Role play exercise
Social Dialogue for Quality Apprenticeships

This exercise is a role play in which you will work on a fictitious country, “Marzia”, and you will represent the Ministry of Labour, Workers’ or Employers’ organization. Please choose a role that is different from your actual role (e.g. if you are a government official, please choose either workers’ or employers’ organization). Through this role play you will understand another party’s positions and perspectives on apprenticeships.

This role play can be used to address any issue related to apprenticeships – it can be easily adapted to national and local contexts. Furthermore, it can be used during training programmes or in strategy development and planning meetings.

The Marzia case

- Marzia is a developing country. Key industries are natural resources and mining, agriculture, fishery, textile, and automobiles. Marzia has attractive tourist destinations. Service sectors have been expanding rapidly.
- There is widespread poverty: 30% of the population live below the national poverty line
- High youth unemployment (27%), especially among those with low education and university graduates.
- Low labour force participation of women in spite of their greater education attainment
- Most parents prefer sending their children to general high school and then university. Around 15% of young people go to university. Many university graduates wish to work in the public sector or find an office job.
- About 25% of students go through Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
- Enterprises often complain that young people do not possess necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes.
- Many large companies hire foreign skilled workers (e.g. managers, engineers and technicians in factories, skilled construction workers etc.).
- The rates of school and TVET drop-out rates are high: at least 30% of those who start vocational training drop out. 40% of all secondary school students do not finish school. Workers in Marzia have therefore modest formal schooling levels on average.
- Micro, small and medium enterprises are the backbone of the economy, both in rural and in urban areas.

The Vice President of Marzia is concerned about high youth unemployment and intends to convene a tripartite Task Force that will be responsible for setting up an apprenticeship system for young people in Marzia. He is also aware that in some countries both employers and youth are not too keen to participate in apprenticeships. You
have received an invitation from the Office of the Vice President to participate in the first Task Force meeting with the following questions:

1. **What policy measure be taken so that SMEs offer apprenticeships?**

2. **How to make apprenticeships attractive to youth?**

The Vice President requests each party to: a) present opinions on an apprenticeship system, b) engage in tripartite dialogue, and c) come to a tripartite agreement on an apprenticeship system.

**Instructions**

Each group will represent a different institution (i.e. Ministry of Labour, Workers’ or Employers’ organization). Each institution will have a different opinion, interests and concerns as to how to set up an apprenticeship system as described in information sheets.

**Please:**

- Read carefully the information sheet and truly internalize the “role”, the interests and concerns of the institution you will represent in this role play. Act out your role as best as you can.
- Discuss in your group the three questions from the Vice President from the view point of your organization with the help of the information sheet. For each question, please come up with the official position of your group.
- If you don’t have sufficient information on a specific point you would like to make, feel free to be creative and “invent” some facts.
- Select two spokes-persons who will represent your group at the “Task Force” meeting.
- At the “Task Force” meeting, your representatives will present the positions of your group and negotiate with representatives of the other groups. Representatives are expected to find a common ground that is agreeable to all parties. Please be aware that you might need to adjust your positions and make concessions, if no agreement is reached with the other groups.
- The other group members who will not participate in the “Task Force” meeting will observe the discussions between the different groups.

**Time**

- 10 minutes for reading instructions, the information sheet of your group and the selection of two group representatives.
- 30 minutes group discussion on the two questions from the Vice President.
- 20 minutes “Task Force” meeting and discussions
- 10 minutes for feedback.

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3 Facilitator can adapt questions to suit national and/or local contexts and purposes of the exercise.

Sample questions are given below:

1. What are the costs and benefits of apprenticeships for different stakeholders – enterprises, apprentices and governments?
2. How should the training be financed? How can costs among the relevant stakeholders be shared?
Information sheets

Employers’ Organizations
(Representing the enterprises and the private sector)

The private sector and the enterprises are generally a bit sceptical about the new proposal to introduce apprenticeship in Marzia. They see a great potential in this new system and they think it will ultimately benefit their Enterprises in the future. However, they are afraid that it might put high costs on the Enterprises, especially small and medium enterprises. They are also afraid that the system will be badly managed: They think that the Government does not understand the needs and concerns of the private sector and that they give in too much to the demands of the Workers’ Organizations. Employers think that Workers’ Organizations only want to participate in the process, because they want to recruit more members, but apart from that they don’t have much to offer.

Therefore, if an apprenticeship system should be installed, the Employers want to be part of the main decision making processes and the governance of the system. E.g. they want to play a role in determining training standards, participate in the development of the curricula, the examination process and the certification process, to make sure that that training will respond to the needs of the enterprises.

Particular concerns of the employers are the following:

- The entrepreneur or master-craftsman has the right to choose whether or not he wants to accept an apprentice. This decision should be based on the enterprises’ mid-term need for additional staff and the aptitudes and personal traits of the apprentice. If an apprentice performs well, the enterprise might decide to give him a full job after completing the apprenticeship, but there is not obligation for the employer to do so.

- Enterprises cannot be forced to train new apprentices every year. Training an apprentice in times of economic crisis could put a severe burden on the enterprise and lead to economic ruin. Especially small enterprises (5 – 10 employees) and medium enterprises (11 – 50 employees) have to be very careful about their costs.

- The relationship between the apprentice and the entrepreneur should be fixed by a contract. This contract should vary according to the industry and job: in some industries or jobs it might be necessary to work nightshifts, do work over-time or to operate in dangerous working conditions or with dangerous equipment and chemicals. If the apprentices are to be truly trained on-the-job, they need to work under the same conditions as all other workers.

- The financial burden for the enterprises should be kept as low as possible. Therefore, enterprises should have no financial obligations in case of a work accident: they do not pay a full health insurance and they do not want to pay compensation. Moreover, they will only allow apprentices in the company if the apprentices covered by a health and accident- insurance scheme.

Workers’ organizations
(Representing the workers in all the main industries in the country)

The Workers’ organizations are extremely interested in the new apprenticeship proposal and they want to be involved in the decision-making processes. They especially want to protect the rights of the apprentices. They
think that apprenticeship is a great way to provide vocational training, but they want to guarantee Decent Work and good working conditions during the apprenticeship, and are also hoping that apprentices get a job with the enterprise after finishing the apprenticeship.

The Workers’ Organizations see the first Task Force Meeting as an opportunity to show the Employers’ Organisations and the Government that Workers’ Organizations have some important things to “offer”. They want to be included in the important governance-aspects of the apprenticeship system, to guarantee good working and learning conditions for the apprentices. They hope to use the first Task Force Meeting to make it clear to the Employers and to the Government that they have important things to contribute for setting up an apprenticeship system, e.g.:

- Contributing to curriculum development. Workers know very well what skills are needed at the workplace and they want to participate in defining training standards and curriculum contents.

- Increasing Occupational Safety and Health and preventing work accidents: Workers’ Organizations could help to train apprentices at the workplace on such issues and they have training manuals that could be used for introducing training modules on these issues into the curriculum of the school based training.

- Developing training modules (for the school-based training) on labour rights for the school based curriculum, to inform apprentices about their rights and to avoid exploitation.

- The Workers Organizations’ Legal Office wants to be involved in formulating and supervising the apprenticeship contract, in order to guarantee that good working conditions will be reflected: decent work hours, effective training, adequate pay, a meaningful training process at the workplace, no over-time work. Work on dangerous tasks and sensitive equipment and substances should only be permitted during the last year of the apprenticeship, preferably when the apprentice has reached the age of 18 years.

- They would also like to provide mediation services in case of work disputes.

- Apprentices who affiliate themselves with the Workers’ Organizations could have access to a specific health insurance plan.

The Workers’ Organizations are especially concerned about the following aspects:

- Apprentices should receive a salary: ideally the minimum salary, but at least a training allowance that covers transport, food and gives them a small extra-salary. A financial remuneration would give apprentices incentives to complete the apprenticeship and also to contribute to their families’ income.

- Apprentices should be covered by health insurance, accident insurance and invalidity insurance. If an apprentice suffers a work accident, they should receive a financial compensation by the employer.

- All enterprises should be obliged to train apprentices every year, no matter what size of enterprise. For each 5 regular employees in an enterprise, they should train 1 apprentice.
- Mastercrafts-persons should give apprentices a “real” training, which should correspond to a well-structured learning plan in the enterprise. It should by all means be avoided that the apprentice is being given “useless tasks” and only routine tasks where he/she is not being able to learn anything.

- Workers know what tasks are needed at the workplace and therefore should take part in structuring the practical training at the workplace as well as developing the school curricula. For the same reason, they should participate in setting quality standards, holding examination and issuing certification of apprentices.

- The training at school should give apprentices a good theoretical knowledge in the technical field that they are being trained in. In addition, it should include core skills like reading, writing, mathematics, computer skills and foreign language skills. It should also include training on occupational safety and health and labour rights. Apprentices should have a complete set of skills that would enable them to find a new job (e.g. if their enterprise closes and they lose their job) and to professionally develop within their job.

**Governments/ Ministry of Labour**

The Government thinks that the best way to introduce a new system is if the Government keeps control over the main important aspects of the apprenticeship system. The few times when the Government has allowed for negotiations with Employers’ and Workers’ Organizations, it was always a very long process and it was hard to find a compromise. Experience has shown that employers are usually reluctant to finance training and that Workers’ Organizations did not bring many useful proposals to the negotiation table. Therefore, the Ministry of Labour wants to use the occasion of this “Task Force Meeting” to establish a Government drive process. In particular, Government should be responsible for the following areas:

- Defining the training curriculum. All learning contents should best be defined by the educational specialists in the Ministry of Labour. People in the Ministry of Labour will know best what the labour market needs.

- It is important that the training standards are uniform and of high quality all over Marzia, so the specialists for technical vocational training within the Ministry of Labour will be asked to develop uniform standards. Examination, testing and certification should be done by an independent body, so as to avoid corruption. A special Government agency should be created for this purpose that operates independently from the Ministry of Labour.

- An apprenticeship contract should be established between the apprentice and the enterprise and that a neutral institution should supervise this contract and intervene in case of labour disputes. The National Training Authority of Marzia could play this role.

- In addition, the National Training Authority also has an office on vocational guidance and orientation. This office could choose the most suitable apprentices for the enterprises.

- Apprentices could also receive a coverage for accident and invalidity insurance with the National Training Authority. However, the National Training Authority cannot provide health insurance. However, they would be able to negotiate a coverage of 50% of health insurance with the Ministry of Health, but only if the employers would cover the other 50%.
In order to encourage enterprises to accept apprentices, the Government is thinking of giving for each apprentice some special tax incentives to the enterprise. In exchange, the enterprises should pay a training allowance to the apprentices that covers transport cost, costs for meals and also represent a small salary. This is important in order to prevent drop-outs and to motivate apprentices to complete the training.

The relationship between the enterprise and the apprenticeship should be fixed by a contract. Since apprentices are too young to be able to negotiate working conditions for themselves, the Ministry of Labour will determine a standard contract for all apprentices.

In order to comply with the plans of providing four times as many young people as possible with training, the government wants to organise establish training quotas. To effectively combat youth unemployment, an “Employment Guarantee Act” shall guarantee each apprentice a job with the enterprise after the apprenticeship is completed.

Since 80% of the economy is made up of small enterprises and only 5% are large enterprises, apprenticeship training should happen the following way:

- Small enterprises (5 – 10 employees) should be training at least one apprentice per year;
- Medium sized enterprises (11 – 50 employees) should train at least two apprentices per year;
- Large enterprises (51 and above) should train three apprentices per year. They want to start immediately in all industries.