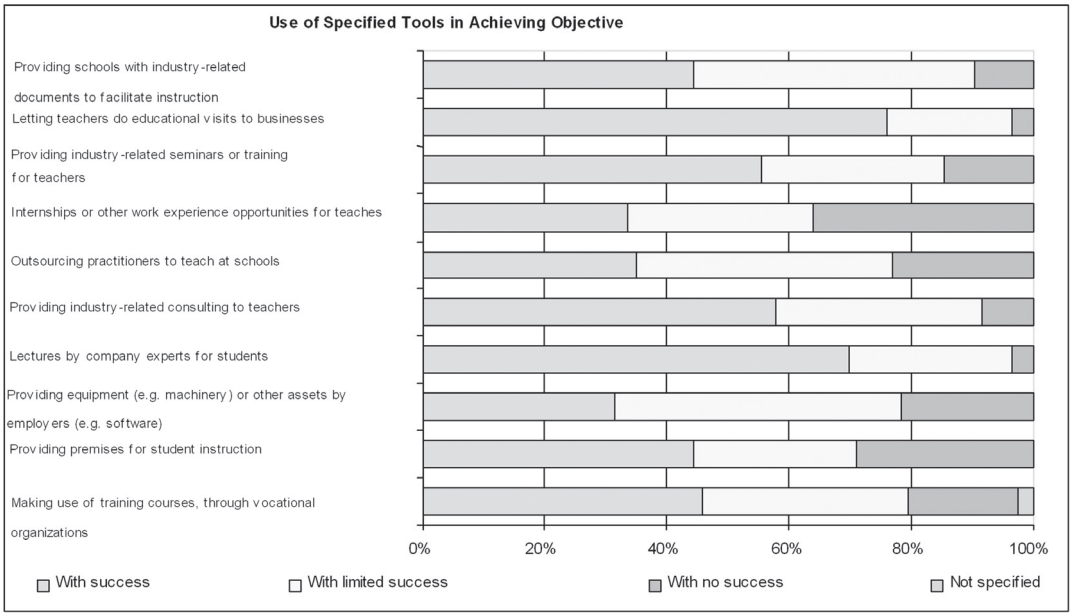
2.2.2. EMPLOYER ASSISTANCE IN IMPROVING INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

The following tools were surveyed to find out how schools perform in achieving the objective of enhancing instructional quality:

- Providing schools with industry-related documents to facilitate instruction
- Letting teachers do educational visits to businesses
- Providing industry-related seminars or training for teachers
- Internship or other work experience opportunities in businesses for teachers
- Outsourcing practitioners to teach at schools
- Providing industry-related consulting to teachers
- Organizing lectures for students by experts of employers
- Providing equipment, machinery or other assets, such as software, by employers for instruction at school or training facility

- Providing premises for student instruction
- Making use of training courses through vocational organizations.

Figure 4 with table



	With success	With limited success	With no success	Not specified
Providing schools with industry-related documents to facilitate instruction	44,6 %	45,8 %	9,6 %	0,0 %
Letting teachers do educational visits to businesses	75,9 %	20,5 %	3,6 %	0,0 %
Providing industry-related seminars or training for teachers	55,4 %	30,1 %	14,5 %	0,0 %
Internships or other work experience opportunities for teaches	33,7 %	30,1 %	36,1 %	0,0 %
Outsourcing practitioners to teach at schools	34,9 %	42,2 %	22,9 %	0,0 %
Providing industry-related consulting to teachers	57,8 %	33,7 %	8,4 %	0,0 %
Lectures by company experts for students	69,9 %	26,5 %	3,6 %	0,0 %
Providing equipment (e.g. machinery) or other assets by employers (e.g. software)	31,3 %	47,0 %	21,7 %	0,0 %
Providing premises for student instruction	44,6 %	26,5 %	28,9 %	0,0 %
Making use of training courses through vocational organizations	45,8 %	33,7 %	18,1 %	2,4 %

As shown in the table and the chart above representing the data for the tools defined for the objective Employer assistance in instructional quality improvements, schools employ with best success the tool educational visits by teachers (75.9%) and another 20.5% try but are successful only in part, which is 96.4% in aggregate. Consequently, this tool can be regarded as a very successful one to achieve the objective.

Experience confirms that teachers (as well as students) benefit from educational visits very much because they will learn new things and can exchange experience. Also companies will learn important information about what the vocational training for the given industry or trade involves and can make their contribution to enhancing school instruction, either by sharing their experience during practical training or communicating their suggestions in the process of designing and implementing educational programmes (graduate profiles).

Lectures for students by company experts is another important tool, which is employed with success by 69.9% of schools and which 26.5% try to employ but with partial success only. These two groups account for 96.4% of schools in aggregate, which makes this tool virtually as successful as the previous one. Among other important tools is Providing industry-related consulting to teachers. Performance in using this tool is rated as with success by 57.8% of schools, while another 33.7% try but are successful only in part. These two groups in aggregate account for a rather significant share of 91.5%.

Slightly lower values (85.5% in aggregate) are observed in the tool Providing industry-related seminars and training for teachers – 55.4% of schools report employing with success, while 30.1% try but with limited success only. Providing schools with industry-related material and documents to facilitate instruction is another tool of importance with the aggregate share of 90.4%; this tools is employed with success by 44.6% of schools, while almost identical share (45.8%) report trying but with limited success only.

Similarly, Providing premises for student instruction and Making use of training courses via vocational organizations are implemented with success by 45% of schools approximately, but the percentage of schools experiencing problems in their efforts to implement these tools with success is considerably higher than that obtained in the previous tools (26.5% and 33.7%). The three other tools – Internships or other work experience opportunities in businesses for teaches (33.7%), Outsourcing practitioners to teach at schools (34.9%) and Providing equipment (e.g. machinery) or other assets by employers (e.g. software) for instruction at school or training facility (31.3%) – received similarly distributed ratings, especially that of employing with success (see the table and the values indicated in parentheses in this sentence), but given the aggregate of this rating and that of with limited success, the shares are almost equal. The lowest value of this aggregate is obtained for Internships or other work experience opportunities in businesses for teaches (63.8%) because as many as 36.1% of schools fail to implement this tool.

A survey among employers has shown that the tools listed are employed to a greater degree by large and manufacturing companies and organizations operating in the quaternary sphere (healthcare, social work, education and training, etc.)

Reasons why some schools miss employer assistance in instructional quality improvements

Judging their utilization of the given tools in achieving the given objective, schools indicated the reasons why they were not (perfectly) successful

at implementing these tools. Schools could use the following table and choose two or three of the suggested reasons for each of the ten tools or they could provide verbal comments.

The table clearly shows that according to approximately one fifth of the schools the reason why employers fail to provide the expected assistance is their lack of (sufficient) interest in vocational education (23.7%), their shortage of funds (20.1%), the absence of more favourable laws (19.8%), and other reasons (21%). It is interesting that the values for this objective do not reveal any major differences, unlike other objectives, which show large differences in the reasons indicated. The only exception is the 9.2% of schools which indicated difficult communication with employers as the reason of unsuccessful collaboration.

The table below shows the distribution of reasons, both for the whole sample and for each type of school.

Table 3

	Schools	Schools with a majority of the following branches		
	All	Technical	Service-related	Arts
Tool (activity) not important for us	7,0 %	3,7 %	2,8 %	8,7 %
Employers not interested (or some only show insufficient	44,1 %	22,8 %	25,7 %	20,2 %
Employers are difficult to communicate with	14,0 %	4,9 %	15,6 %	11,5 %
Employers have insufficient funds	5,7 %	19,5 %	27,5 %	13,5 %
Employers want more favourable legislation (e.g. tax concessions)	11,6 %	28,0 %	14,7 %	15,4 %
Other reason	17,5 %	21,1 %	13,8 %	30,8 %

When comparing the types of school, it is revealed that employers especially miss more favourable laws (e.g. tax concessions) in their collaboration with technical schools (28%), and that schools meet with lack of (sufficient) interest of employers in education and training (22.8%) and have to cope with a shortage of funds (19.5%). 21.1% of schools indicated other reasons.

The art schools indicated none or low interest of employers in education and training (20.2%) as the main reason of their vain efforts; it should be noted, however, that a relatively high percentage of schools (30.8%) indicated other reasons. The services-related schools see the shortage of employers' funds (27.5%) and none or low interest of employers in vocational training (25.7%) as the main problems.

Overall, the problem in collaboration with employers in enhancing instructional quality is seen by the schools as an aggregate of several factors consisting in employers' lack of interest in education and training, insufficient funds available to employers, and the need to ensure laws more favourable to employers.

Most schools come up against no major problems when communicating with employers – such problems were indicated by one tenth of all the surveyed schools only (9.2%), but communication problems were indicated by a fairly significant percentage of service-related schools (15.6%). Some schools (6.1%) do not regard this objective as important.

The interpretation of results for objective 2 – Employer assistance in instructional quality improvements – is in principle in accord with the overall summary identifying employers' lack of interest in vocational education and training as the key issue. Moreover, other aspects play a role here, those money- and legislation-related, as stated in the final interpretation.

The free answers provided by schools show that many of them have also been using other (new) tools facilitating instructional improvements at regional level, be it collaboration with other organizations involved in vocational education and training and, last but not least, motivating students to learn the given branch or subject.

These include tools such as student allowances, provision of material and equipment for students, motivation allowance in less attractive fields, participation of social partners in assigning school-year projects (some companies organize annual competition for third-year students), joining forces in recruiting school leavers, targeted vocation-related leisure activity for students, granting some of employee benefits, allowance or gifts for best performing students, corporate sponsoring of schools, organizing internships in other countries for students in their final or pre-final year, recruitment discussions with these students in vacancy presentation sessions in companies, and organizing outstations on a company's premises.

2.2.3. FAMILIARIZING STUDENTS WITH REAL WORK ENVIRONMENT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The following tools were surveyed in order to obtain data about performance in achieving the objective Familiarizing students with a real work environment in the Czech Republic:

- Student educational visits to experience a real work environment
- Student internships in a real work environment
- Practical training in a real work environment
- Students taking part in corporate project teams, or working on separate component projects for companies.

Student educational visits to experience a real work environment is one of the suitable ways to supplement theoretical instruction and introduce students to a specific work environment, machinery and equipment, and operations and production processes in a specific company. These visits are a common supplementary teaching method allowing students to have a taste of working processes. Educational visits usually take the form of guided tours.

Student educational visits to experience a real work environment are employed with success by 91.6% of schools, with 6% of schools trying but being successful in part only despite their best efforts. Only one school reported that they failed to make any educational visits (1.2%). One school omitted to rate this tool in their answers.

As far as the type of school criterion is concerned, educational visits are employed with success by 92.9% of technical schools, 86.7% of service-related schools, and 90.0% of art schools. A few technical schools (4.8%) admit they are not perfectly successful at ensuring educational visits for students (two schools), with one school having indicated no answer. A higher percentage of services-related schools (6.7%) admit they are not perfectly successful at ensuring educational visits for students, with a still higher percentage of art schools (10.0%) having admitted the same. The legislation-related reason is the one most often indicated in explanation why schools experience problems in this tool.

Student internships are compulsory at secondary technical schools with the Maturita examination, and the length of internship defined in teaching documents. Schools provide this internship either through businesses or through workshops they run themselves. Also, schools may define their internship priorities and goals for different grades if these are not strictly defined in teaching documents. In the fields of study with focus on the hotel and catering industry or agriculture some portion of the required internship period may be done during the holidays.

Student internship is employed with success by 84.3% of schools, while 10.8% of schools try but are successful in part only in ensuring student internship in a real work environment. 2.4% of schools report they fail to ensure any internship and the same number of schools have failed to indicate any answer to this question. Legislation (cf. the previous tool) and employers' lack of interest are the most frequent reasons among those specified by schools why they are confronted with problems in ensuring student internship in a real work environment. Internships for students are employed with success by 90.5% of technical schools, with 4.8% of schools trying but being successful in part only in ensuring internship in a real work environment; the same percentage of schools have indicated no answer. The service-related schools ensure internship with success in 86.7% of cases and 13.3% of schools report they meet with some problems in ensuring internship in a real work environment. No school has indicated that they would fail to provide any internship in a real work environment at all. Art schools ensure internship in a real work environment with success in 50% of cases, some problems are encountered by 40.0% of schools, and only 10% report no success at all in ensuring any internship for their students in a real work environment.

Practical training is part of the secondary technical school curriculum in the fields of study completed by an apprenticeship certificate and in some fields of study completed by the Maturita examination. In substance, practical training is focused on a real work environment and schools deliver it either in businesses or in workshops they run themselves. The fields of study completed by apprenticeship certificate are allocated a high percentage of practical training in the overall instruction – as many as nearly half the total weekly classes in the given field of study.

Practical training of students in a real work environment is employed with success by 69.9% of schools. 14.5% of schools gave no answer, and these might be the schools teaching the fields of study completed with the Maturita exam that do not require any curricular practical training. 8.4% of schools admit only limited success in their efforts to ensue practical training in a real work environment, and 7.2% of schools are unable to ensure any practical training in a real work environment at all. Besides the other, unspecified category of reason, legislation is most often reported as the reason of the inability to ensure practical training in a real work environment with better than a rather limited success.

Practical training in a real work environment is successfully ensured by 71.4% of technical schools, with 7.1% and 4.8% of schools experiencing only limited and no success, respectively. No answer to this question was indicated by 16.7% of schools, and it may be assumed that these are schools which are not required to provide practical training and, therefore, did not rate their performance in this tool.

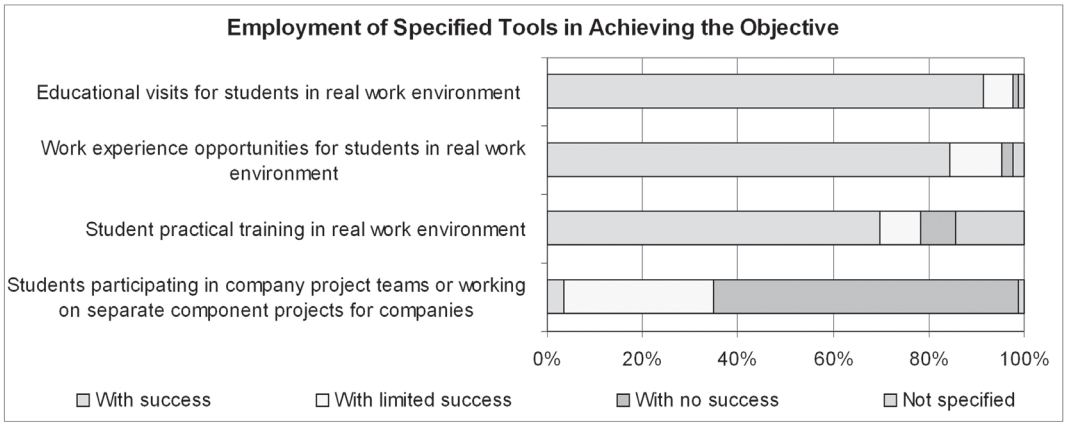
The percentage of service-related schools which deliver practical training in a real work environment amounts to 86.7%, with only 6.7% of schools reporting limited or no success at delivering practical training in a real work environment. The percentage of art schools which deliver practical training in a real work environment amounts to 30%, with limited and no success reported by 20.0% and 20.0% of schools, respectively. No answer was provided by 30% of schools.

Participation of students in company project teams is a tool neither commonly employed nor included in teaching documents as yet. Accordingly, it is up to schools whether or not they have opportunities to implement and use this tool in ensuring that students are in touch with a real work environment. The survey results show, however, that most schools are not successful at making use of this tool, but among those which are, art schools are the most successful, followed by technical schools. The service-related schools do not employ this tool at all.

Participation of students in company project teams or in separate component projects for companies is a tool employed with success by 3.6% of schools. Limited success is reported by 31.3% of schools, with 63.9% of schools failing to use this tool at all. One school chose not to answer this question. In technical schools, this tool is employed with success and limited success by 4.8% and 28.6% of schools, respectively. Most schools, however, report no success (64.3%), and 2.4% schools indicated no answer. In service-related schools, no school employs this tool on a regular basis and with success. Only limited success is achieved, despite their efforts, by 26.7% of schools, and most schools (73.3%) report they fail to have their students involved in project teams in businesses. In art schools, this tool is employed with success by 10% of schools, with 40% of schools achieving a limited success only despite their efforts. No success is reported by 50% of art schools.

The reasons most often indicated in explanation why schools fail to have their students involved in project teams in companies, or even in working on minor constituent problems, are employers' lack of interest and other unspecified reasons.

Figure 5 with table



	With success	With limited success	With no success	Not specified
Educational visits for students in real work environment	91,6 %	6,0 %	1,2 %	1,2 %
Work experience opportunities for students in real work environment	84,3 %	10,8 %	2,4 %	2,4 %
Student practical training in real work environment	69,9 %	8,4 %	7,2 %	14,5 %
Students participating in company project teams or working on separate component projects for companies	3,6 %	31,3 %	63,9 %	1,2 %

We asked ourselves a question why some schools achieve only limited, or even no success at familiarizing their students with a real work environment. According to schools most problems are attributable to employers showing little interest. Employers show either no or limited interest in collaborating with schools, which is reported by 31.9% of schools. This problem is experienced most by technical schools (32.8%), with service-related schools closely following (31.8%) – these also add that they find communication with employers difficult. Communication problems are an issue in the two other types of schools to a lesser degree, only reported by 5.2% of technical schools and 6.3% of art schools. Legislation is another frequently indicated factor held responsible for the poor situation in ensuring that students are in touch with a real work environment. Employers would need more favourable laws that would motivate them, such as by tax concessions, to get involved in undergraduate vocational education and training. This reason is reported by 20.3% of schools, with the highest share of technical

schools (29.3%), followed by art schools (34.4%). Services-related schools do not see legislation an issue, with only 4.5% of them having indicated it as a problematic factor. Surprisingly, shortage of funds ranks last. The reason that employers do not have enough money to provide internships was stated by 5.8% of schools on average. Money is regarded an issue in ensuring that students are in touch with a real work environment by art schools in most cases (12.5%), and a relatively high percentage (26.8%) accounts for reasons which the schools did not specify.

Table 4

Reasons why some schools achieve limited or no success in familiarizing students with the real work environment in the Czech Republic

	Schools	Schools with a majority of the following branches		
	All	Technical	Service-related	Arts
Tool (activity) not important for us	5,8%	3,4%	9,1%	0,0%
Employers not interested (or some only show insufficient interest)	31,9%	32,8%	31,8%	21,9%
Employers are difficult to communicate with	9,4%	5,2%	31,8%	6,3%
Employers have insufficient funds	5,8%	3,4%	0,0%	12,5%
Employers want more favourable legislation (e.g. tax concessions)	20,3%	25,9%	4,5%	34,4%
Other reason	26,8%	29,3%	22,7%	25,0%

Let us state some examples of collaboration between schools and companies in familiarizing students with a real work environment selected from the free answers provided by schools. Most frequent answers appreciated good collaboration in delivering students practical training or internships in businesses and organizing educational visits for students. Some schools stated the importance of establishing effective control and evaluation tools so that the training in a real work environment in business would be effective and beneficial. It is obvious that some firms have understood the potential that opened to them through collaboration with vocational schools by getting the opportunity to systematically work on developing their personnel potential and influence the quality of their potential human resources.

Not always does the quality of collaboration depend on the size of a business; many small businesses can provide students with very good training. Ensuring student internship opportunities is often a matter of networking and often conditioned by a good long-term collaboration between schools and employers. One school pointed out that being in touch with a real company work environment has an impact not only on students' acquisition of skills, but also on their attitudes, values and work habits. It was also identified as an important factor that by ensuring internship or practical training opportunities the school will introduce students to the company, in which they may be given temporary jobs, or even a permanent job once they have graduated.

2.2.4. FAMILIARIZING STUDENTS WITH A REAL WORK ENVIRONMENT IN OTHER COUNTRIES

The following tools were surveyed in order to obtain data about performance in familiarizing students with a real work environment in other countries:

- Student educational visits to experience a real work environment
- Student internships in a real work environment
- Practical training in a real work environment
- Students taking part in company project teams or in working on separate component projects for companies.

Educational visits to experience a real work environment in a different country are a suitable method of supplementing the teaching of theory and may encourage students' interest in their field of study. In terms of the type of school breakdown, this tool is employed with success by 26.2% of technical schools, 46.7% of services-related schools and 10.0% of art schools. Technical schools admit limited and no success in 42.9% and 31.0% of cases, respectively. Service-related schools admit limited or no success in 26.7% of cases, while the percentage of art schools failing to ensure any educational visits abroad at all amounts to 20.0%.

In explanation why they experience limited or no success in ensuring this type of educational visit, schools indicated the other category of reasons most often (it might represent reasons such as a language barrier) and insufficient communication from employers.

Student internships abroad are not a common component of instruction at secondary technical or vocational schools, yet schools make maximum efforts to arrange such internships for their students and deepen their interest not only in their field of study and experience of a work environment in a different country but also in language and communication skills.

Student internships in a real work environment in a different country are successfully ensured by 26.5% of schools. Only limited success is reported by 32.5% of schools, with 39.8% of schools failing to arrange any student internships in a different country at all. This question was not answered by 1.2% of schools (one school).

The reasons indicated by schools why they fail to arrange student internships in a real work environment in a different country are, again, the other category. This may suggest that factors such as inadequate foreign language skills are perhaps the biggest barrier. Poor communication from employers is another reason.

This tool is employed with success by 19.0% of technical schools, with 26.2% of technical school achieving a limited success only. The highest percentage of technical schools accounts for those failing to deliver any foreign internships at all (52.4%). One school did not answer.

This tool is employed with success by 46.7% of service-related schools, with the same percentage reporting a limited success only and as few as 6.7% of schools admitting no success. In art schools this tool is employed with a limited success by 40% of schools, with 60% of schools reporting no success at all.

Practical training in a real work environment in a different country is employed with success by 22.9% of schools, with 9.6% of schools having indicated no answer. These may be schools with teaching plans which do not include any practical training, i.e. with the fields of study completed with the Maturita examination.

Efforts to arrange practical training in a real work environment are declared by 22.9% of schools, but these admit they only achieve a limited success. No success in employing this tool is reported by 44.6% of schools.

Other reasons and poor communication with employers are again the most frequent reasons indicated by schools in explanation of why they fail to employ this tool with perfect success. Poor communication with employers may not always imply their unwillingness but may also be attributable to a language barrier.

This tool is employed with success by 19.0% of technical schools, with the same percentage of technical schools reporting a limited success only. No success is admitted by 50.0% of technical schools, and 11.9% of schools gave no answer. In service-related schools, practical training in a real work environment in a foreign country is delivered by 40.0% of schools, with 46.7% and 13.3% reporting a limited and no success, respectively. No art school reported successful employment of this tool, and only 10% achieve at least a limited success. This question was not answered by 30% of respondents.

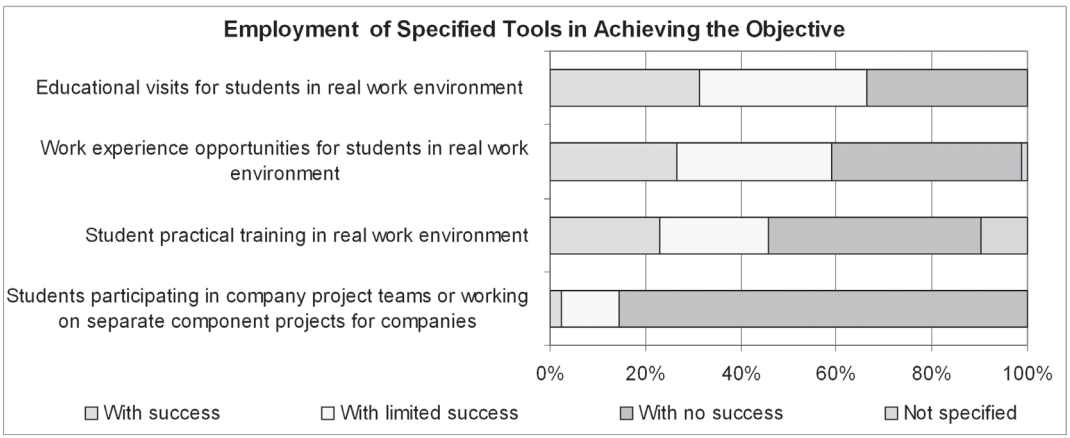
Participation of students in project teams of companies in foreign countries is a tool which is not commonly employed as yet. Therefore, it is up to schools and their decision and networking, whether they can and have opportunities to employ this tool. The survey results show that most schools fail to use the tool. So far, art schools seem to be most successful, followed by technical schools. Service-related schools have not yet been employing this tool at all.

Participation of students in project teams of companies based in foreign countries or students working on separate component projects for companies is a tool employed with success by 2.4% of schools only (two schools). Limited success is reported by 12.0% of schools, with 85.5% of schools failing to employ this tool at all.

Technical schools report they did not manage to ensure the participation of students in company project teams or in projects for foreign companies. Some schools report they try but have only limited success (14.3%). Most schools report they are not able to ensure participation of their students in project teams in other countries (85.7%). In terms of service-related schools, none employs this tool on a common basis and with success, although 6.7% of service-related schools try but achieve only a limited success.

Most schools (93.3%) report they are unable to get their students involved in company project teams. As regards art schools, all of them report they do not employ this tool in practice at all. The reasons most often indicated in explanation why schools fail to arrange for their students participation in project teams in companies in other countries or in minor constituent problems are the employers' lack of interest and other, unspecified reasons.

Figure 6 with table



	With success	With limited success	With no success	Not specified
Educational visits for students in real work environment	31,3 %	34,9 %	33,7 %	0,0 %
Work experience opportunities for students in real work environment	26,5 %	32,5 %	39,8 %	1,2 %
Student practical training in real work environment	22,9 %	22,9 %	44,6 %	9,6 %
Students participating in company project teams or working on separate component projects for companies	2,4 %	12,0 %	85,5 %	0,0 %

We asked ourselves a question why some schools achieve only a limited or even no success at familiarizing their students with the real work environment in other countries. The reasons indicated most frequently are other reasons – indicated by 39.4% of schools. These may include an insufficient ability to speak foreign languages, and the need to provide staff members to be in charge of students. The latter usually poses a problem to the school because the teacher is absent from regular classes and such familiarizing visits are often long-terms stays, in which either students or their parents may show fairly little interest because of a certain amount of risk associated with such stays, a long-term absence from classes, etc. Difficult communication with employers is indicated as a reason by 18.7% of schools, which may be attributable to different environments and different mentalities of the communicating parties, as well as inadequate foreign language skills. The lack of interest of foreign employers is reported by 15.0% of schools as a reason while the insufficient funds of employers were reported as a reason by 13.1% of schools. Legislation shortcomings are regarded as a reason by 9.5% of schools and only 4.3% of schools do not see familiarizing students with a real work environment abroad as an important objective.

Comparison between school types suggests interesting conclusions – whereas technical and art schools explain their low success in respect of this tool by other reasons (40.4% and 46.%, respectively), service-related schools attribute their low performance to difficult communication with employers (41.7%). All schools give virtually identical answers to the question about employers' interest – low interest of foreign employers is reported by 15.4% of technical schools, 14.6% of service-related schools and 9.7% of art schools. Employers' lack of finance to spend on students is least pressing for service-related schools (4.2%) while a higher percentage is shown in technical and art schools (14.1% and 17.7%, respectively).

Table 5

Reasons why some schools achieve limited or no success in familiarizing students with real work environment in other countries

	Schools	Schools with a majority of the following branches		
	All	Technical	Service-related	Arts
Tool (activity) not important for us	4,3 %	4,5 %	4,2 %	0,0 %
Employers not interested (or some only show insufficient interest)	15,0 %	15,4 %	14,6 %	9,7 %
Employers are difficult to communicate with	18,7 %	16,7 %	41,7 %	12,9 %
Employers have insufficient funds	13,1 %	14,1 %	4,2 %	17,7 %
Employers want more favourable legislation (e.g. tax concessions)	9,5 %	9,0 %	12,5 %	12,9 %
Other reason	39,4 %	40,4 %	22,9 %	46,8 %

The free answers provided by schools show that best results are achieved in arranging student exchange and organizing educational visits to operations plants. It is also evident that schools make efforts to extend these activities to other countries. Interviews with representatives of service-related schools suggest that many schools deliver internships and practical training in foreign countries, even for long periods, where these activities are usually seasonal and associated with local tourism. This helps not only to develop students' professional competencies while gaining work experience in a real work environment abroad, but also to enhance their foreign language skills and their knowledge of trade vocabulary and to develop communicative and soft skills.

2.2.5. ENCOURAGING STUDENTS' INTEREST IN THE FIELD OF EXPERTISE THEY ARE TAUGHT

The following tools were surveyed to find out how successful schools are at motivating students to find jobs in their field of study:

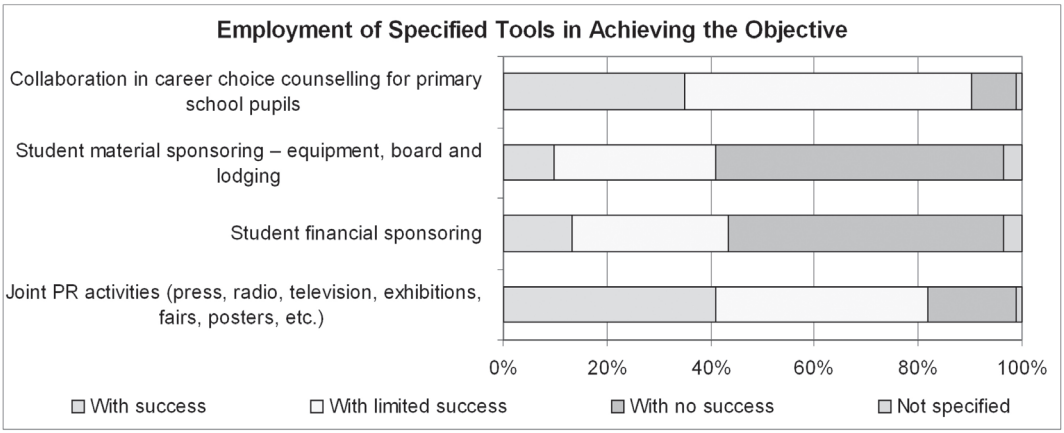
- Collaboration in career counselling for primary school pupils
- Material support to students – gear, and board and lodging
- Sponsoring students
- Joint public relations activities (press, radio, television, exhibitions, trade fairs, posters, etc.).

More than half of the schools try to institute some collaboration in influencing career choices by pupils, but fail to be entirely successful (55.4%). One third report successful employment of this tool while less than one tenth (8.4%) report no success. Only 1.2% of schools chose not to rate their performance in using this tool. The employers' lack of interest is the prevailing reason (27%) to explain limited or no success.

Material support to students shows nearly the same results as sponsoring students. The performance rating categories are ranked identically in these two tools and the percentages are similar. Most schools are unable to use these tools (55.4% and 53%, respectively), less than one third are successful only in part (31.3% and 30.1%, respectively) and the lowest percentage accounts for schools which employ these tools with success (9.6% and 13.3%, respectively). As many as 3.6% of schools provided no answers as far as these tools are concerned. The most frequently indicated reasons for limited or no success were insufficient funds of employers (36%) and their need of more favourable legislation (23%).

Joint PR activities were reported by four fifths of the schools, with performance rating distributed evenly between with success and with limited success (41%). If we put aside the several schools which chose not to assess their performance in this tool (1.2%), we obtain nearly one fifth of schools which are unsuccessful at carrying out any joint PR activities. The most frequent reasons for limited or no success are the employers' lack of interest (19%) and insufficient funds (13%).

Figure 7 with table



	With success	With limited success	With no success	Not specified
Collaboration in career choice counselling for primary school pupils	34,9 %	55,4 %	8,4 %	1,2 %
Student material sponsoring – equipment, board and lodging	9,6 %	31,3 %	55,4 %	3,6 %
Student financial sponsoring	13,3 %	30,1 %	53,0 %	3,6 %
Joint PR activities (press, radio, television, exhibitions, fairs, posters, etc.)	41,0 %	41,0 %	16,9 %	1,2 %

Reasons why schools achieve limited or no success in collaboration with employers in encouraging students' interest in their field of study. The usual reasons why schools achieve only a limited or no success in collaboration with employers in encouraging students' interest in their field of study are: insufficient funds – 29.2%; employers' lack of interest – 25.3% (but 8.6% from service-related schools); and discouraging legislation – 21.1%. Communication with employers is most difficult for service-related schools (10%) while least difficult for art schools (2.7%).

Table 6

	Schools	Schools with a majority of the following branches		
	All	Technical	Service-related	Arts
Tool (activity) not important for us	1,0 %	0,7 %	0,0 %	0,0 %
Employers not interested (or some only show insufficient interest)	25,3 %	31,4 %	8,6 %	21,6 %
Employers are difficult to communicate with	6,5 %	6,6 %	10,0 %	2,7 %
Employers have insufficient funds	29,2 %	25,5 %	37,1 %	29,7 %
Employers want more favourable legislation (e.g. tax concessions)	21,1 %	21,2 %	25,7 %	16,2 %
Other reason	16,9 %	14,6 %	18,6 %	29,7 %

As shown in this and the previous tables, collaboration with employers in encouraging students' interest in their field of study is important to schools. Consequently, all but one school indicated No to the question whether they regard this tool as unimportant. On average, one fourth of schools explain why collaboration does not work by employers' lack of interest (25.3%), with service-related schools being out of this average value because this reason was indicated by less than one tenth (8.6%). Again, service-related schools are those that reported difficult communication with employers most frequently (10%), which is again a value out of the average (6.5%). Difference to the average value is also shown in art schools, which argue by difficult communication in only a small number of cases (2.7%). The widest agreement across all types of schools is found in the case of the reason that employers have no funds available to spend on collaboration (29.2%). This opinion was most often indicated by service-related schools (37.1%).

The third most indicated reason (21.1%) is the need for laws that would be more favourable to employers so that they could collaborate with schools better. This reason was indicated by one fourth of the service-related schools, one fifth of the technical schools and almost one sixth of the art schools. Other reasons of unsuccessful collaboration were indicated by 16.9% of schools, with art schools showing the highest percentage (29.7%).

Free answers provided by schools also contain some examples of good practice:

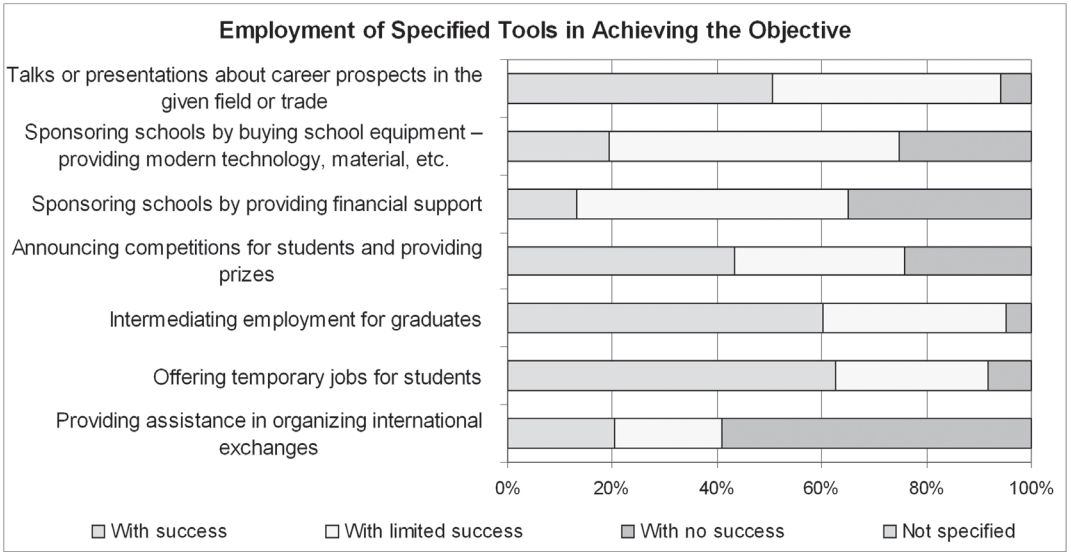
- Collaboration on the development of an interlinked web environment – SPŠS Vsetín
- Collaboration on activities for primary school pupils – SPŠS Vsetín
- School as a Centre of Education for the Zlínský Region – SOŠ Otrokovice.

2.2.6. ENCOURAGING STUDENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT IN TRADES THEY HAVE BEEN TRAINED FOR

The following tools were surveyed to obtain data about the success in motivating students to find job in their field of study:

- Talks or presentations about career prospects in the given field or trade
- Sponsoring schools by buying school equipment – providing modern technology, material, etc.
- Sponsoring schools by providing financial support
- Announcing competitions for students and providing prizes
- Securing employment for graduates
- Offering temporary jobs for students
- Providing assistance in organizing international exchanges.

Figure 8 with table



	With success	With limited success	With no success	Not specified
Talks or presentations about career prospects in the given field or trade	50,6 %	43,4 %	6,0 %	0,0 %
Sponsoring schools by buying school equipment – providing modern technology, material, etc.	19,3 %	55,4 %	25,3 %	0,0 %
Sponsoring schools by providing financial support	13,3 %	51,8 %	34,9 %	0,0 %
Announcing competitions for students and providing prizes	43,4 %	32,5 %	24,1 %	0,0 %
Intermediating employment for graduates	60,2 %	34,9 %	4,8 %	0,0 %
Offering temporary jobs for students	62,7 %	28,9 %	8,4 %	0,0 %
Providing assistance in organizing international exchanges	20,5 %	20,5 %	59,0 %	0,0 %

Half of the total schools (50.6%) confirm they are successful at organizing talks with students or presentations about career prospects in the field of study they are taught. On the other hand, a relatively high percentage of schools (43.4%) admitted only limited employment of this tool and 6% of schools do not use this tool at all. 19.3% of schools are successful at obtaining sponsorship for material and equipment, but more than half of the schools (55.4%) admit that they fail to achieve expected results despite their efforts. One quarter of schools (25.3%) acknowledge they have no access to this type of sponsorship.

Sponsorship by financial support is confirmed by 13.3% of schools, with more than half of schools (51.8%) reporting only limited success in spite of their efforts to persuade social partners for such sponsorship. No success in obtaining financial support is reported by more than one third of schools (34.9%). The survey results show that if persuaded to sponsor a school, companies tend to choose to provide material and equipment rather than direct financial support.

Relatively better performance is reported by schools in respect of collaboration with social partners in organizing and sponsoring student competitions. This tool is employed with success by 43.4% of schools, with 32.5% enjoying only a limited success. Still, a considerable percentage of schools (24.1%) are unsuccessful at establishing collaboration with social partners in terms of sponsoring. Schools perform very well in respect of the share of social partners providing employment for graduates and temporary jobs for students. More than half of schools (60.2%) report successful collaboration with businesses regarding employment of graduate students. Limited success is reported by 34.9% of schools, with only 4.8% of schools reporting that employers do not get involved in this.

The highest percentage of successful collaboration between employers and schools is reported in offering temporary jobs for students. More than one quarter of schools (28.9%) report only limited success, in spite of their efforts to establish collaboration. No offer of temporary jobs for students is acknowledged by 8.4% of schools.

The least employer involvement is observed in assistance to schools in organizing international exchanges. Only one fifth of schools (20.5%) report success without reservations in this field, with identical percentage of schools reporting only limited success. An absolute majority of schools (59.0%), however, enjoy no assistance by companies.

Reasons why schools achieve limited or no success in collaboration with employers in motivating students to find employment in their field of study

Where rating their performance in using the tools as successful in part or unsuccessful, schools were asked to give reasons they see as having negative impact on their situation. They were given six reasons to consider (those in the left column in the following table) and asked to choose no more than three reasons for each tool. The following table shows the percentage distribution of the reasons indicated, both in terms of total percentage and type of school breakdown.

Table 7

	Schools	Schools with a majority of the following branches		
	All	Technical	Service-related	Arts
Tool (activity) not important for us	1,9 %	0,9 %	1,3 %	2,2 %
Employers not interested (or some only show insufficient interest)	28,2 %	27,1 %	24,1 %	22,2 %
Employers are difficult to communicate with	5,6 %	6,3 %	6,3 %	5,6 %
Employers have insufficient funds	23,9 %	19,9 %	29,1 %	22,2 %
Employers want more favourable legislation (e.g. tax concessions)	21,4 %	24,9 %	22,8 %	24,4 %
Other reason	19,1 %	20,8 %	16,5 %	23,3 %

It is obvious from the data obtained that the tool unimportant reason was selected by the least percentage of schools when explaining the lack of success in collaboration with employers in motivating students to find employment in the field they have been trained for. This reason was indicated by 1.9% of schools only; technical schools show the lowest percentage (0.9%) while the percentage of service-related schools having specified this reason is 1.3%. The highest percentage is obtained in art schools (2.2%), but given the low number of art schools in the survey, this percentage does not account for an absolutely higher number of instances. According to the surveyed schools, the following four tools are not important in this respect: company sponsorship of material and equipment, company sponsorship as direct financial support, offering temporary jobs for students (each tool indicated by two schools), and assistance in organizing international exchanges (three schools).

The reason indicated most often in explanation of limited or no success in achieving the objective in question is that employers do not show any interest in this kind of collaboration (or some do, but their interest is fairly indifferent). A total of 28.2% of schools (including those which are difficult to be clearly classified as any of the three school types) expressed opinions to that effect. Closest to the overall average value for this reason is the percentage in the group of technical schools (27.1%), whereas service-related schools account for a relatively lower percentage (24.1%); the lowest percentage of this reason was obtained in art schools (22.2%). This reason is indicated with all tools. Most schools (34.9%) indicated this reason when considering assistance in organizing international exchanges; 27.7% of schools meet with the employers' lack of interest when trying to organize talks or presentations for students, and nearly the same percentage of schools (26.5%) believe this lack of interest to be the reason of the low involvement of businesses in orga-

nizing student competitions. With both the sponsorship-related tools, the same percentage of schools (22.9%) explain their poor performance by this reason, and the lowest percentage of this reason (13.3%) was obtained in respect of offering employment for graduates and temporary jobs for students (15.7%).

On the other hand, few schools attributed their problems to employers being difficult to communicate with, with a total of 5.6% of schools having indicated this reason (technical schools 6.3%, services-related schools 6.3%, and art schools 5.6%). Although this reason was indicated with each tool, it always accounts for low percentages.

Overall, nearly one fourth of schools (23.9%) believe that employers do not have enough money for these activities. This conviction was most often expressed by service-related schools (29.1%), closest to the average value are art schools (22.2%), and technical schools show the lowest percentage (19.9%). This reason was indicated with each tool. The tools ranked at the top in this respect are sponsoring by provision of material and equipment, and sponsoring by financial support (39 respondents each). In contrast to that, only one respondent believes that this reason has an impact on the securing employment to graduates tool. Almost identical frequency was obtained for organizing and sponsoring student competitions (14 respondents) and assistance in organizing international exchanges (13 respondents). Six and three respondents believe that low finances are an obstacle to talks or presentations for students and temporary jobs for students, respectively.

The opinion that employers need more favourable legislation (e.g. tax concessions) to develop collaboration with schools is held by 21.4% of schools, nearly one quarter of technical schools (24,9%), one quarter of art schools (24.4%) and 22.8% of service-related schools. Again, this reason is indicated with all tools, where the two sponsoring-related tools, unsurprisingly, are those with the highest frequency of this reason: sponsoring of material and equipment is reported by 36.1% of schools while direct financial support by 43.4% of schools. 12% of schools specified this reason in explanation of problems with organizing and sponsoring student competitions, 9.6% of schools with temporary jobs for students, 4.8% of schools with organizing talks and presentations for students, and 3.6% of schools with assistance in organizing international exchanges.

Besides those mentioned above, a total of 19.1% of schools admit there are other reasons with a negative impact on developing collaboration with social partners in achieving the objective in question. Art schools show the highest percentage in this opinion (23.3%), followed by technical

schools (20.8%) and service-related schools (16.5%). The surveyed schools, however, did not give any details as to these other reasons, such as by providing free answers.

The free answers provided by schools as to positive experience with collaboration with employers show further possibilities for motivating students to find employment in their field of study. Some schools made mention of various forms of providing financial support to students by firms and companies.

This support may be a student allowance to students of a certain field of study (especially mechanical engineering and building industry). One school (a glass making secondary school of applied arts in Valašské Meziříčí) provided information of the amount of financial support to students in the glass maker branch by Moravské sklárny Květná – a monthly allowance of CZK 1,000 plus an allowance for good school results of up to CZK 500.

Also, companies pay students of some schools recruitment benefits (especially in the less attractive fields of study), commuting benefits, and learning material benefits; some employers motivate student by means of rewards and prizes for winning a competition. Mention was also made of the cases of students being allowed to use employee benefits (Moser, a.s.), or take part in company projects or take part in R&D technological tasks (Jablonex Group, a.s. and Česká mincovna).

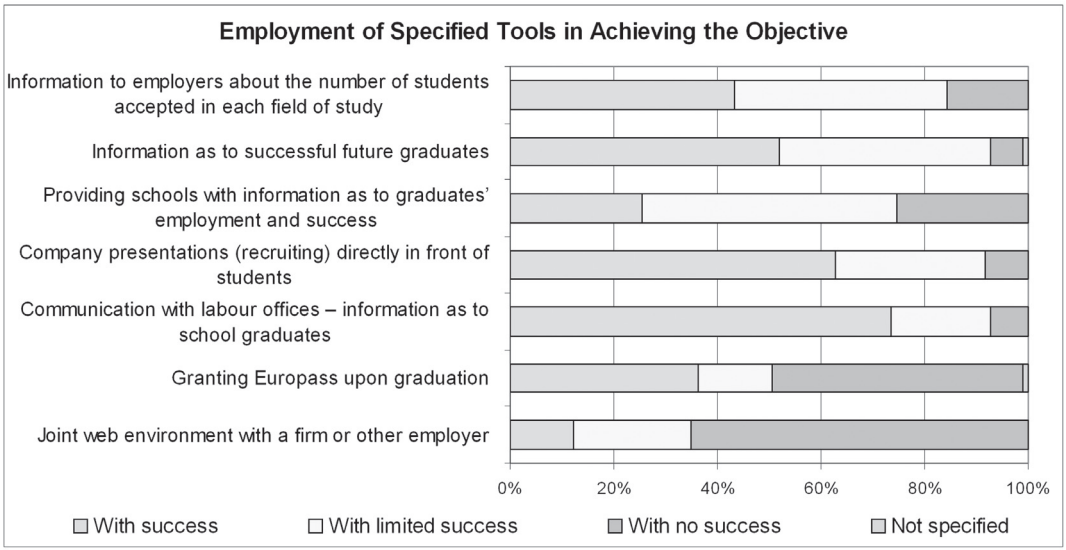
2.2.7. DEVELOPING THE KNOWLEDGEABILITY OF SCHOOLS ABOUT EMPLOYERS AND VICE VERSA

We had selected some tools of a successful development of mutual knowledgeability and surveyed the schools' performance in their efforts to use them.

These tools are:

- Information to employers about the number of students accepted in each field of study
- Information as to successful future graduates
- Providing schools with information as to graduates' employment and success
- Company presentations (recruiting) directly in front of students
- Communication with labour offices – information as to school graduates
- Granting Europass upon graduation
- Joint web environment with a firm or other employer.

Figure 9



The chart clearly shows that schools are not successful at having a common web environment with employers. As the world wide web is very effective as a communication development tool and has a great future, school web sites should at least contain links to sites of future employers and employers should use their site more intensely to present their plans and offers for students and graduates. Granting Europass is an issue for 50% of schools, but we expect this will be resolved over time, with the support of NUOV and the development of its methodology-advisory services.

Communication with labour offices has been receiving positive feedback in many surveys for many years. This is to be credited particularly to labour office information and counselling centres, which provide group counselling to primary and secondary school pupils and students. Group counselling covers activities such as presenting occupational profiles, lending video films featuring specific occupations, and organizing talks with practitioners. Moreover, information and counselling centres maintain a database of all education and training courses and programmes offered by Czech schools plus data on school leaver / graduate success rate broken down by school and field of study. Employer presentations directly in front of students are organized at nearly all schools. Schools did not asses the success rate in this tool, but in terms of career guidance and counselling it is recommended that such

presentations should be organized already for primary school pupils. Schools are not very often provided information on the employment and success rate of their graduates, usually because of the lack of interest on the part of employers. Employers are not obliged to inform schools they have employed their graduates or send them performance assessment reports in respect of such graduates. Any such information is data about a specific person, therefore subject to personal information protection. Labour offices play an agency role in this matter to some extent. They summarize the data on graduates by school and field of study, thus providing schools with quantitative feedback. Information about specific work experience is available to students perhaps only during talks with graduates.

Almost all schools have information about their successful future graduates, but the question is how this information is communicated to potential employers, which, on the other hand, do wish to have this valuable information and will quite often make great efforts to get it. In the fields of study completed with final examinations, this information may be intermediated by 'practitioners' – representatives of potential employers who take part in preparing the content of the final exams and attend the exams. Information on how many students have been accepted for study is of little relevance to employers although it may be an indicator for them how to plan job positions in future and, accordingly, the future development of their business. Schools, on the other hand, might find useful the feedback how many people companies may need in four or five years, i.e. what development they plan in the midterm.

Examples of good practice in developing mutual knowledgeability

- SPŠS Vsetín has established collaboration with 13 firms and holds round table discussions with their representatives. Collaboration also includes communication of the current vocational education curriculum reform to social partners, preparation of school educational programmes, interlinked web environments, and collaboration in activities for primary school pupils such as the Handy Hands competition, etc.
- Secondary School of Promotional Production and Printing in Velké Poříčí works with the Czech Association of Printing Businesses to create conditions for the networking of schools teaching similar fields of study (school commission), and they jointly provide an information service and grant graduates Association certificates.
- The Secondary Polytechnic School in Brno (Jílová 36g) works with employers in the preparation and execution of final examinations; collaboration with labour offices covers particularly the provision of information about employment of the school's graduates.
- ČAZ secondary school in Humpolec, states it has been developing mutual knowledgeability of employers about their school. Recruitment talks with pre-graduate students about job vacancies have proved successful.
- Representatives of the Secondary Technical School in Ostrov together with representatives of manufacturing companies in the region visit primary schools and provide the parents of the final year students with information about mutually beneficial collaboration and activities.
- The Business Academy in Pelhřimov has stated very good experience with collaboration with the labour office and the Economic Chamber, which are institutions with comprehensive understanding of the labour market and what graduate profiles employers expect in the individual fields of study. Moreover, these two organizations have enough information that is analytically structured, and collaboration with schools is part of their job.
- SPŠKS Karlovy Vary collaborates with Moser a.s. in recruiting students. This includes information provided to would-be students by the company itself upon prior arrangement, familiarization with

the actual work environment, CDs promoting the trade, recruitment benefits, assistance in finding accommodation, allowance for students with goods school results (under preparation), and company sponsoring of school promotion material.

To conclude, schools regard the tool of mutual knowledgeability between them and employers as an important collaboration objective. The similar view is held by employers, and particularly large companies doing business in the trades with apprentice certificates. They try to promote this development, but the implementation process is difficult and slow. Another good example is joint recruitment presentations of schools and employers for primary school pupils. Support to developing mutual communication should also be given by the Economic Chamber and school associations.

2.3. SUMMARY OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS IN INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The following table shows the percentages of the reasons indicated by schools to explain their limited or no success in achieving some of the objectives of collaboration with businesses and other employer organizations.

Table 8 *(The total objectives and reasons account for 100% in aggregate)*

	Reason 1	Reason 2	Reason 3	Reason 4	Reason 5	Reason 6
Aligning instructional content with employer needs	1,4 %	8,8 %	2,8 %	1,1 %	2,3 %	3,5 %
Employer assistance in instructional improvements	1,3 %	4,9 %	1,9 %	4,1 %	4,1 %	4,3 %
Familiarizing students with real work environment in CR	0,3 %	1,6 %	0,5 %	0,3 %	1,0 %	1,4 %
Familiarizing students with real work environment in other countries	0,5 %	1,8 %	2,2 %	1,6 %	1,1 %	4,8 %
Encouraging students' interest in their field of study	0,1 %	2,9 %	0,7 %	3,3 %	2,4 %	1,9 %
Encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for	0,3 %	5,0 %	1,0 %	4,2 %	3,8 %	3,4 %
Developing the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa	0,9 %	5,8 %	1,9 %	0,2 %	0,3 %	4,3 %

Reasons:
1 – Tool (activity) not important for us
2 – Employers not interested (or some only show insufficient interest)
3 – Employers are difficult to communicate with
4 – Employers have insufficient funds
5 – Employers want more favourable legislation (e.g. tax concessions)
6 – Other reason

With the exception of two of the surveyed objectives, we see that the employers' lack of interest in collaboration is regarded by schools as the main problem in achieving the desired results. Paradoxically, the highest percentage of this reason of limited or no success of schools in their efforts is obtained in the objective aligning instructional content with employer needs (8.2%). This finding is in agreement with another relatively high percentage of this reason in the objective developing the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa (5.9%). This reason's percentages obtained in the objectives encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for (5.1%) and assistance by employers in instructional improvements (5.0%) are a logical correlation. Although the lowest percentage is obtained in the objective familiarizing students with the real work environment (1.7%), it exceeds the percentages obtained in other reasons. On the other hand, the employers' lack of interest has a less distinct impact on encouraging students' interest in their field of study (the second highest relative percentage) and familiarizing students with the real work environment in other countries (ranking third in terms of percentage share).

Given the highest ranking, apart from two exceptions, of employers' lack of interest as a reason of limited or no success achieved by schools in respect of the surveyed objectives, it becomes obvious that a major prevalence of a different reason is to be observed in two cases only. In the case of familiarizing students with the real work environment in other countries, other reasons show the highest percentage (4.9%) and they rank second in the case of the following four objectives: employer assistance in instructional quality improvements, development of the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa, aligning instructional content with employer needs, and familiarizing students with the real work environment in the Czech Republic. Other reasons received the fourth highest percentage in respect of these two objectives: encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for and encouraging students' interest in their field of study.

The highest ranking reason in the objective encouraging students' interest in their field of study is that employers do not enough funds for collaboration on this objective (3.4%). This reason ranks second in respect of the objective encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for; third, in respect of employer assistance in instructional quality improvements; fourth, in respect of familiarizing students with the real work environment in other countries; and last, in respect of the three other objectives (aligning instructional content with employer needs, familiarizing students with the real work environment in the Czech Republic, and developing the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa).

The distribution of the rest of the reasons of limited or no success in respect of each of the objectives varies; they rank from second to sixth place and are described in the following paragraphs according to their ranking in the areas/objectives in question. The reason difficult communication with employers ranks second in the objective familiarizing students with the real work environment in other countries; third, in aligning instructional content with employer needs and development of the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa; fourth, in familiarizing students with the real work environment in the Czech Republic; and fifth, in employer assistance in instructional improvements, encouraging students' interest in their field of study, and encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for, which demonstrates a relatively low negative impact on these three objectives.

The reason legislation more favourable for employers (e.g. tax concessions) ranks between third and sixth place; it ranks third in three objectives: familiarizing students with the real work environment in the Czech Republic, encouraging students' interest in their field of study, and encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for; fourth, in aligning instructional content with employer needs and employer assistance in instructional improvements; and fifth (a relatively low impact), in familiarizing students with the real work environment in other countries and development of the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa.

That a school considers a tool as unimportant is the least significant reason given by schools to explain their limited or no success in objective achievement. This reason ranks fourth and fifth in single objectives – developing the knowledgeability of schools about employers and vice versa and aligning instructional content with employer needs, respectively, and occupies the last, sixth place in the remaining five objectives. Surveys among employers have been confirming that educational visits and internships, and job offers are the most employed tools of collaboration, which significantly prevail in the case of small businesses.

Overall, large companies (and manufacturing companies in particular) are most active in collaboration with schools, taking a larger part in school sponsoring than other companies, teaching, providing equipment, sharing practical expertise and experience, working on research or other school projects, or organizing student competitions.

Partnership between Schools and Employers

3.

3. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS IN FURTHER EDUCATION

In the Czech Republic, further technical education is provided by various educational and training facilities, including secondary technical and secondary vocational schools. Further technical education courses are usually taken by employees or unemployed persons (retraining). The role of employers in the development of further education is different in different European countries, according to the national and local tradition and conditions. The Czech Republic has a relatively long tradition of further adult education, which was provided by technical schools.

3.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The development of manufactories in the second half of the 18th century gave rise to a need to train employees for the newly developing form of production. Foreign experts were coming to the Czech territories to especially train spinners and weavers. The first organized adult training in the Czech territory was taking place in manufactories. The first spinner and weaver schools began to be established in the mid 18th century to provide three-week (four-week, at a later point) courses in these trades. Training also covered the basic technical theory. However, apprenticeship training in guilds still continued to be the prevailing way of becoming a skilled worker.

The first technical schools in the Czech territories began to be established in the first half of the 19th century, which is in the period of when the modern Czech nation was formed. Having developed from what we would now call adult education courses, these schools were organized by Czech patriots, who wanted more education for those Czech people who had only received the basic education at trivial schools at the time (trivium

– reading, writing and counting) and wanted to uplift the trades and industries at the time. Courses were very practice-oriented – put into modern language, directed towards better marketability of tradesmen's and labourers' skills on the labour market – and gradually developed into technical schools, which at first, provided only evening or Sunday courses of adult education. In other countries, the situation was similar.

In 1857 the Industrial Association opened the first Czech technical school in a Prague grammar school building, with Jan Evangelista Purkyně as headmaster. Classes were held in the evenings and on Sundays, 18 classes a week. The school transformed into a full-time teaching technical school in 1873.

Adult education activities were also developing in the second half of the 19th century, a period characterized by rapid development of various clubs and societies, and many of the newly established societies were aimed at education – e.g. Osvěta (a society for public lectures). The Catholic Academy (1875) and Labourers' Academy (1899) were also among the active societies . Lectures, or rather lecture series, for the public delivered by university teachers developed towards the end of the 19th century (called university extensions in the language of the time). Professor Masaryk, who became president of the Czechoslovak Republic at a later point, was among those who promoted and delivered these university extensions. Masaryk campaigned for knowledge popularization and education democratization. According to Masaryk, the principal purpose of education is to provide orientation in the world reflect the requirements of reality, and to be accessible because the accessibility of education is a precondition of democracy.

In the 1980s a system of technical schools progressively developed, comprising complete (úplné) technical schools, lower schools, and incomplete (neúplné) technical schools (these were schools to provide training to self-employed persons and workshop leaders, and the final certificate substituted in full or in part the certificate of due completion of learning, as well as the certificate of the required period of employment as a craft trade 'assistant'). The third type of schools were follow-up (pokračovací) schools, and in 1855 this system was extended by another type of school, a general craft trade schools, where follow-up trade schools for apprentices as well as public drawing offices for craftsmen and training workshops were established. Gradually, the school system saw further specialization. The first specialized courses for foremen and manual workers began to be organized as early as that period, representing a further step in the development of continuing education. The system of follow-up schools collapsed towards the end of World War I. In 1915 schools for disabled war veterans were established in connection with the injured soldiers returning home from the front, but these schools were closed down by as soon as 1922.

The activities of educational societies, academies and individuals transformed into a rich harvest after the independent Czechoslovak Republic was established in 1918. Aware of the importance of an educated population, the government decided to regulate adult education by law, rather than leave it only up to the good will of the stakeholders (be them individuals or various organizations and societies). The government extended and transformed the system of upper people's schools, which became the institutional basis for systematic education at lower or upper secondary schools. The standard of these schools was excellent, and classes (except technical or practical courses) were free of charge for poor people. These schools were fully funded by government, which saw education as a national asset rather than merchandise . Schools for jobless people were organized as early as this period and attendance was compulsory for

those receiving unemployment benefits. Mention should be made of the development of in-company education and training, which was worked out in detail especially in the Bata company plants. The education and training in the Bata company was a system of its own, combining training and theory into a comprehensive system.

The development of further education, as well as the reform and democratization of the school system was interrupted by World War II. The system of educational institutions, which had been developing nearly 100 years, was destroyed and failed to be restored in its original spirit when the war was over. On the contrary, adult education facilities were being established across the country to especially serve the purpose of political indoctrination.

Associated with secondary vocational schools, technical schools for production training foremen (called, in the terminology of the time, technical schools of labour reserves at a later point), were established in 1953. However, these did not last long. In 1955–1960, there were efforts to create a system of further education and qualification for the employees of what was called national labour reserves schools and labour force ministry regional offices; courses of teaching and teaching of technical subjects for teachers who had attained qualification at technical schools; central physical education courses for physical education instructors who lacked the required qualification; central specialized courses of technical labour standardization for teachers and employees of regional administration offices; and one-year librarianship courses for librarians who had attained the required qualification. Long-term adult education courses were planned to be implement after 1960, but this implementation never took place. Company work schools were formed in the 1950s. These were open to company employees with a certain length of work experience (usually three to five years) and after passing pre-qualification examinations, to attain better qualification as if attending a regular school. After completion, such employees qualified to be classified in relatively high ranked qualification classes.

There was no political thaw until the 1960s. In this period, universities began to organize their first teams to research adult education, and andragogy was established as a separate field of study. After the Soviet invasion in 1968, however, this promisingly developing branch started to lose edge. Activities shifted to the field of in-company training, which was important economy-wise, therefore less associated with ideology. Many industry-specific institutions were established, giving jobs to those who were not allowed, for political reasons, to teach at universities.

The situation did not become less complicated after 1989 – many people regarded the adult education organizations as redundant and compromised. Many of these educational institutions were closed down, many equipped facilities were lost – companies were getting rid of them as 'useless'. Although these steps may seem understandable, the lack of foresight in them is beyond doubts.

This lack of foresight was proven very soon because the transformation of economy gave rise to a need to retrain a large number of employees; along with this, there was an increasing demand for acquiring new skills as well as increasing demands on managers' qualification. The ICT development generated the need to organize courses to address these demands, and a significant change took place in respect of foreign language skills, etc. Many private firms (including foreign companies) sprouted up in the adult education business, with technical schools and universities, gradually and to a limited extent, getting involved, too.

Currently, adult education is provided by many organizations – private firms, higher education institutions, secondary and tertiary schools, and non-profit organizations. The number of these organizations is different across regions, and it is not surprising that most of them are based in large cities. The standard of the courses they provide varies, as there is not established any quality assurance system. This does not apply to retraining courses, which require accreditation by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – labour offices are not allowed to pay for any courses without accreditation. Many large corporations, such as Škoda Mladá Boleslav, Povltavské tukové závody, Bosch, or Třinecké železárny, have established their own systems of in-company education and training, but the qualification attained under these systems is not recognized outside the company premises.

3.2. COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS IN FURTHER EDUCATION TODAY

After 1989 the sphere of education got liberalized, the powers of schools increased and private schools were established. Secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools broadened their range of fields of study and instructional content underwent changes. These positive changes were accompanied by an increase in the number of schools, which reduced the average number of students per school.

Secondary technical and vocational schools progressively resumed their involvement in delivering further education. A certain cloistered nature and isolation of these schools from the actual labour market was a problem. Schools had to face up to relatively strong competition of private training firms, which had sprouted up in large numbers after 1989. There were, and continue to be, cases of private training companies hiring teachers to teach their courses or only intermediating courses outsourced from schools. Reasons of this lay primarily in that schools were unable to do business on their own and get their own customers.

As far as further education is concerned, collaboration between technical schools and employers takes various forms, such as organizing courses of compulsory training for specific jobs (e.g. operation of specialized machinery or heating equipment) which require a specialized test. Retraining courses are also held quite often. These, however, need accreditation by the ministry of education, but social partners take no part in this process. Schools also provide adult courses leading to a recognized educational attainment level, and hobby courses.

The development of further education and training provided by technical and vocational schools, including their collaboration with employers in this field, was also supported by projects co-funded from European funds. The Kraj and Centrum vzdělanosti projects of the Liberecký Region were among the first projects to support this collaboration. Coordinated by the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education, both these projects were aimed to learn schools to prepare and deliver further education programmes in close collaboration with employers. The enactment of Act No. 179/2006 Coll. of 30 March 2006, on verifying and recognizing further education results, has provided schools and other organizations an opportunity to take part in the process of recognizing the results of previous learning. For this reason, the UNIV project (Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Education and Training in School Networks) was set up establishing networks of education and training institutions in order to join together the preparation and delivery of further education programmes with the recognition of previous learning results.

We have used the data from a questionnaire survey to make conclusions as to the current situation in further education and training collaboration between schools and employers.

The questionnaire with six scale-based semi-closed questions has been designed to obtain the following information as regards further education and training:

- How schools rate the types of further education in terms of success and significance
- With how large companies and schools collaborate in the field of further education
- What types of further education schools provide in collaboration with employers
- In which fields schools collaborate with employers most
- What motivates schools to deliver further education courses
- What the schools think are their benefits from providing further education in collaboration with employers.

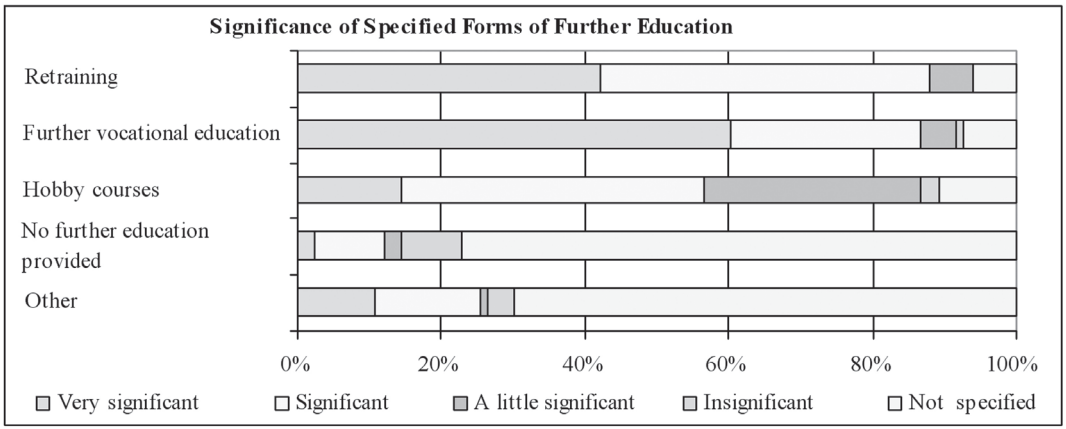
3.2.1. TYPES OF FURTHER EDUCATION PROVIDED BY SCHOOLS

In the first section of the questionnaire the surveyed schools were asked to indicate the significance they attach to the types of further education they provide and how they rate their performance in this activity. The point was further education as such, rather than only the further education provided in collaboration with employers.

The survey shows that further education or training is offered by 77.1% of schools while 22.9% of schools offer no further education or training. Retraining is seen as significant by the highest number of schools (88%), with 42.2% and 45.8% of schools having indicated very significant and significant, respectively. Retraining is seen as a little significant by 6% of schools, with no school attaching no significance to retraining. Delivering further occupational education and training is regarded as very significant (60.2%) or significant (26.5%) by a total of 86.7% schools, with 4.8% and 1.2% schools attaching low and no significance, respectively.Delivering hobby courses is regarded as very significant (14.5%) or significant (42.2%) by a total of 56.7% schools, with 30.1% and 2.4% schools attaching low and no significance, respectively.

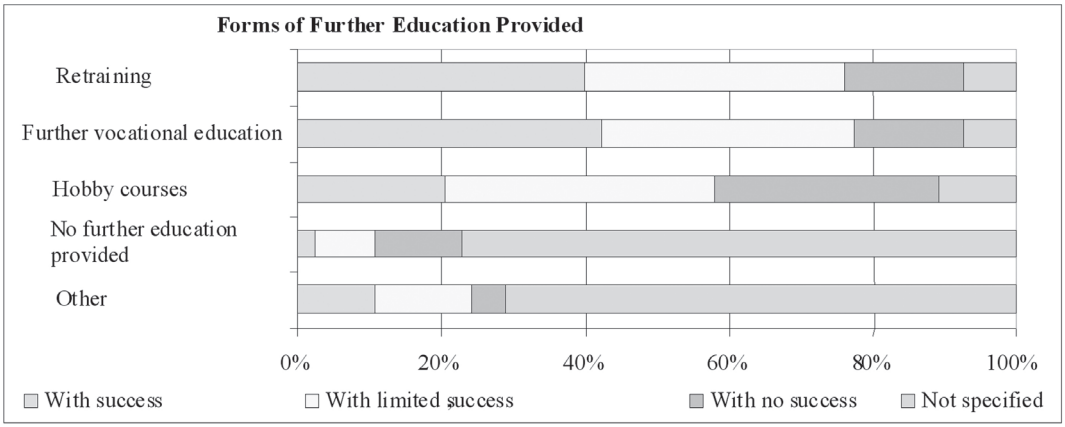
In the 22.9% of the surveyed schools which do not deliver any further education and training, this fact is regarded as very significant by 2.4%, significant by 9.6%, a little significant by 2.4%, and insignificant by 8.4%.

Figure 10



Further occupational education or training is delivered with success and limited success by 42.2% and 34.9% of schools, respectively (a total of 77.1%); retraining courses are delivered with success and limited success by 39.8% and 36.1% of schools, respectively (a total of 75.9%). Hobby courses are delivered with success and limited success by 20.5% and 37.3% of schools, respectively (a total of 57.8%). Nearly one quarter of all the surveyed schools (24.1%) provide, with (limited) success, other types of further education and training, among which they have specified further education courses for teachers, recognition of previous learning results, technical courses and seminars (with no other details provided), and courses for elderly people. It is likely that each specified type of further education or training would qualify as retraining, other occupational or hobby courses.

Figure 11



There is indeed a group of schools whose efforts to start providing further education and training courses have been made in vain as yet, of which 16.9% have been unsuccessful in respect of retraining courses and 15.7% in respect of further occupational education courses.

Retraining is regarded as very significant or significant by 88% of schools, but only 75% rate their performance in delivering retraining courses as successful or successful to a limited extent. Similar data are obtained in the case of further occupational education, which is regarded as very significant or significant by 86.7% of schools, but delivered with success by only 77%. Consequently, there are schools which are not able to deliver these types of further education and training with success although they regard them as very significant or significant.

As many as 31.3% of schools report no success in delivering hobby courses. These are regarded as very significant or significant by 56.7% of schools and 57.8% of schools rate their performance in this respect as successful or successful to a limited extent. It seems, therefore, that there is a small number of schools which deliver hobby courses although it is of little or no significance to them; this shows that the situation in respect of delivering hobby courses is different from that in respect of delivering retraining courses or further occupational education or training.

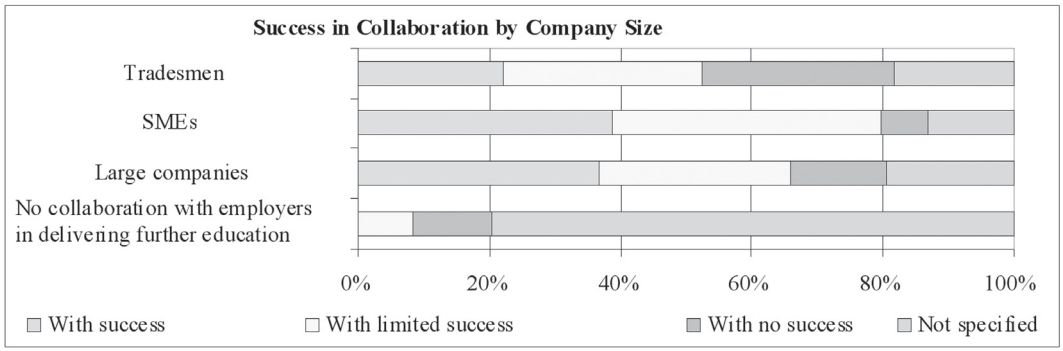
3.2.2. WHAT PARTNERS SCHOOLS TEAM UP WITH IN DELIVERING FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The questions aimed at the collaboration of schools with employers in delivering further education and training were to provide data as to with how large companies and schools team up, how successful schools rate this collaboration, and how much significance they attach to it.

As many as 79.6% of schools team up with small and/or medium business, 38.6% of schools rate their collaboration as successful and 41% of schools have expresses reservations. Only 7.2% of schools admit vain efforts in this field. The highest percentage of small and medium business is not surprising because large companies very often have their own human resources departments as well as their own established system of education and training, and, to a lesser extent, their own instructors and training facilities. Small and medium business, on the other hand, do not have such resources available but are motivated to ensure that their employees are trained new skills and taught new theory. Moreover, there are more small and medium businesses than large companies.

Partnerships in delivering further education and training courses with large companies has been established by 65% of schools – 36.1% and 28.9% evaluate this partnership as successful and successful to a limited extent, respectively. No success as yet is reported by 14.5% of schools. Partnerships with tradesmen have been established by 51.8% of schools, with 21.7% reporting success and 30.1% limited success. 28.9% of schools would welcome partnerships with tradesmen, but their efforts have been in vain.

Figure 12

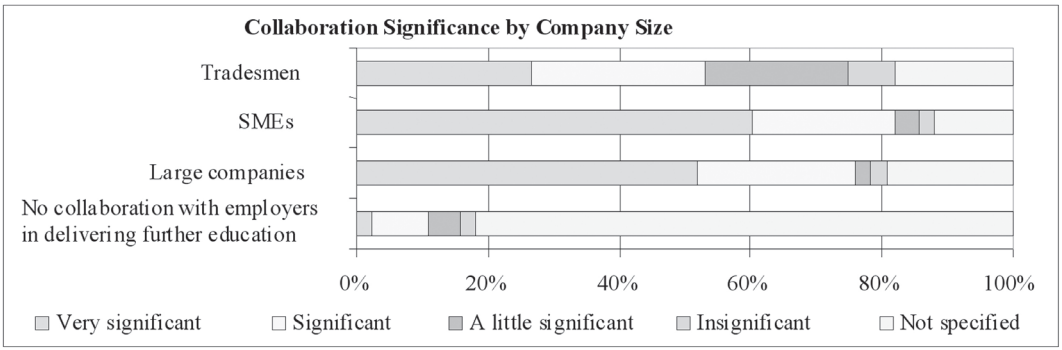


Tradesmen seem to be the most attractive target group in respect of delivering further education and training courses, which is not surprising given the highest percentage of with no success answers in respect of collaboration with this group.

Mention should be made of the percentages obtained in respect of the option we do not collaborate with employers in delivering further education and training, an answer of a somewhat clumsy wording, where 12% of schools indicated no success and 8.4% of limited success. The question is what the schools wanted to express by their answers. We assume they meant they had no established collaboration with employers.

Collaboration with small and medium businesses ranks top (81.9%) in terms of the significance attached by schools – 60.2% of schools regards it as very significant and 21.7% as significant. Large companies rank second – very significant (51.85) or significant (24.1%) to a total of 75.9% of companies. Collaboration with tradesmen ranks third, with 53% of schools attaching significance (26.5%) or high significance (26.5%) to this partnership.

Figure 13



The performance rating of collaboration with employers in further education and training agrees, to some extent, with the results obtained in respect of actually delivering further education and training in collaboration with employers. It may be assumed that schools especially provide such type of further education to which they attach significance for whatever reason. In other words, once a school has started to provide a type of further education, it becomes significant to the school.

Again, there is a group of schools which fail to establish collaboration, in terms of delivering future education, with certain employers important to them. It is 7.2% of schools in respect of small and medium business, 14.5% of schools in respect of large companies, and even 28.9% of schools in respect of tradesmen.

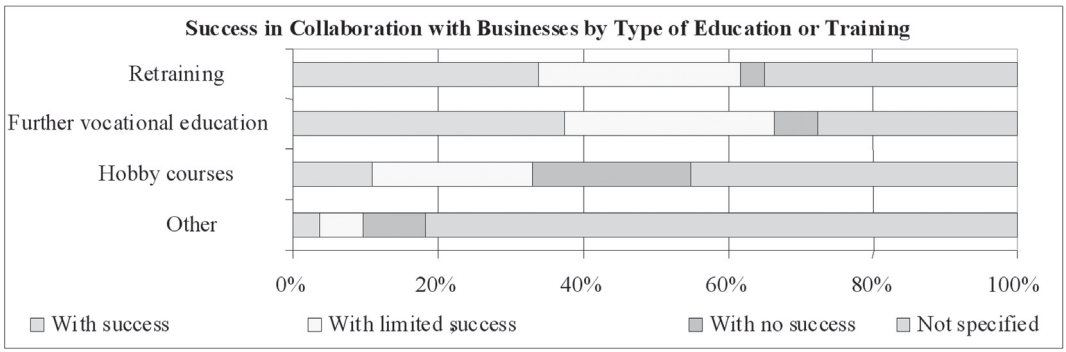
3.2.3. WHICH TYPES OF FURTHER EDUCATION SCHOOLS PROVIDE IN COLLABORATION WITH EMPLOYERS

We focused on which type of further education schools provided in collaboration with businesses, how schools rated their performance in this and what significance they attached to this activity. Success and limited success in respect of delivering further education are reported by 37.3% and 28.9% of schools, respectively (a total of 66.2%), with 6% of schools reporting no success in this field. A total or 77.1% of schools (see 3.2.1) report success or limited success in respect of delivering further occupational education or training. It therefore seems that 10.9% of schools deliver, with success or limited success, further occupational education or training without collaborating with employers, which may well be the case.

A total of 61.4% of schools rate their collaboration with employers in delivering retraining courses as successful (33.7%) or successful in part (27.7%), with 3.6% of schools reporting no success. Given that 75.9% of schools (see 3.2.1) rate the delivering of retraining courses as successful or successful in part, it may be assumed that 14.5% of schools deliver, with success or limited success, retraining courses without collaborating with employers. This is quite likely because retraining courses are most often provided for labour offices, which have the necessary equipment available.

Success or limited success in respect of delivering hobby courses in collaboration with employers is reported by a total of 32.5% of schools, with 10.8% and 21.7% of schools rating this collaboration as successful and successful in part, respectively. 21.7% of schools have reported no success in their efforts to deliver hobby courses in collaboration with employers. The delivering of hobby sources is rated as successful or successful in part by 57.8% of schools (see 3.2.1). Consequently, 25.3% of schools deliver their hobby courses without collaboration with employers. This sounds perfectly logical, but the question is whether or not the hobby courses delivered in collaboration with employers really qualify as hobby courses.

Figure 14

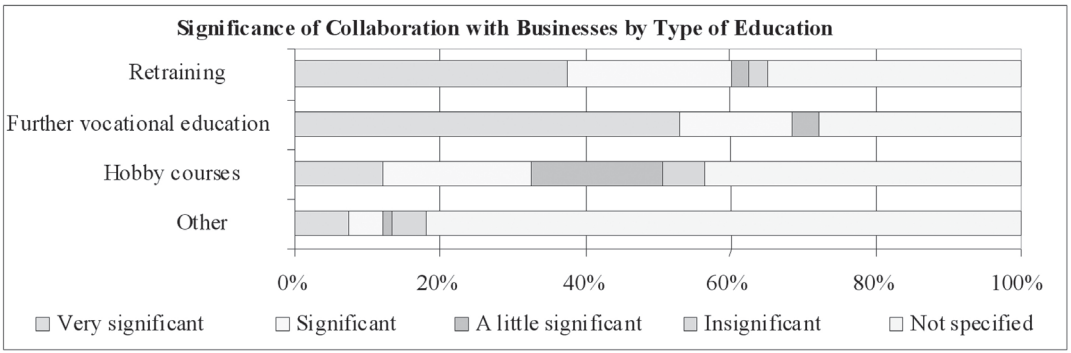


In terms of significance, schools most appreciate collaboration with employers in delivering further occupational education and training. A total of 68.7% of schools attach high significance (53%) or significance (15.7%) to this collaboration, with 3.6% of schools attaching low significance; no school regards this collaboration as insignificant. 2.5% of schools regard collaboration with employers on further occupational education and training as very significant or significant although they are unsuccessful in establishing such collaboration.

Collaboration with employers in delivering retraining course is regarded as very significant and significant by 37.3% and 22.9% of schools, respectively (making up a total of 60.2%), while 2.4% and 2.4% see this collaboration as a little significant and insignificant, respectively. Only 1.2% of schools rate collaboration with employers in delivering retraining courses as very significant or significant although they admit they have been unable to establish such collaboration so far.

Collaboration with employers on hobby courses is seen as very significant (12%) or significant (20.5%) by a total of 32.5% of schools, with 18.1% and 6% of schools having indicated little and no significance, respectively. As many as 32.5% of schools rate their collaboration with employers in delivering hobby courses as very significant or significant while 32.5% of schools are of the opinion that their collaboration is successful or successful in part.

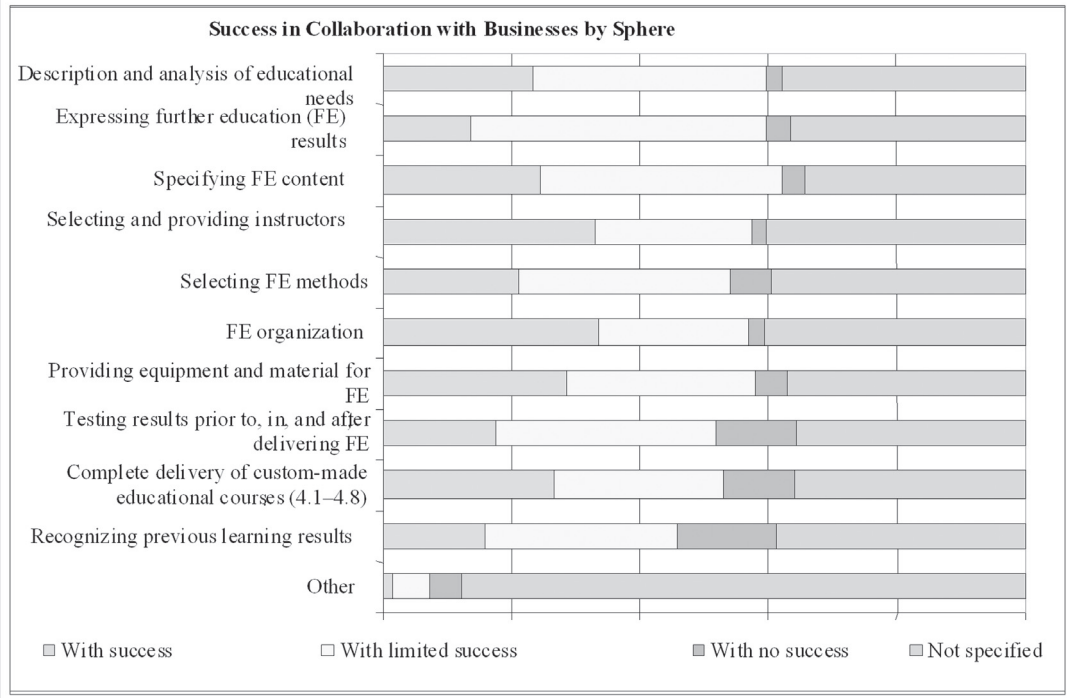
Figure 15



3.2.4. SPHERES OF COLLABORATION

This question was aimed at finding out the spheres of collaboration between schools and employers in delivering further education and training. To a certain extent these data may suggest the actual standard of such collaboration. Respondents were asked to use the provided scale and rate their success in collaboration in the given spheres and the significance they attach to it.

Figure 16



Collaboration between schools and employers spans a range of spheres. If we define a category employing with some success including both employing with success and employing with limited success, we will find out that only the sphere of recognizing previous learning results amounts to less than 50%, i.e. 45.8%, which is a rather surprising result given the low awareness of this possibility among the public in general and among businesses in particular.

We should ask, in respect of each of the choices provided, what hinders schools in better collaborating with employers – inadequacy of schools, employers' lack of interest, or both? Perhaps it is the lack of time or patience. Although the data obtained can hardly provide us with these answers, yet they allow us to draw some conclusions – more

than half of the schools report success or limited success in collaboration with employers in each of the choices (except recognizing previous learning results) and value their collaboration as very significant or significant (including recognizing previous learning results). Consequently, it may be assumed that most schools know which steps in respect of collaboration with employers they should take in preparing further education and training programmes.

In respect of describing and analyzing educational needs, successful and partly successful collaboration is reported by 22.9% and 36.1% of schools, respectively (a total of 59% of schools), with 2.4% of schools reporting no success. High significance and significance are reported by 30.1% and 30.1% of schools, respectively (a total of 60.2% of schools), with only 1.2% and 2.4% of schools rating their collaboration in this field as a little significant and insignificant, respectively. Therefore, it may be concluded that schools are aware of the importance of this phase of preparation of further education and training programmes. In respect of expressing education and training results, successful and partially successful collaboration with employers are reported by 13.3% and 45.8% of schools, respectively (a total of 59.1% of schools), with 3.6% of schools reporting no success. 57.8% of schools rate this collaboration as very significant (21.7%) or significant (36.1%) while 6% and 1.2% of schools see this collaboration as a little significant and insignificant, respectively.

In respect of specifying instructional content, collaboration is assessed as successful (24.1%) or successful in part (37.3%) by 61.4% of schools, and rated very significant (36.1%) or significant (27.7%) by 63.8% of schools, with 2.4% and 1.2% of schools having rated their collaboration as of low and no significance, respectively. At the same time, 3.6% of schools report no success in their efforts to establish collaborating with employers on specifying the instructional content. Collaboration with employers in selecting and securing instructors is seen as successful (32.5%) or successful in part (24.1%) by 56.6% of schools, with 2.4% of schools reporting no success, and as very significant (31.3%) or significant (24.1%) by 55.4% of schools. As many as 3.6% and 2.4% of schools rate their collaboration as of little and no significance, respectively.

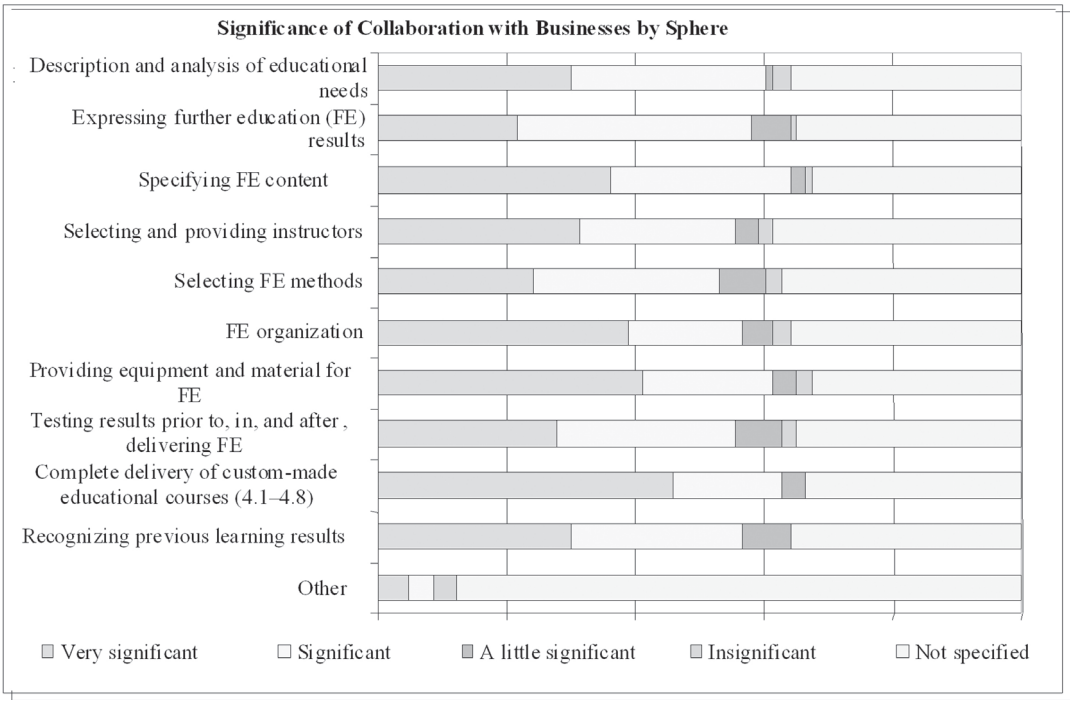
Success (20.5%) or partial success (32.5%) in collaboration with employers in selecting further education and training methods is reported by 53% of schools, with 6% of schools reporting no success. Collaboration in this sphere is rated as very significant (24.1%) or significant (28.9%) by 53% of schools while 7.2% and 2.4% of schools classify it as a little significant and insignificant, respectively.

Collaboration with employers in the organization of further education and training is successful (32.5%) or successful in part (22.9%) in 55.4% of schools, with 2.4% of schools reporting no success. 56.7% of schools rate this collaboration as very significant (38.6%) or significant (18.1%) while little and no significance have been indicated by 4.8% and 2.4% of schools, respectively.

Success (27.7%) or partial success (28.9%) in collaboration with employers in ensuring material and equipment for further education and training is reported by 56.6% of schools, with 61.5% of schools rating this collaboration as very significant (41%) or significant (20.5%). It seems that the greatest potential for collaboration lies in this sphere – 41% of schools rate it as very significant, but only 27.7% have implemented it without reservations. It may be assumed that inadequacy of schools is not likely to be the prevailing reason of the insufficient standard of collaboration. No success in collaboration in this sphere is reported by 4.8% of schools, and 3.6% and 2.4% of schools rate it as a little significant and insignificant, respectively. Success (16.9%) or partial success (33.7%) in collaboration with employers in testing the progress of students in the further education and training process (before, during, and at the end) is reported by 50.6% of schools, with 12% of schools reporting no success. This collaboration is rated as very significant (27.7%) or significant (27.7%) by 55.4% of schools. Neither in this sphere do schools achieve the results they would like to. Their collaboration is seen successful by 16.9% of schools while 27.7% of schools rate is as very significant. At the same time, 12% of schools report no success in establishing collaboration with employers in this sphere, and 7.2% and 2.4% of schools rate collaboration in this sphere as a little significant and insignificant, respectively. We assume that given the significance attached by schools to collaboration in this sphere, the unsatisfactory results are not attributable to the inadequacy of schools. Their collaboration with employers in the complete process of delivering further education and training (especially in delivering custom-made courses) is rated as successful (26.5%) or successful in part (26.5%) by 53% of schools, with 10.8% reporting no success. 62.7% of schools rate this type of collaboration as very significant (45.8%) or significant (16.9%); 3.6% of schools rate this collaboration as a little significant and no school rated as insignificant.

Success (15.7%) or partial success (30.1%) in respect of collaboration with employers in recognizing previous learning results is reported by 35.8% of schools, and rating very significant (30.1%) or significant (26.5%) was indicated by 56.6% of schools. No success is reported by 15.75 schools, 7.2% of schools rate this collaboration as a little significant, but no school indicated no significance.

Figure 17



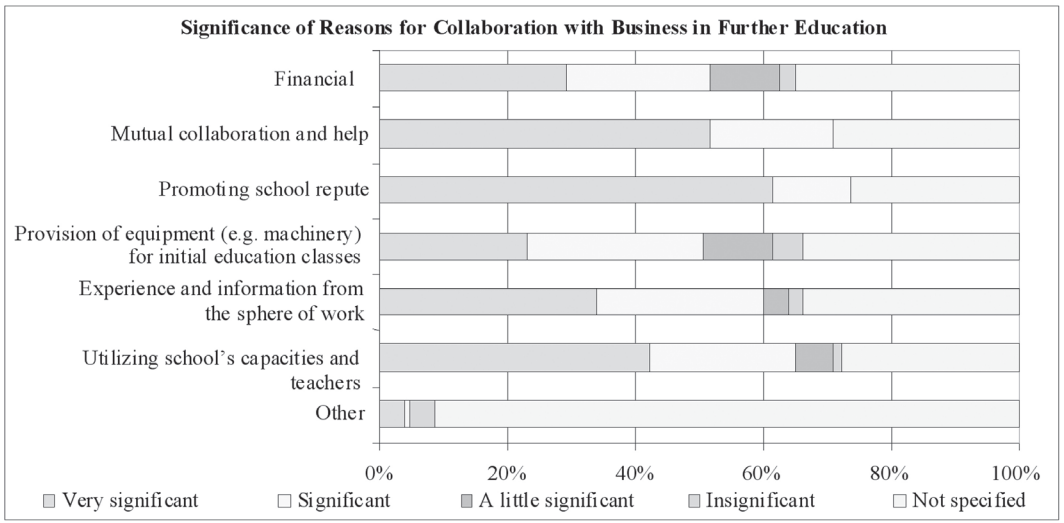
3.2.5. REASONS WHY SCHOOLS COLLABORATE WITH EMPLOYERS IN DELIVERING FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This question was to survey what motivates schools to collaborate with employers in delivering further education and training. In our opinion, motivation is the critical factor with a fundamental effect on collaboration in this field.Respondents were asked to choose from several suggested reasons or provide their own reasons. They were asked to rate each suggested reason in terms of success and significance. Success ratings express how satisfied schools are in respect of the choice, i.e. how successful they are in employing it. Promoting school reputation is a reason for schools to collaborate with employers in delivering further education and training that is very significant and significant to 61.4% and 12% of schools, respectively (a total of 73.4% of schools). No school has rated this reason as a little significant or insignificant. Success and limited success in promoting their reputation are reported by 51.8% and 18.1% of schools, respectively. No school has admitted no

success. Mutual assistance and collaboration is very significant (51.8) or significant (19.3%) to 71.1% of schools, with no school having reported little or no significance. The question is what this collaboration is about, in which fields it is employed. However, 66.3% of schools are of the opinion that they collaborate with success (38.6%) or limited success (27.7%), with 1.2% of schools reporting no success.

Utilization of their facilities, equipment and teaching staff is rated as very significant (42.2%) or significant (22.9%) by 65.1% of schools, with 6% and 1.2% of schools having indicated the rating a little significant and insignificant, respectively. Success (26.5%) or limited success (42.2%) in utilizing their facilities, equipment and teaching staff in delivering further education and training in collaboration with employers is reported by 68.7% of schools, with 1.25 schools reporting no success.

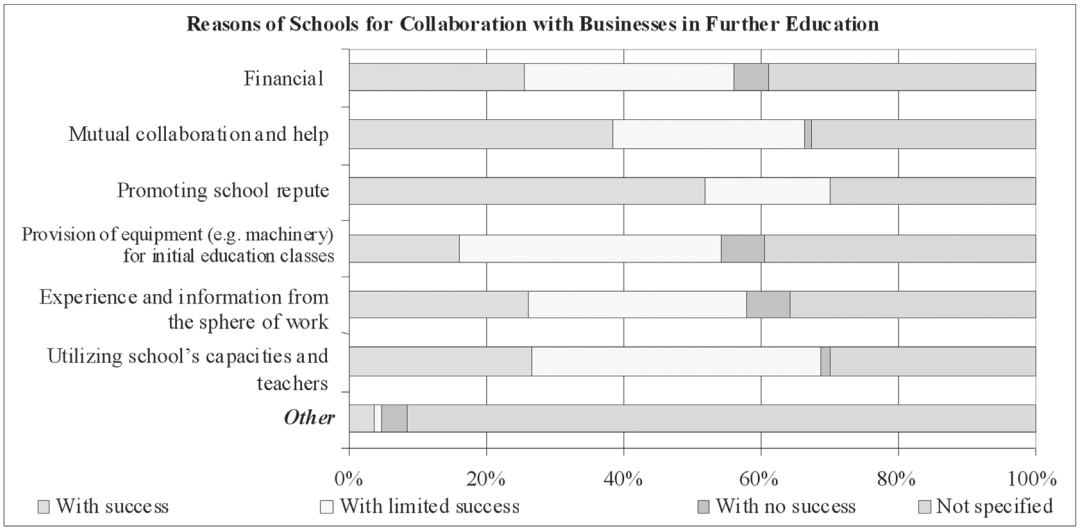
Figure 18



Schools also highly rate the possibility of being familiarized with work environment or gaining experience and information from practice: very significant 33.7% and significant 26.5%. As few as 3.6% and 2.4% of schools rate this possibility as a little significant and insignificant, respectively. Success (25.3%) or limited success (31.3%) in this field is reported by 56.6% of schools, with 6% of schools reporting no success.

Although playing an important role in delivering further education in collaboration of schools and employers, financial motivation is not the most important factor, with 28.9% and 22.9% of schools having rated it as very significant and significant, respectively (a total of 51.8% of schools). 10.8% of schools rate it as a little significant, and 2.4% of schools as insignificant. Success (25.3%) or limited success (30.1%) in respect of financial motivation is reported by 55.4% of schools, with 4.8% of schools reporting no success.

Figure 19



In their free answers, schools indicated reasons why they deliver further education and training in collaboration with employers such as 'we want to be a school to which businesses pay a lot of attention'; 'our success in competition with other schools'; 'promotion for our school and the fields of study we teach'; 'opportunity for supplementary activity'; or 'involvement in the ESF projects'.

3.2.6. BENEFITS FOR SCHOOLS FROM COLLABORATION WITH EMPLOYERS IN DELIVERING FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This question was to find out how schools rate, in terms of significance and success, the specific benefits they have from collaboration with employers in delivering further education and training. Better reputation is rated by schools as a very significant (59%) or significant (14.5%) result of their collaboration with employers. Success (48.2%) or limited success (20.5%) in respect of this result is reported by 68.7% of schools. Better reputation is a motivation factor that is very significant or significant to 73.4% of schools, and the same significance is attributed by schools to promoting their reputation as a result of their collaboration with employers.

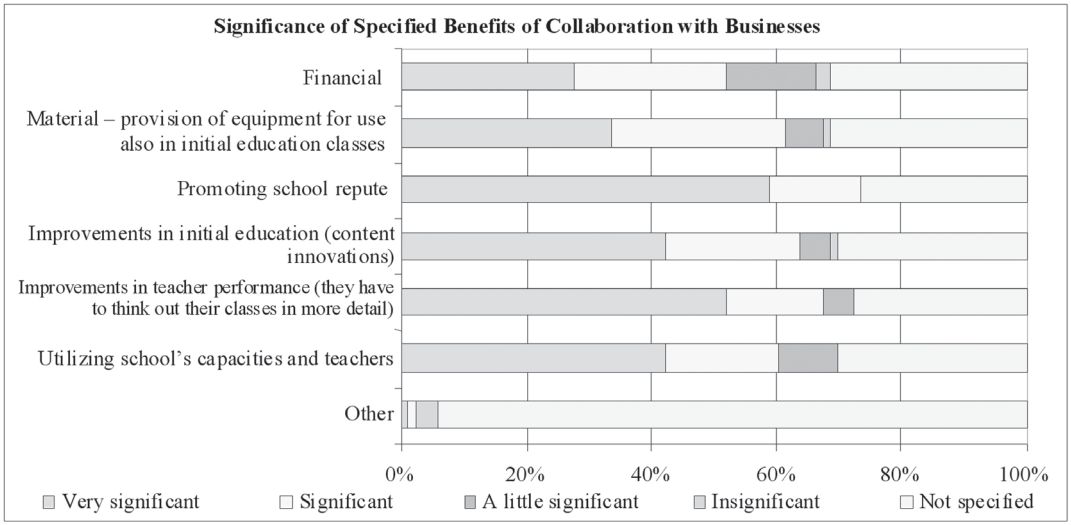
Also, the results achieved in delivering further education and training in this field received a similar rating – 69.9% of schools rate the promoting of reputation as a successful or partially successful motivation factor. Success or limited success in promoting their reputation is reported by 68.7% of schools. No school has rated better reputation as a little significant or insignificant, and no school has reported no success in this respect.

Improvements in teachers' performance as a very significant (51.8%) or significant (15.7%) result of collaboration with employers are reported by 66.5% schools. This high percentage may be taken as a positive feedback about monitoring the impacts of delivering further education and training on the performance of schools. Another positive piece of information is that 63.9% of schools rate this result as successful (20.5%) or successful in part (43.4).

On the other hand, we do not know what methods schools use in assessing the performance of their teachers, why they think that their teachers have been improving, i.e. why they think their teachers now think out their teaching methods in more detail. We know from experience, however, that a majority of teachers prepare their adult education classes conscientiously for fear of making a fool of themselves, showing insufficient professional skills, and similar worries.

Improvements in teacher's performances as a result of delivering further education and training in collaboration with employers are a little significant in 4.8% of schools, but no school has rated these improvements as insignificant. No improvements are achieved in 3.6% of schools.

Figure 20

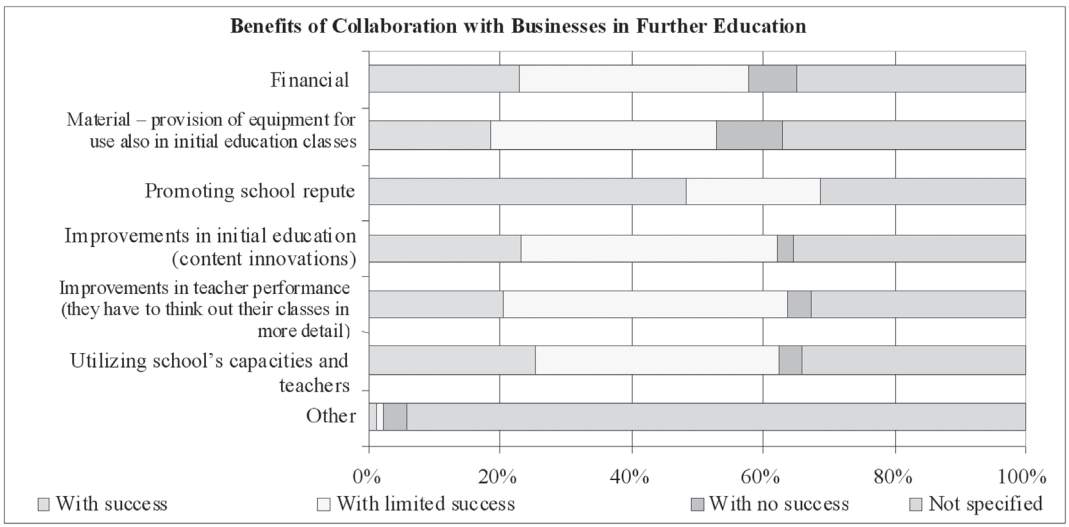


Providing that delivering further education and training in collaboration with employers contributes to improvements in teacher performance, a positive impact on the delivering of initial education and training may be assumed. Improvements in initial education and training are rated as very significant (42.2%) and significant (21.7%) by 63.9% of schools. This result is of little and no significance in 4.8% and 1.2% of schools, respectively, and is achieved with success (22.9%) or limited success (38.6%) by a total of 61.5% of schools. No success is reported by 2.4% of schools. The choice improvements in initial education and training was used in connection with content innovations, thus distinguished from improvements in teacher performance used in connection with teachers that have to think out their classes in more detail. Another result is the utilization of a school's equipment and teachers; this is regarded as very significant (42.2%) or significant (18.1%) by a total of 60.3% of schools. This result may become more important in the following years, in relation to the lower numbers of students at secondary technical schools due to a demographic decline. Little significance is attached to this result by 9.6% of schools. Success (25.3%) or limited success (37.3%) in respect of achieving this result is reported by 62.6% of schools. No success is reported by 3.6% of schools. Providing equipment also for classes in initial education and training is a result of collaboration with employers in delivering further education and training that is very significant (33.7%) or significant (27.7%) to 61.4% of schools, with 6% and 1.2% of schools rating this result as a little

significant and insignificant, respectively. Success (18.1%) or limited success (33.7%) in respect of achieving this result is reported by 51.8% of schools, with 9.6% of schools reporting no success. Therefore, 51.8% of schools are provided by employers with equipment that can be used in delivering both further education and initial education.

Financial benefits from delivering further education and training in collaboration with employers are very significant (27.7%) or significant (24.1%) to 51.8% of the surveyed schools, with 14.5% and 2.4% of schools rating financial benefits as a little significant and insignificant, respectively. Success (22.9%) or limited success (34.9%) in respect of financial benefits is reported by 57.8% of schools. This may be interpreted as that 22.9% of schools are satisfied with the financial benefits they obtain in relation to delivering further education and training while 34.9% of schools are only satisfied to a limited extent and will try to get more.

Figure 21



The free answers describing the results of delivering further education and training in collaboration with employers include items such as 'dominant position in the retraining business' – this particular school has achieved this unique position at regional level through collaboration with employers.

4. Conclusions and Outlook

4. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

4.1. CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

4.1.1. INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Most significance is attached by schools to motivation-related objectives – familiarizing students with the real work environment in the Czech Republic, encouraging students' interest in their field of study, and encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for. With respect to the significance attached by schools, the least success is reported in achieving the motivation-related objectives, i.e. encouraging students' interest in their field of study and encouraging students for employment in trades they have been trained for.

Both a high significance and a high success rate are only reported in respect of familiarizing students with the real work environment in the Czech Republic. A relatively low importance is attached by schools to the objective aligning instructional content with employer needs, and schools see themselves as achieving this objective with a rather high success. Given the opposite opinion held by many employers, this might suggest that schools underrate this objective.

The largest differences between technical schools and service-related schools in how they rate their performance in achieving the surveyed objectives are shown in aligning instructional content with employer needs and familiarizing students with the real work environment in the Czech Republic. Success in the former objective is reported by twice as many technical schools as service-related schools while the latter objective shows the opposite ratio.

Both schools and companies agree in which tools of collaboration are employed most often: educational visits, internship and practical training in businesses, presentations for students by practitioners, and offers of temporary jobs or permanent employment.

A tool which is employed quite often and which demonstrates the involvement of schools is their membership or the membership of their headmasters in vocational associations or guilds, including the membership in managing boards of these organizations. This tool appears as critical in achieving the objective aligning instructional content to employer needs. Therefore, employers should invite school representatives to their associations, guilds or commissions if they want to get instructional content aligned with their needs to a maximum extent. Also, this objective finds support in another tool employed fairly often, which is employer representatives attending final examinations at schools. In terms of collaboration tools, financial, material and technology sponsoring are employed rather sparsely, with the tool of students taking part in company project teams being employed very rarely.

The tools contributing to teaching improvements are in between these two groups of collaboration tools. Educational visits for teachers and presentations for students by experts are those employed most often, followed by counselling, seminars and courses for teachers, and the provision of instructional technical material and documents.

These latter tools are prevailingly carried out by large businesses, especially manufacturing companies and organizations in the quarterly sector (healthcare, social care, education and training, etc.). Although schools use these wide range of tools not infrequently, they usually rate this very significant objective as successful in part only.

It is obvious that the schools' approach to rating the involvement of employers in education and training improvements is more critical than in rating the alignment of instructional content with employer needs. Given this self reflexion, a wide range of these tools, and an increasing interest by umbrella employers' organizations in instructional content taught at technical and vocational schools, it may be hoped that the involvement of employers in bringing about instructional improvements will be growing more intense and will be reflected in the relatively related objective of aligning instructional content with employer needs.

It is beyond doubt, however, that internships and practical training in firms are the tools which supports most of the objectives, i.e. not only the motivation objectives, but also aligning instructional content with employer needs, and instructional improvements. There has been an increase in the interest of employers in providing practical training or internships after the drop in this form of practical vocational training in the 1990s; admittedly, the current standard of practical training may be lower than desired in some cases and students may be regarded as a filler for mission labour force, without taking due account of the instructional needs.

Among the tools to motivate students, those of a technical-promotional nature prevail over providing financial or material support. According to schools, employers' lack of interest (or their low interest only) in collaboration is the most frequent bar for this collaboration to be successful.

On the other hand, it is beyond dispute that all the relevant stakeholders consider collaboration between schools and employers as important. The overall picture is not very satisfying, yet there are many good practice examples of collaboration between a school and an employer which is continuous, systematic, and

multi-level, rather than consisting of isolated events such as educational visits. That such examples exist is, in the first place, due to the efforts of specific individuals on both parts and the relations they have established.

4.1.2. FURTHER EDUCATION

The answers provided by schools which took part in the questionnaire survey have revealed very interesting information about adult education in the Czech Republic. A most serious fact is that more than three quarters of schools have got involved in adult education and training. The surveyed sample is certain to play a role here, yet it is a very high percentage of schools which provide adult education courses with more or less success. The courses provided by schools most qualify as other occupational education and training, and retraining, with not insignificant percentages of hobby courses. Another serious fact is that a share of schools try to offer further education and training courses, but are unsuccessful in delivering them. It may be assumed that these schools miss counselling.

Schools most often work with small and medium enterprises in delivering further education and training; this is not surprising information because large companies have their own human resources departments and, in many cases, also their own established system of education and training and their own training facilities. Even though most schools collaborate with employers in adult education and training, approximately one half of schools are not satisfied with the standard of this collaboration.

Collaboration between schools and employers covers a range of areas, such as defining educational needs and results, specifying instructional content, providing instructors, or selecting methods of further education. Schools expect from employers, among other things, assistance in the organization and material support for further education and training, as well as in the organization of complete custom-made courses. It is good news that schools collaborate with employers on recognizing education and training results, and that some have started to emphasize the recognizing of previous learning results. It may be assumed, therefore, that most school know which steps they should take while in respect of collaboration with employers in preparing further education and training programmes.

Schools see as significant that delivering further education and training brings about improvements in teacher performance, better utilization of their potential, and more effective use of school equipment and facilities. Also, the financial benefits for schools from delivering further education and training are not insignificant.

The fundamental reasons for schools to deliver further education and training may be considered to lie, both now and in future, in promoting their reputation. Both schools and the communities in which they operate perceive the delivering of further education and training as appreciation of the school's standard – 'the school disposes of real experts and up-to-date information'. By delivering further education and training, a school becomes better known to its community and employers. It may be assumed that schools that deliver further education and training are more successful in recruiting students for their initial education programmes.

If delivering further education and training itself promotes the repute of a school, a still better reputation must be enjoyed by a school that delivers further education and training in collaboration with employers because this may be interpreted as that the school provides courses which really are aligned with the employer's needs, which the schools

is aware of in good detail. If the school did not meet the employer's needs, the company would cease to use their courses.

From this point of view, collaboration between schools and employers may be seen as a factor with a considerable impact on the standard of initial education in respect of its content-related focus. Also, delivering further education and training, and in collaboration with employers in particular, is certain to contribute to improvements in performance of the teachers involved. Adult education requires the re-thinking and re-defining of the teaching process and methods, the readiness to answer questions, the ability to use practical experience of adults, and more focus on achieving the required results, i.e. acquiring the competencies required for a particular job. It is quite understandable that all this is reflected in the work of these teachers in initial education classes.

The opinion, wide-spread in the Czech Republic, that teachers are incompetent to educate and train the adult population has been proven false. If this had been the case, schools would have hardly provided any further education and training, and especially in collaboration with employers. The case is that some technical school teachers prefer teaching undergraduates while some prefer teaching adults; approximately half of teachers enjoys working with both these groups to compensate for a certain routine in a teacher's job.

4.1.3. OUTLOOKS FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS IN FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The involvement of the Czech adult population in further education continues to be fairly unsatisfactory. According to a Eurostat survey in 2007, only 5.7% of people aged between 25 and 64 were involved in some kind of further education or training. The average EU involvement of the corresponding cohort is 9.7%, with this percentage amounting even to 11.3% for the 'old' member countries.

Further developments in continuous education will be influenced by a variety of factors, such as

- the unemployment rate, which is currently very low (just below 5%) and does not stimulate interest in continuous education or training;
- the conditions for continuous education created by the government (tax concessions, etc.);
- raising public awareness of the need for continuous education, etc.

It is difficult to predict the future developments of these factors, but it may be expected that a slow-down in economic growth, which will progressively occur (or has been happening already) will result in an increased number of unemployed people. Also, better public awareness of the need for and the choices of continuous education should be expected – the more so in the case of implementing national ESF-supported projects aimed at recognizing previous learning results (see projects such as UNIV II).

It is likely that schools will be relied on as providers of further education or training courses more often that they are today. These courses will not only cover retraining and further occupational education, but also hobby or community courses. Courses for retired people are likely to become a very specific area because these people are the only age group in the Czech Republic whose numbers will be increasing considerably in the foreseeable future.

An important factor that may encourage the school-based delivering of further education and training is the significant drop in the number of secondary school students we are experiencing as a result of our demographic develop-

ment. Schools, and especially those providing initial education in vocational training branches, will seek opportunities to make use of their human resources capacities. A drop in student numbers will result in limits on initial education in some vocational training branches, or these branches may even be closed down. Consequently, attaining the corresponding qualification will only be available through in-service training, such evening courses, distance learning and combined studies, or recognition of previous learning results.

The recognition of previous learning results is becoming a new element in the further education and training provided by schools. Many schools will collaborate with employers in respect of this recognition, motivated by the requirements in the NSK assessment standards to be used in the recognition process (some fields of study have been following these standards already), as well as employers' demand for more skilled employees. Of course, not all schools will be providing recognition of previous learning results in collaboration with employers, particularly those which have enough equipment and facilities available and will be granted authorization for certain field(s) of study.

The question is, however, how much interest these new ways of recognizing learning results will arouse in the public given that a majority of people do not know at all that there exists any such possibility of attaining qualification. It is also very difficult to predict whether or not human resources departments in companies accept the attainment of partial qualification as defined under Act no. 179/2006 Coll. Many employers provide education or training to their employees, but are reluctant to give them any certificates in acknowledgement of such training for fear that such employees might leave their jobs and accept a more attractive job with a different company. If employers did the procedure of learning results recognition in accordance with Act. no. 179/2006 Coll., either in collaboration with schools or by themselves, they would be required to issue employees the corresponding certificates.

On the other hand, for some employers the chance of recognizing previous learning results is an opportunity to get skilled workers in a relatively short time. This, however, will not be a procedure of 'pure' recognition, but a recognition procedure combined with further education or training courses prepared in compliance with the assessment standards for partial qualifications. This is a way which may lead to reducing the time needed for obtaining a certain qualification, but which may require support by labour offices (in many cases) and is certain to require a massive awareness campaign among employers, the public, and schools.

To put into practice this method of recognizing previous learning results in combination with further education or training courses will require that a range of retraining programmes need to be prepared using a single methodology so that these programmes could contribute to a high standard of this way of providing education or training.

If the recognition of previous learning results is to become a type of further education delivered by schools prevailingly in collaboration with employers, we need to increase our efforts in raising the awareness among the public, employers and labour offices of this possibility of obtaining qualification. Therefore, a promotion campaign needs to be prepared in collaboration with the mass media, regional authorities, and schools, as schools are those that can provide examples of good practice in this field. Umbrella employers (the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, and the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic in particular) should also be involved in such a campaign.

The statutory authorities who run schools, i.e. regional governments in most cases, should take into account, when assessing a particular school, whether such a school delivers further education courses and whether it is done so in collaboration with employers. These statutory authorities should also contribute to publishing information on these schools, which could inspire other schools as well as employers. In addition, the statutory authorities should support collaboration between schools and employers in delivering courses of further education or training.

4.2. POSSIBILITIES FOR CENTRAL AND REGIONAL SUPPORT TO COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS

4.2.1. ALIGNING INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT WITH EMPLOYER NEEDS

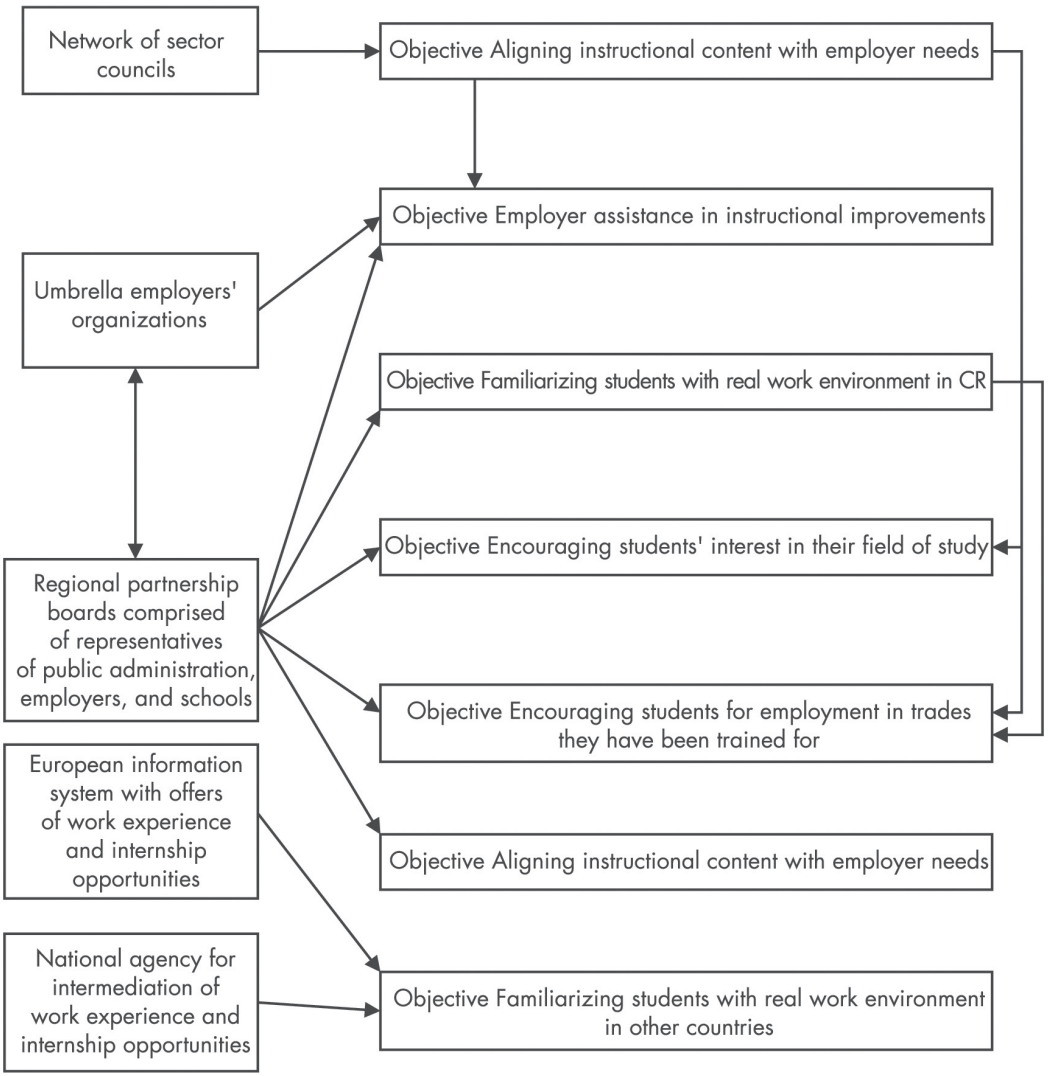
The main goal of shaping educational structure at national level should lie in finding a form able to flexibly respond to the needs of the labour market. The task for central administration bodies should be to provide a qualified prognosis as to how economy and the labour market will develop in relation to human resources development. This prognosis should be corrected by the government agencies, businesses, employers' associations and occupational associations relevant to individual industries, as well as sector councils.

Sector councils contain an unprecedented potential of representatives of employers, which, although competitors on the market, work together in these councils to define the content of occupations and qualification requirements so that the content of qualifications and fields of study would be aligned with the needs of the world of work. Umbrella employers' organizations (especially the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic and the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic) ensure appropriate compositions of sector councils, both in terms of the representation of employers in the various sector councils, and in terms of involving the best experts in defining job positions, occupations and qualification standards.

The progressively developed National Qualifications Framework, inspired by the National Occupations System and regulated in Act no. 179/2006 Coll., is the tool to translate the requirements of job positions and occupations into instructional content. Both the systems are currently under preparation, and sector councils play a key role in this process. The qualification standards and occupation definitions provide the educational sphere with objective and up-to-date requirements in respect of instructional content.

Chart 1

Most important links between central/regional organizations or tools, and the objectives of collaboration between schools and employers



4.2.2. EMPLOYER ASSISTANCE IN IMPROVING INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

To a large extent the standard of a school is assessed by how successful its graduates are in subsequent education or employment. Particularly today, when there is strong competition among secondary schools, they are motivated towards better quality and to prepare their students on the basis of employer needs. Accordingly, collaboration with employers in bringing improvements to instructional content and methods is of the utmost importance for schools. No less important is to persuade employers that they, too, will benefit from their energy put in this process. It is essential that employers perceive improvements in instructional content and methods as quality enhancement of their future human resources. This may only be achieved if there are guarantees for employers that instructional content is aligned with their needs and that school leavers are motivated to accept jobs in their companies.

Sector councils and the National Qualifications Framework are the vehicles to make instructional content aligned with employer needs, and umbrella employers' organizations should be those to run awareness raising campaigns targeted at businesses. Admittedly, these umbrella organizations must have a motivation to do this, which is very unlikely to happen unless they get fundamentally involved in the system of sector councils and the National Qualifications Framework. This shows how close the ties between the objectives are and that the whole area of partnerships between schools and businesses must be considered comprehensively.

4.2.3. FAMILIARIZING STUDENTS WITH THE REAL WORK ENVIRONMENT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND OTHER COUNTRIES

Technical schools educate their students not only for subsequent study at technical higher education institutions or tertiary technical schools, but also for immediate employment. Accordingly, familiarizing students with the real work environment is a very important element contributing to the standard of education as well as students' motivation to get employment in their field of study. To motivate employers is also important, as with the previous objective. Employers must be sure that when they create conditions for internships and educational visits, they do it for future graduates who will find their way to their companies and will have the competencies the employers need them to. Campaigns by umbrella employers' organizations may play a major role in this respect.

According to the survey, only a small portion of schools are successful in familiarizing students with the real work environment in other countries. In future, schools could benefit from a Europe-wide information system with offers of internships and work experience opportunities in European countries (such as the EURES system) and from activities of national agencies for intermediation of such opportunities (such as the Czech Academic Information Agency associated with Dům zaharničních služeb (Foreign Services House) of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports). The National Agency for European Programmes (NAEP) has also an important position in this field.

4.2.4. DEVELOPING THE KNOWLEDGEABILITY OF SCHOOLS ABOUT EMPLOYERS AND VICE VERSA

Labour offices could provide the environment for pooling information on the educational and business spheres, and the regional partnership bodies comprised of representatives of the public administration, employers and schools could define the mechanisms to share and use this information. The key role in achieving the objectives lies with employers. Admittedly, employers require that a certain legal environment be established and compensation for costs principles adopted.

Such compensation primarily concerns the costs of the following:

- Developing a system of career choice counselling in respect of the defined labour market segments
- Student recruiting, and raising awareness of a field of study
- Direct costs of teaching, namely wages of vocational training students and teachers, costs of material and similar costs
- Exempting employers from paying social security and healthcare insurance premiums and contributions to government employment policy on wages payable to students
- Costs associated with internships of secondary school specialists in the facilities of companies
- Costs of the minimum equipment required for students
- Multi-source funding with separate funds on school teaching (theory) and in-company training (technical training)
- Concluding contracts with a promise to conclude an employment contract; such contracts would give a company a reasonable guarantee of a new employee while students would be guaranteed employment (stabilization effect for both parties), where this should include all those who have been trained in a firm (received the vocational part of training)
- Preparing a civil law form of contract that would provide for the performance of the obligation between the student and the company, contain a

commitment by the company to employ the student after graduation and that by the student to continue to be employed with the company for a reasonable period of time; this stipulation would only be applicable where the company has provided the student with performance in excess of the minimum required standard.

4.2.5. ENCOURAGING STUDENTS' INTEREST IN THE FIELD OF EXPERTISE THEY ARE TAUGHT AND ENCOURAGING STUDENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT IN TRADES THEY HAVE BEEN TRAINED FOR

State, sectoral, and regional stimulation of children's and parents' interest in technical and vocational education must, in the first place, be demonstrated by providing relevant information and educating quality and well-informed career choice counsellors and diagnosticians, both those working for career choice centres and those working for primary schools.

Joint strategy of schools and employers, in particular, is critical and should incorporate, among other things, intense media coverage and the resulting better awareness of technical education, its fields of study and the associated occupations, as well as jointly organized or mutually supported events, such as open days. Also, the action in defining the conditions of study, work experience, and future employment (such as studentship allowance, work experience benefits, or benefit packages once in employment) should follow a joint strategy. Inspiration could be found in employers motivating potential students (apprentices) by direct personal contact, which is practiced with much success in the building industry in France, for instance.

Enormous importance should be attached to creating platforms for wide collaboration at the regional level. Partnerships of public administration, employers and schools, with recruitment agencies and training-providing firms involved where useful, should jointly carry out targeted campaigns systematically focused on the relevant target groups, campaigns based on partnerships in which each plays their parts while generating the synergy effect by joint cooperation.