Quality Assurance Instruments in the In-Company Training Process

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Preliminary remarks:

This paper is an unofficial translation of the seventh chapter of the final report of the project "Planning and design of training in the context of learning in the process of work":

"The research questions on learning in the process of work and on the planning and organisation of in-company training were investigated using a methodological approach consisting of qualitative and quantitative steps. The starting point was formed by literature and sector analyses of the occupational profile, the training regulations and their underlying planning models. In 45 qualitative company case studies, interviews were conducted and analysed with training managers for selected training occupations, including HR managers, managing directors and in-company trainers. Building on this, a quantitative telephone survey was conducted among training managers from 1,343 companies. In addition, the topic of the impact of the corona pandemic on training companies was included in the telephone survey." (SCHREIBER u. a. 2023, p. 15)

7 Quality Assurance Instruments in the In-Company Training Process

Questions

▶ How often, in what way and why do training companies use the training record?

▶ What other monitoring instruments/procedures are used to assess the educational and training level during training? Who is involved?

▶ Do training companies carry out a review after completion of the apprenticeship?

The overarching aim of this study is to generate in-depth findings on the arrangement of in-company training in the work process in addition to companies planning of training. The arrangement of training also includes the in-process review of skills acquisition. In this context, the company survey and the qualitative interviews were intended to determine whether, how and for what reasons training companies make use of the training record, which instruments and procedures for the quality of the training process are also used and which stakeholders are involved.

7.1 The training record

Quality assurance in the dual training system is primarily based on input and output criteria; quality assurance elements, such as the training record, rarely relate to the implementation process. It is a specific characteristic of the dual system of vocational education and training that the training process - over and above the specifications in the training regulations and the framework curriculum - is not very regulated in order to give the companies sufficient creative freedom. Against this background, the instrument of the training record, also known as the report booklet, correspondingly is of high relevance. The training record is kept during the apprenticeship and can therefore not only be used at the end of training, but can also form the basis for readjustments to training planning and organisation during the training process.

The submission of a report booklet signed by the training staff and the apprentice is a prerequisite for admission to the final examination in accordance with (BBiG 2020, §43, Para. 1; HwO 1953, §36, Para. 1, No. 2). The written evidence serves to document the factual and chronological progression of both the company-based and vocational school-based training and thus make it transparent and comprehensible for all those involved.

It is therefore a prescribed instrument for ensuring the quality of training in the dual system in Germany, which is used in particular at company level.[1]

A recommendation issued by the BIBB Board on 1 September 2020 (BIBB-HAUPTAUSSCHUSS 2020), which goes back to a recommendation from 1971 that was revised in 2012 and 2018, regulates the keeping of training records (cf. BIBB-HAUPTAUSSCHUSS 2020). According to this, apprentices should complete the report booklet on a daily or weekly basis, which they should be encouraged to do by their in-company trainers. The latter have the task of regularly reviewing the documentation and check and sign the entries at least once a month (cf. BBiG 2020, Para. 14, Sec. 2).

One of the aims of the company survey was to obtain information on the distribution of the training record in company training practice and on its relevance as a quality assurance instrument. According to the results, the training record is kept and checked across the board, as only one respondent stated that "no report booklet is kept" or "not checked at all" in his or her company.

When asked about the frequency with which the report booklet or proof of training was checked, the response behaviour was as follows (see Table 14): 57% check on average "at least monthly", 19% "at least weekly" and 8% "at least every two weeks". This means that 84% of all training companies surveyed follow the recommendations of the BIBB Board, of which a total of 27% exceed the regulations in that they carry out checks more frequently than once a month. However, 14% only check the report booklets "at least every six months" and 2% even only before the examinations. This suggests that this group does not use the instrument of training records for the continuous, process-accompanying internal evaluation of training quality, at least from the company side. The checks prior to the examinations appear to serve more to fulfil official requirements in connection with examination approval (see above).

In a comparison between the training sectors[2], it is noticeable that both the skilled trades (81 %) and the public sector (77 %) are slightly below the average (84 %) in terms of the implementation of the BIBB main committee recommendation. Industry and commerce (91 %) and the hospitality industry (88 %) have above-average figures (88 %) regarding the compliance with regulations on the utilisation of training records.

Table 14: Frequency of checking the report booklet (in %)

Frequency	Occupations in the skilled trades	Occupations in the hospitality industry	Occupations in industry and commerce	Occupations in the public service	All occupations
No report booklet available	0	0	0	1	0
No control	0	0	0	0	0
Only before the exam	3	1	1	1	2
At least every six months	17	11	7	21	14
At least monthly	59	58	52	48	57
At least every two weeks	8	9	9	9	8
At least weekly	14	21	30	20	19

If we look at the figures in relation to company size, companies with up to 49 employees a good 80% meet the control requirements, which is below the overall average of 84%. Larger companies, on the other hand, are

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[1] See the multi-level model developed by the German Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (DEQA-VET) multi-level model developed by the German Reference Centre for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (DEQA-VET) to explain company quality assurance in the dual training system in Germany: BIBB (2017)p. 37, 84ff.
[2] [Additional Information: The study differentiates between the training areas in 1. the skilled trades, 2. the industry, 3. services, trade and the public sector and 4. the hospitality industry.]

above the overall average, with companies with 250 to 499 employees showing the highest values with regard to the recommended frequency of checks on training records at 97%.

The survey also asked how important it was to keep a report booklet for the two specified objectives of "documenting the progress of training for the apprentice" and "providing feedback to the company on the status of training". The answers indicate that around 70% rated both of these reasons as "very important" or "important" neither of the two perspectives dominates (see Tables 15 and 16).

Despite this cross-training area agreement, the roughly twice as high values (11%) for the statement that the report booklet is "not important" for providing feedback on the training status to the company are striking for the skilled trades compared to the responses from the other training areas. It would be interesting to know here whether the reason may lie in the fact that other instruments are used or whether – as it is obvious for small or micro small companies – observation and daily interaction with the apprentices are the predominant means of assessing the level of training. Statements such as that from a training officer in a medium-sized electrician's workshop would speak in favour of this. She responded to the question of how the company would assess the success of training during the apprenticeship by pointing out that the colleagues who supervise the apprentices would see the success of their work (cf. 0102; pos. 64-65).

Table 15: Statements on keeping a report booklet with regard to the objective "Documentation of the training progress for the trainees" (in %)

Assessment	Occupations in the skilled trades	Occupations in the hospitality industry	Occupations in industry and commerce	Occupations in the public service	All occupations
Very important	40	41	34	43	39
important	34	32	44	42	35
Less important	17	20	21	8	18
Not important	9	6	2	7	7

N = 1,298; Weighted data

Table 16: Statements on keeping a report booklet with regard to the objective "Feedback to the company on the level of training" (in %)

Assessment	Occupations in the skilled trades	Occupations in the hospitality industry	Occupations in industry and commerce	Occupations in the public service	All occupations
Very important	39	37	32	34	37
Important	30	38	40	41	34
Less important	20	20	23	21	20
Not important	11	5	5	4	9

N = 1,298; Weighted data

In the telephone survey, the companies interviewed had the opportunity to give further reasons for keeping a report booklet. A review of the responses reveals that the report booklet tool is considered equally useful for both the apprentices and the company. This also confirms the results of the answers given above.

On the apprentices' side, it is frequently emphasised that keeping the training record, in addition to (handwritten) formulation skills, promotes personal skills in the area of independence, i.e. the ability to learn, self-organisation, self-control, discipline and personal responsibility. In addition, the writing routine enables

continuous consolidation and repetition of the learning material as well as the use of the report booklet as a reference work.

Several respondents formulated answers that emphasised the necessity of a report booklet for admission to the examination. The need to safeguard the company - for example in the event of failing the final examination - was also frequently mentioned. In such a case, a report booklet can be used to prove to third parties that the prescribed training content has been properly and completely taught, this is also important for the company for financial reasons (threat of back pay if no training performance can be proven).

Furthermore, many respondents to the survey emphasised the points of better overview and control for the operational side. On the one hand, this relates to the review of the apprentice's performance and fulfilment of tasks (including those at other places of learning such as school, network partners) and on the other hand to the training performance of the company. According to the Deming circle[3], phase three (review/control) is followed by phase four (action/adaptation). This fundamental logic of quality assurance is reflected in some responses when it is stated that reflections are made on the basis of the documentation in the report booklets and that interventions are made on this basis, for example in the form of readjustments.

Rarely is explicit reference made to the instrument of giving feedback or jointly reflecting on the content and progress of training, for which the training record would provide a good basis according to the main committee recommendation (BIBB-Hauptausschuss 2020). This aspect may shine through in some feedback, for example when it is stated that a good report booklet increases the bond between the company and the apprentice. Even in the qualitative interviews the following statement remains the exception: "The training records have to be kept weekly and we meet to do this once a month. [...] [T]here is a regular appointment and then we take the time to discuss the content" (0107, 48 - 54).

Accordingly, one possible conclusion would be that there may not yet be sufficient awareness of the need to "intensify communication between in-company trainers and apprentices" via - as the main committee recommendation states - "extended models of the legally prescribed proof of training" (BIBB-Hauptausschuss 2020, p. 2). This would also include the fact that extended forms of the report booklet, which for example provide for the allocation of training content to the occupational profile positions[4] of the training framework plan by the apprentices are not yet very widespread or at least not in the sense of a mutual exchange (and feedback). This is at least supported by the lack of corresponding free answers that refer to the use of the report booklet as a starting point for systematised communicative exchanges. On the other hand, the aspects of monitoring and review are highly recognised, both by the apprentices (self-monitoring) and on the company side, and enable appropriate adjustments to be made to the quality of training during the course of the training. This is illustrated by an interview with a training officer from the catering sector:

> "The way it's organised here is that they always bring their report booklet to the training courses here
> and I check them promptly so that I can see [...] what they have done in the restaurant, so that I also have a basis
> for discussion with the restaurant manager, when I talk to him on the phone" (0709, 152).

Handwritten or digital use?

The above-mentioned BIBB main committee recommendation leaves open the question of whether apprentices should keep their training records in writing or electronically. However, it notes that electronic processing "increasingly corresponds to the media and working habits of apprentices and trainers" (BIBB-

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[3] The Deming or PDCA cycle comprises the four phases Plan, Do, Check and Act and, according to W. Edwards Deming, stands for a continuous improvement process. It forms the basis for all common quality management systems (Deming 1982).

[4] [Additional Information: "Section 4 (2) BBiG and, correspondingly, Section 25 (2) HwO stipulate that "[f]or a recognised training occupation, training may only be provided in accordance with the training regulations".
The basis for the training plan is therefore the training regulations, and here in particular the factual and temporal structure described in the training framework plan. Skills, knowledge and abilities are laid down here in the form of minimum standards, organised into occupational profile positions, which define the training occupation profile. They represent the professional ability to act in the respective occupation." Schreiber u. a. (2023, p. 11)]

HAUPTAUSSCHUSS 2020, p. 2) and that online-based software offers make it possible to check the report booklet entries regardless of time and place, which also applies to the communication of all those involved. Accordingly, we wanted to know from the companies whether handwritten or digital training reports were kept, or both.

In principle, it can be stated that the exclusively digital use of report booklets increases with the size of the company. It starts at 3% for companies with up to ten employees and climbs to 36% for companies with 500 employees or more. Accordingly, the highest figures for the use of exclusively handwritten report booklets (83%) are also found in training companies with fewer than ten employees.

A look at the distribution of the results by training sector (see Table 17) shows that in the skilled trades sector with its many small and micro-enterprises, the vast majority only use the handwritten version (77%). In terms of exclusively digital use, the public sector is in the lead with 53%, followed by industry and commerce (43%), hospitality (16%) and skilled trades (7%). However, on average a good 20% of the training companies surveyed also use both forms, with companies with 250 to 499 employees are most frequently found in this group at 45%.

Table 17: Use of a handwritten and/or digital training record by training area (in %)

Type of use	Occupations in the skilled trades	Occupations in the hospitality industry	Occupations in industry and commerce	Occupations in the public service	All occupations
Handwritten	77	57	30	20	64
Digital	7	16	43	53	16
Both	17	27	28	27	21

N = 1,298; Weighted data

Even though the quantitative survey was conducted during the pandemic-related business closures, it can be assumed that the spread of the digital report booklet has accelerated since then - although this must remain a hypothesis. However, the qualitative interviews, which were completed before the pandemic, already illustrate the general perception of companies that they are in a transitional phase, for example, when they say that the important training report would currently "still be written by hand" (0109, 98 - 101) by the apprentices. In another interview, environmental reasons are also cited that suggest a complete abandonment of the paper versions: "Let's see whether we [...] do away with this paper thing over the years [...], also for EMAS reasons [...], that will become clear in the next few years, I think" (0101, 197 - 197).

It is also known from the qualitative interviews that, from the companies' perspective, this phase can also lead to uncertainties and hinder the introduction of the digital report booklet. One training officer commented as follows: "We haven't yet recognised the advantage of an online training record because ultimately the apprentice prints it out, files it back in their folder and takes it to the exam, because the examiners want to have a look" (0502, 110 - 126).

Digital development potential

Irrespective of the question of whether the report booklet should be kept in digital or handwritten form, interviewees put forward conceptual considerations for the further development of the training record, which concern the comparison with the vocational training positions.

In one case, it was suggested that the idea of working with the help of a "catalogue of tasks" could be copied from medical assistants: "Whenever I have done a task like this, the company signs off on it, so to speak, under the respective task item. And I think that wouldn't be a bad idea if the framework plan or this report booklet would be turned round" (0108, 74 - 74). The following suggestion goes in a similar direction: "It would be much easier if you could check directly in a kind of digital matrix or template whether everything has been done

accordingly [...] So if you could compare in digital form which activity covers which area, that could simplify a lot" (1101, 89 - 90). It is suggested that the apprentices should not follow the instructions and assign the "consecutive number" of the occupational profile items from the general training plan to the company activities and areas, as provided for in Annexes 3a and b of the main committee recommendation (BIBB-HAUPTAUSSCHUSS 2020). Rather, it is proposed that these (occupational profile items) be translated and specified in the form of tasks/activities, which would be easily possible via links in digital report booklet variants. In another interview, the general assessment is also conveyed that the potential uses of digital versions of the training record are not yet fully utilised: "After all, we have introduced the electronic report booklet, so we could utilise even more options than we do. For example, you could also use some kind of learning progress monitoring, which we don't have yet" (0101, 197 - 197).

Digital training records and tools are also playing an increasingly important role in training companies in the hospitality business. Various training companies surveyed reported that they use a learning app for the catering and hotel industry. However, this app was not used for the most part, as the costs for the individual usable and bookable elements were considered too high in some cases. And in companies with employee representatives, the works councils have spoken out against it, citing insufficient data protection. They also criticised the fact that it was difficult to differentiate between working time and free time when using the app (cf. 0701, 0704, 0706). One interviewee from a small training company praised the app and its potential uses:

> "There is a provider [...] that has great things, [...] the basic idea is something that should actually be adopted, [...] I think it's really well organised [...], it makes the work easier, you can [...] keep and upload the reports online. [...] But I print things out from time to time, [...] it's one of the things that I find really great per se, because it's a good mix of this playful, specialised, quiz stuff and at the same time material that you can download and use" (0705, 131, 133)."

These examples are indicative for the openness of training companies to the potential of digitalised report booklets, even if their use is not yet or not yet fully implemented. This could be seen as a starting point for further efforts to innovatively develop digitalised report booklets. The aim here would be to further expand and strengthen the training record as a central instrument for the in-process review of training success. Furthermore, in practice there appear to be barriers to the use of the digital report booklet that are caused by parallel (analogue and digital) practices - which is typical for transition phases. Clarification at system level may be required to remove such barriers.

7.2 Further monitoring of performance during the in-company training process

In response to the question of what other means companies use to check whether apprentice have learnt what they should be able to do at the time, eight instruments and methods were provided as possible answers in the company survey (multiple answers possible). Apart from the answer "through regular assessment of grades at vocational school" (average use: 90 %), these can be arranged on a scale ranging from little to highly formalised, this is associated with varying degrees of transparency and traceability in terms of quality assurance.

In the survey, the method "by observing the apprentice" has the highest values, and its use is also the least formalised because it is likely to be continuous in the training process. Across all training areas, it achieved an average value of 96%, whereby - apart from the public sector (88%) - there is no deviation from the average of more than three percentage points, which this also applies to the breakdown by company size. Accordingly, continuous monitoring during the training process can be regarded as a further central means of control during training for all training companies interviewed - in addition to the report booklet This is closely followed by the measures "regular assessment of vocational school grades" (90 %) and "discussions with apprentices on spontaneous occasions" (89 %).

As Table 18 shows, with the exception of "through joint assessment of all those involved in training participants with the apprentice" (60 %) - none of the other monitoring instruments achieve an average utilisation of 50 %. These are measures with a higher degree of regulation, i.e. they are not used spontaneously, but rather at predetermined times, which requires binding agreements with the dialogue partners. This means that these

resources are more transparent and comprehensible, especially if the results of meetings or evaluations are documented in writing. However, these measures place higher time and planning requirements for the companies and also require basic expertise.

If the distribution is analysed separately according to the training areas however, the figures differ greatly in some cases. For example, written evaluation or assessment forms are only used by 19% of the skilled trades companies interviewed, but by 77% of the participating training companies in the public sector, followed by 55% in industry and commerce and 31% in hospitality (see Table 18). If we contrast this with the response behaviour according to company size, we also find large discrepancies with regard to the use of the evaluation forms mentioned. The smallest training companies represented in the sample only use them 7% of the time. However, their use increases with the size of the company up to 77%.

Taken together, this shows that rather small training companies and craft enterprises, which are more frequently categorised as small companies, are less likely to use written and documented monitoring procedures scheduled in advance. It is questionable whether the reasons lie in the additional effort and lack of corresponding time and personnel resources in smaller companies or whether there are other arguments against the use of such process-accompanying quality assurance measures. It is conceivable, for example, that operational processes would speak against it or that there are company training cultures in which it would be perceived as strange and inappropriate, for example, to prefer the written recording of what has been said to the spoken word:

> "So I think everything you're talking about with regard to exam preparation, debriefing and making sure that the boy really does it properly, that's what we do in the end. Just not so systematically and with checklists, but in the end it works in a friendly way with each other" (0301, 88 - 89).

Further studies would be of interest here, focussing, for example, on identifying obstacles to the introduction and use of even very low-threshold methods, aids and tools tailored to the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises, and developing solutions based on existing materials and findings.[5]

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[5] The instruments developed as part of the pilot project "Quality development and assurance in in-company vocational training" should be mentioned. The chambers also provide comparable tools to support training companies with regard to the quality of their training.
see URL: https://www.deqa-vet.de/en/daqavet_119364.php (as of 25/10/2024).

Table 18: Checking the level of training using various methods by training area (in %)

Methods	Occupations in the skilled trades	Occupations in the hospitality industry	Occupations in industry and commerce	Occupations in the public service	All occupations
(1) Through observation	95	98	95	88	96
(2) Through conversations on spontaneous occasions	89	92	88	85	89
(3) Through discussions at fixed times	31	53	73	80	44
(4) Through written evaluation or assessment forms	19	31	55	77	29
(5) Through joint assessment by all those involved in training without the apprentices	42	35	38	25	39
(6) Through joint assessment of all those involved in training with the apprentices	56	63	67	60	60
(7) Through agreements, the results of which are reviewed	39	55	58	36	46
(8) Through regular assessment of the vocational school grades	90	91	92	91	90

N = 1,343; Weighted data

The interviews also asked who is involved in monitoring the progress of training. In principle, it can be stated that as the size of the company increases, the involvement of the company's management decreases, but that of the training manager and the in-company trainer increases. The other training personnel are involved to an average of around 55%, with a significantly higher rate (72 %) only in companies with at least 500 employees. The works and staff councils and youth employee representatives play no or only a minor role in monitoring the progress of training in small companies, which is probably due to the fact that there are no such representative bodies in such small companies.

Table 19: Participation in the monitoring of training progress by training area (in %)

Participants	Occupations in the skilled trades	Occupations in the hospitality industry	Occupations in industry and commerce	Occupations in the public service	All occupations
Management	78	78	36	32	69
Training manager	79	90	90	95	84
In-Company Trainer	81	92	90	83	85
Other training personnel	53	58	59	51	55
Works council/staff council	5	3	16	27	7
Youth employee representation	4	2	12	21	5

N = 379; Weighted data

7.3 Review of the completed training programme

In addition to the in-process review, complete quality assurance also includes an evaluation at the end of the training process. Knowledge gained in this way can be the starting point for any necessary adjustments to future apprenticeships, this approach is also a testimony to the willingness to see oneself as a learning organisation. Against this background, the training companies were also asked whether they would conduct a review of the training after it had ended.

Of the companies surveyed, 62% stated that they would look back after the end of training (see Table 20). This is done either only with the respective apprentices or with several people involved in the apprenticeship.

A review with several people involved in the training programme but without the respective apprentice plays a very minor role (3% on average). Only in the public sector (9 %) and by a wide margin in training companies with more than 50 employees (6 %) is such a form of retrospective implemented to any significant extent (see Tables 20 and 21).

As many as 38% do not carry out a review. This applies more frequently than average to the skilled trades sector (43%). Table 20 shows that micro-enterprises with fewer than ten employees were the most likely to state that they do not carry out a retrospective (43%).

Table 20: Review after completion of training; by company size (in %)

Participants	Micro- Enterprises (< 10 employees)	Small company (10 to 49 employees)	Medium-sized company (50 to 249 employees)	Large company (250 employees or more)	Total
With the apprentices	25	29	23	21	26
With the apprentices and several people involved in the training	29	30	37	47	33
With several people involved in the training, but without apprentices	3	2	6	5	3
No	43	40	34	27	38

N = 663; Weighted data

Talks at the end of the training programme have two functions: Firstly, they are used as a review of the apprenticeship. Secondly, they discuss the apprentices' professional future, especially if the apprentices are taken on:

> "So we have a takeover meeting with our apprentices. We conduct these together with our colleagues from HR, and in principle, we talk to our apprentices again, looking back with our apprentices in retrospect. How did it go, what can we improve, what else would they have liked?" (0108, 106 -110).

In most of the discussions at the end of training, however, the focus seems to be on the future, so that the motivation for the exchange is mostly based on taking on the apprentice: "[On] the last day of training, people are actually looking to the future rather than to the past, I would say" (0106, 181 - 184) "Yes, there is a kind of feedback meeting again, which starts in the last six months, but it is linked to looking at where we can place the apprentice and which department they would like to be taken on in" (0104, 126- 129). In other words, a clear separation of looking back and planning for the future is not at the centre of interest, which is also difficult because the latter builds on the training results. In some cases, this seems to mean that the conversations are not perceived as retrospectives at all:

"But it's not the case that we all sit down together and say what went well, what went badly, where we need to follow up. Of course, we talk about it again with the trainers in our department at a meeting. And then we look at what we can do better or differently for the future. That's already the case now. If you see a need for improvement somewhere" (0109, 123 -125).

However, there are likely to be very large differences with regard to the differentiation of the assessments. No quantitatively reliable statements can be made about the number of cases in which the results of the reviews are recorded in writing. In any case, it can be seen from the qualitative interviews that the results of the discussions tend to be treated in a less formalised manner, so that instruments such as evaluation forms are not used: "A joint review and outlook is planned in any case, but not in the sense of a standardised questionnaire, they are discussions" (0110, 86 - 91). It also happens that the usefulness of retrospectives is fundamentally questioned. In the case of a joinery business, it is pointed out that these are individual cases that do not allow any general conclusions to be drawn about the future:

"Because the training is never really rigid, and that's why it's difficult to say at the end to say: Yes, if we had done a bit more of this or a bit more of that, the next training programme can be completely different, because the focus will be different" (0302, 43 -44).

Table 21: Review after completion of training by training area (in %)

Participants	Occupations in the skilled trades	Occupations in the hospitality industry	Occupations in industry and commerce	Occupations in the public service	All occupations
With the apprentices	24	30	25	34	25
With the apprentices and several people involved in the training	29	33	44	29	33
With several people involved in the training, but without apprentices	4	3	3	9	3
No	43	34	28	28	38

N = 663; Weighted data

7.4 Relationships between planning types and the use of quality assurance instruments

Is there a general tendency in some companies to dispense with quality assurance instruments planned in writing or to use them only to a limited extent? Or vice versa: Are companies that already use a written quality assurance measure more likely to use others than the average company surveyed?

In order to investigate this, the data from the companies that work on the basis of informal[6], non-written training planning was used and merged with a range of other data via cross-tabulations and analysed in more detail.

The first step was to examine whether there is a correlation between the group of companies that do not carry out written training planning and those companies that do not check the report booklet frequently enough. The list shows that the companies only check the report booklets at least every six months and therefore do not meet the requirements are most frequently found in the group (20 percent) that just offer their training programmes only informally, i.e. not in writing (see Table 22). This can be seen as an indication that there are companies that are fundamentally reluctant to use written planning and monitoring instruments, i.e. they

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[6] [Additional Information: "… informal planning […] comprises companies that make sure that all essential training content that constitutes the training occupation is taken into account in the training process. […] The companies therefore have an implicit concept for the training programme. However, they do not set out these considerations in a written training plan." SCHREIBER u. a. (2023, p. 29).]

either do not use them or, measured against the available recommendations, do not utilise them sufficiently intensively. Or to put it another way: if companies do not plan their training in writing, it is more likely that they will also not use other written quality assurance procedures, or only use them insufficiently.

Table 22: Frequency of checking the report booklet by planning model (in %)

Frequency of control	No or informal planning	Key points plan orientated to orders	Key points plan based on training regulations	Elaborated plan based on orders	Elaborated plan based on training regulations	Total
No report booklet	0	0	0	0	0	0
No check	0	0	0	0	0	0
Only before examinations	3	1	0	3	1	2
At least every six months	20	9	11	10	7	14
At least monthly	54	65	60	62	54	57
At least every 14 days	8	4	9	10	10	8
At least weekly	15	20	20	15	28	19

N = 1,320; Weighted data

The findings in Table 23, which show a correlation between the type of training planning used by companies and the utilisation of other quality assurance measures and instruments, point in a very similar direction.

Table 23: Utilisation of quality assurance measures according to the planning model (in %)

Measures	No or informal planning	Key points plan orientated to orders	Key points plan based on training regulations	Elaborates plan based on orders	Elaborates plan based on training regulations	Total
Through discussions with the apprentices at set times	28	61	58	49	54	44
Through written evaluation or assessment forms	13	45	41	31	45	29
Through joint assessment of all those involved in training with the apprentices	52	67	61	71	64	60
Through agreements on the further course of training, the results of which are reviewed	37	54	47	56	56	46
By observing the apprentice	96	96	95	97	93	96
Through discussions with the apprentices on spontaneous occasions	89	89	89	93	90	89

N = 1,325; Weighted data

Here, the first four response categories in Table 23 on quality assurance procedures - which generally also have to be accompanied by a certain degree of written form - show a connection to the type of training planning. Companies that plan informally and therefore not in writing use the following instruments the least:

▶ Discussions with the apprentices at fixed times (16 percentage points less often than the average),
▶ Written evaluation or assessment forms (16 percentage points less frequently than the average)
▶ Joint assessment of the level of training involving the apprentices and other participants (8 percentage points less frequently than average)
▶ Agreements on the further course of training, compliance with which is monitored (9 percentage points lower than average).

The result is corroborated by the "counter-finding": quality assurance procedures such as observing apprentices and discussions with apprentices on spontaneous occasions, which do not require written form, are used just as frequently by these companies (without written training planning) as by the average of the companies interviewed. It was also found that micro-companies use the "review at the end of training"

instrument five percentage points less frequently than the average. Although no enquiry was made as to whether this review is accompanied in writing, however, experience suggests that it can be assumed to a certain extent that written planning or processing is used here too. On the one hand, those involved in the meeting must be informed of the appointment (which may not always be organised in writing, but often is), and on the other hand, the results of the meeting must be documented in the form of bullet points or similar during or after the meeting. Since micro-enterprises more often plan their training informally and not in writing, this would also support the above-mentioned finding that more in-depth use of written quality assurance procedures is more likely to be implemented by companies that also carry out written training planning.

7.5 Correlations between the utilisation of instruments accompanying the training process and training success

Finally, an attempt was made to use the quantitative material collected to investigate the question of whether a correlation can be established between the commitment of the companies to utilise quality assurance instruments during the training process and their training success. The latter was analysed using the variables final grade (grade point average) and the drop-out rate of apprentices, which are based on corresponding items in the company survey.[7]

For this reason, the frequency of use of all eight methods listed in Table 18 was initially compared with the two indicators of training success mentioned. We then focussed on the five instruments (Nos. 3 to 7 in Table 18) that have a higher degree of regulation and are therefore associated with higher demands on the companies.

In both cases, a significant correlation can be established with regard to the grade point averages achieved, whereby in the case of the five more elaborate instruments, the established correlation (-.22) is somewhat stronger than in the calculation based on all eight instruments (-.21). This means that in companies where the listed process-related quality assurance instruments are utilised to a greater extent, apprentices also achieve better final grades. Such a correlation could not be demonstrated with regard to the second training success variable "training drop-outs" (see Table 30 "Training outcome" in Chapter 11).

7.6 Summary: Instruments of the training process quality

All of the training companies surveyed maintain and check the training record, with 84% following the recommendations of the BIBB Board by checking the report booklet at least once a month. This means that not only do all companies state that they use the report booklet, they also appear to use it continuously as an instrument of quality assurance in the training process.

So, while only 59% of the companies surveyed draw up their own training plan in writing, the figures for the report booklet speak in favour of more active use. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the legislator already provides a comprehensive factual and time-related basis for the *planning* of training in the form of the training regulations and the training framework plan, which 41% of the companies seem to consider sufficient insofar as they no longer prepare a written plan adapted to their own operational framework conditions.

In view of the large number and heterogeneity of training companies, there is a great deal of room for manoeuvre with regard to the *implementation* of training. It is up to those involved in training to fill this space in their daily practice and to find their own way of realising it within the company. Against this background, the report booklet appears to be in great demand as a process-accompanying aid, which would explain its more intensive use. And this is not only done in order to fulfil the requirements, but to a large extent in the manner recommended by the BIBB Board.

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[7] See Chapter 11 Model training outcome. There, with the help of further variables, correlations to the training success of companies are quantitatively recorded.

Apart from these positive figures, it should nevertheless be noted that, at around 15%, there is still a significant proportion of training companies that do not use the training record in an appropriate manner - at least from a company perspective. The majority of these are small companies. Due to the only sporadic use of the report booklet, these companies are likely to derive only a very limited benefit from the report booklet in the sense of a continuous, process-accompanying evaluation of training quality.

In terms of quality assurance, it can also be seen as a pleasing result that around 70% of apprentices keep a report booklet not only to "document the progress of their training for the apprentice", but also to a similar extent to "provide the company with feedback on the progress of their training". Most of the training companies interviewed therefore regard the training record as a joint instrument that is equally useful for both the training company and the apprentice. In this context, the aspects of monitoring and review predominate, which are also seen both by the apprentices (self-monitoring) and by the training companies and include all other parties involved (network partners, vocational schools, inter-company training centres, etc.). Other important reasons cited for the use of training records are - unsurprisingly - the regulations relating to examination authorisations or legal requirements such as the company's ability to provide evidence of proper training. In addition, the training record is said to have a high educational benefit with regard to the development of apprentices in terms of (handwritten) formulation skills, organisational skills and independence.

For the dialogue-communicative aspect - in the sense of a reciprocal, i.e. interrelated exchange in connection with the use of the report booklet - there seems to be no or only very little awareness on the part of the training companies, at least according to the results of our study. The lack of corresponding information from the companies points in this direction, which in turn indicates unutilised development potential in the area of teaching/learning relationships

The exclusively digital use of report books increases with the size of the company. Accordingly, the highest value for the exclusive use of handwritten report booklets, at a good 80%, is found in training companies with fewer than ten employees. It is important here that small companies are not left behind in terms of further digitalisation for economic reasons, but also with respect to the competition for apprentices. Last but not least, it is important for all training companies to keep up with electronic developments in order to ensure future-proof training. There may be barriers to implementation with regard to the further spread of the digital report booklet because it is not transparent everywhere whether and in what form digitally managed report booklets are also permitted.

In addition to the report booklet, a number of procedures and instruments are used to check the respective training status during the process. Almost all companies cite "observation" of the apprentice as a further central instrument for checking the status of training during the training process. All other methods, which are necessarily associated with greater time, administrative and planning requirements are used less frequently. The example of the evaluation forms shows striking discrepancies between the different company sizes: The smallest training companies hardly use them at all, while the companies with the most employees use them quite predominantly.

This means that quality assurance instruments with a higher degree of regulation, usually in writing, are used less frequently than methods that do not require further planning. Another finding is that more elaborate tools are used more frequently by those companies that also plan their training formally in writing and are less likely to be among the smaller companies. It is therefore more likely that a training company will use written-elaborated instruments for quality assurance in the training process if it has already developed its own company-based training plan.

With regard to the question of the effect of such commitment on training success, reference is made here to Chapter 11. There it is shown, among other things, that there is a medium-strong positive correlation between the use of the instruments described here for quality development and assurance and the grades achieved by the apprentices of a company in the final examination.

Concerning small and medium-sized enterprises, there are already low-threshold evaluation aids tailored to their specific needs. The question arises as to why these tools do not achieve a higher utilisation rate among

companies with up to ten employees and also among those with up to 50 employees (18 %). Apart from further studies that could shed more light on the framework conditions and possible obstacles in the area of company cultures, further efforts in the area of awareness-raising could be considered. The approach would be to raise awareness of the possibilities of regular evaluations in the area of training, which could serve as a basis for intensified communication between apprentices and in-company trainers in the form of feedback discussions. There is also scope for development with regard to carrying out a planned and coordinated review at the end of a training programme with the aim of using the knowledge gained for future apprenticeships.

With regard to the central, output-orientated control instrument in the dual training system, namely the examinations, it should be noted that it is very important for the training companies how and whether apprentices pass them - because all of the companies surveyed stated that they offer their apprentices corresponding support services. This company commitment characterises the planning and implementation of training by the companies.

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