



**PARTNERS FOR CHANGE**

# Supporting the development of quality apprenticeships

**I-WORK project strand 2**

Technical report on benchmarking

14 April 2020

## ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL

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Our work within technical and vocational education and training (TVET) aims to improve technical and vocational skills systems so that they are inclusive and relevant for employment and entrepreneurship. We do this by sharing UK and international experience from skills policy and practice; encouraging mobility and exchange for young people, practitioners and policymakers; supporting innovative and sustainable partnership working; and helping to build the capacity of teachers, practitioners and policy-makers so that there is a better fit between skills provision and labour market needs. To date we have worked in over 50 countries

## **CONTENTS**

Section 1: Foreword	2
Section 2: Executive summary	3
Section 3: Background and objectives	6
Section 4: An introduction to the tool and how it was used	11
Section 5: Further development of the tool	14
Section 6: Top-line findings on the benchmarking conducted by country and criteria	17
Section 7: How countries can use the benchmarking tool to shape practical action	23
Section 8: Conclusions	25
Section 9: Recommendations	27
Annex 1: Terms of reference for the I-WORK project	28
Annex 2: The structure of the benchmarking tool	29
Annex 3: Analysis of benchmarking results	30
Annex 4: Action planning using the benchmarking tool	32

## **SECTION 1: FOREWORD**

This report describes the process of designing, piloting and utilising an Apprenticeship System Benchmarking tool to inform improvement in Apprenticeship policy and practice. We are confident this tool is a unique and powerful addition to the support available for countries that are driving systems improvement. Our ambition is that it will be used as a diagnostic instrument for countries to benchmark themselves against both a common objective standard for quality apprenticeships and other countries.

The project has addressed some interesting questions about the development of apprenticeship systems and the value of benchmarking:

- Is there one ideal way to design and run apprenticeship systems that we can capture in a benchmarking tool?
- Are we clear enough about the policy drivers for apprenticeship and how can we capture these?
- Can a benchmarking tool with sufficiently binary responses to allow country comparisons, also provide the stimulus to challenge existing country plans and shape new strategy?

These questions do not have easy answers but through our conversations with governments, industry and fellow international skills development organisations we are confident they were the right ones to consider.

Our ambition is that the on-line Apprenticeship System Benchmarking tool developed for and refined by this project, will now be widely adopted by Governments and agencies that have an interest in building quality apprenticeship systems. We welcome any suggestions or ideas for how we and the global community might further build on this project and approach.

We urge greater international collaboration and mutual endeavour to promote benchmarking and further refine our approach, with the aim of helping countries to objectively view their systems and take the steps needed to make sustainable improvements. We know apprenticeships are vital to improve economic and social outcomes for countries and their citizens and we hope you find this report useful and thought-provoking.

Andy Hall

Senior Consultant, British Council

## **SECTION 2: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Apprenticeships are increasingly recognised by governments as one of the most effective ways to prepare young people for work and to create the pipeline of skill they need to drive their economies. While the concept appears simple, the development and delivery of quality apprenticeship systems is more complex. There are often issues in achieving a coherent policy position, framing enabling legislation, employer engagement and quality delivery shared between employers and public training institutions is challenging and insufficient attention is often paid to monitoring, evaluation and return on investment.

As countries strive to make improvements to their apprenticeship systems, they may adopt practice from some of the leading global players without necessarily considering the cultural fit and can end up with piecemeal solutions that do not deliver quality or meet the scale of their ambitions.

The benchmarking tool, developed and piloted as part of the British Council I-WORK project, offers a new way forward. It has been designed as a diagnostic and action planning instrument for use by countries, without the need for extensive external support, to benchmark their whole system against an objective standard for quality apprenticeship and against other countries, to take an objective view of the strengths and limitations of their model and take action where it can most add value.

The report describes the structure of the benchmarking tool and how it was developed, based on good practice models from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), The European Union, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in the UK. The tool, which has three main sections, 13 main criteria and over 220 self-assessment questions, covers a full range of policy, implementation, monitoring and evaluation issues, including an action planner highlighting strengths, gaps, challenges and areas for practical action. Introduced to the four I-WORK countries (Ghana, India, Malaysia and South Africa) and UK Devolved Government representatives at an international workshop in London in March 2019, the basic framework was well received and provided a good basis for diagnosis and action planning in these diverse countries. The original Word version was adapted into Excel to aid analysis and comparison and an on-line version has subsequently been developed which is now publicly available.<sup>1</sup>

Back in country, National Apprenticeship Experts in the four I-WORK countries then worked with government, employers and TVET stakeholders to complete their benchmarking, identify project options and agree a realistic project plan based on the results of their analysis. It was encouraging that the process worked well in countries with very different levels of system maturity, particularly where a strong country team was in place and had time to work systematically through the process.

Analysis of the results across the four countries showed that the Policy and Implementation sections each had a similar proportion of positive responses. Heat-mapping the results was helpful in drawing out issues. The Monitoring and Evaluation section had the lowest proportion of positive and highest proportion of negative responses.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://britishcouncil2.formstack.com/forms/i\\_work\\_benchmarking\\_tool](https://britishcouncil2.formstack.com/forms/i_work_benchmarking_tool)

There was considerable difference of practice in completing the tool, with more and less optimistic perspectives at play in deciding positive and negative responses and several “Yes” responses were qualified as only “partly in place”. These variations made comparisons between countries more difficult than anticipated using the first version of the tool, although the additional context provided by the action planning section at the end of the analysis helped to overcome this to some extent. The variation is of less consequence on a country by country basis where there was re-assuring evidence of a clear line of sight from benchmarking responses to action plans and project design.

There was debate during the development process about the relative value of seeking binary responses to questions compared with a more discursive approach. We concluded that there was real value in forcing a Yes/No decision against each question, not so much for the answer itself, but because of the debate generated amongst stakeholders, and the priority for attention that emerges from this. Overall, there was strong evidence that benchmarking against a good practice standard has encouraged a wider and more objective analysis of gaps and issues in each country.

Comparative benchmarking between countries also seemed to add value, with strong interest in sharing results and approaches despite there being only a small number of results available. The lesson here was that we needed a better method to allow comparison between countries than was possible using Excel. This led to the on-line version of the tool being designed with a graph function to allow improved comparability on a question by question basis and the opportunity to see an overview of Global trends across the countries involved.

Countries were asked to revise their benchmarking assessments using the on-line version of the tool, based on their increased understanding of their countries system and changes brought about by their project interventions. It was interesting that these changes were both significant and in two cases reduced their overall scores, where research for their project exposed more significant gaps than initially recognised.

Data was also added from England, Switzerland and Scotland to provide sufficient country examples to test the new comparison tools. A second international workshop took place in March 2020 to report on each project, share views about benchmarking and to demonstrate the capability of the on-line version of the tool to draw out helpful and non-judgemental comparisons. Senior TVET experts from leading international organisations expressed strong interest in continuing to develop and implement this new approach.

The report closes with advice for countries on how to use the tool on a facilitated self-assessment basis for “end to end” analysis of their apprenticeship systems and recommendations on the further development of apprenticeship benchmarking.

There does seem to be something unique about this benchmarking approach, pulling together good practice from a wide range of sources to create an objective standard, turning this into a stand-alone diagnostic instrument to provoke debate, comparison and objective judgement of strengths and issues and then, action planning to draw out context, conclusions and forward steps.

Our challenge was to design a tool that allowed the richness of detail required to form action plans at an individual country level whilst providing a sufficiently binary structure to provoke debate and decision as well as allowing high level international comparisons. Perhaps the main lesson from the project has been that while benchmarking has been valuable in helping countries draw comparisons to learn what works in quality apprenticeship development, the I-WORK countries have gained most value from using the benchmarking tool to support facilitated self-assessment of their own system, helping them to take a “helicopter view” and stimulating open debate about strengths and gaps in their approach against an objective and non-judgemental standard.

Given the hugely encouraging response from those who have been involved in its development, we are confident that the I-WORK benchmarking tool has the potential to be a game-changer in the analysis and development of apprenticeship systems across the world. We welcome your views on it.

## **SECTION 3: BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES**

This is the second of two reports describing the outcomes of Strand 2 of the I-WORK project. It is a technical report that describes the development and implementation of a benchmarking tool and process in support of the development of quality apprenticeships in the four Official Development Assistance (ODA) Countries, (Ghana, India, Malaysia & South Africa). It is designed for policy leads, national and international thought leaders and government or institutional leaders in education and business who have a specific interest in apprenticeships and Human Capital Development who wish to have a more detailed understanding of how benchmarking tools and processes can support the development of quality apprenticeship systems. It is designed to complement the main impact report for Strand 2 of the I-WORK project. The Terms of Reference for I-WORK are at Annex 1. The I-WORK apprenticeships strand was designed to:

Research, benchmark and provide technical assistance to improve the policy and provision of apprenticeships in the participating countries. Working with government TVET Authorities and key other actors to benchmark the current systems, identify areas for improvement and design and deliver technical assistance projects to improve apprenticeship policy, management and delivery in the identified areas. This project is designed to provide an opportunity to share innovation and approaches across, Ghana, India, Malaysia, South Africa and the UK and create a shared experience in developing policy and practice.

The apprenticeship strand was designed on the principal of “adaptive management for the purpose of working with complex systems”, taking an action research approach to project development. Knowing that each country’s system would be at a different stage of development and include different initiatives, the project was designed to allow comparison of practice and approaches across the countries involved and create a platform to support developments in key areas of interest. The intention was that national partners should shape the project as it evolved and ensure alignment with the most important issues as they saw them.

The report sets out how the benchmarking tool draws on international frameworks and other relevant good practice to facilitate self-assessment by countries of their apprenticeship systems against key aspects of effective apprenticeship policy and implementation. It describes how the character, strengths and challenges of the I-WORK countries systems were identified through this tool in consultation with stakeholders and policy makers and how this analysis was used to shape the development of focused projects designed to support improvements in key aspects of apprenticeships policy and delivery within the time and resource constraints of the project.

The objectives of the report are to:

- Describe the development of the benchmarking tool and how it was tested and deployed in the I-WORK project
- Analyse the top line results of the benchmarking and discuss why international comparison is useful for systems
- Elaborate on how countries can use the tool to shape practical action to change their approach
- Provide conclusions and recommendations for the global apprenticeship community on how to best use the tool and to stimulate debate.



### Why and how the tool was developed

The development of quality apprenticeships systems is an issue of huge importance for governments across the globe. They know that Apprenticeships are one of the most powerful tools available to them to build the skills pipelines they need to fuel economic growth and prepare young people for sustainable employment. Apprenticeships are unique in the way they connect government to industry, support a skills ecosystem that is driven by employer need, strengthen training provider capacity and systematically builds individual's skills to meet employer defined standards of competence.

Whilst apprenticeships appear relatively simple on the surface, the reality is rather different. They are complex interlinked systems that rely on a number of major stakeholders working together in new ways to deliver programmes that may be unfamiliar and against expectations of quality and scale that may be hard to achieve.

In this environment it is all too easy for countries to rely on the expertise of donors who may wish to impose "cut and paste" solutions from their own culture. The risk is that can lead to culturally inappropriate solutions and fragmentation of delivery on the ground.

The British Council has never believed this was a sensible way forward. The ambition of the UK and of this project, is that we develop objective and practical tools to help categorise and diagnose the effectiveness of current approaches and, that with partner countries, we take realistic steps forward based on clear sighted analysis of their priorities.

Simon Perryman was appointed to support the project as the "global apprenticeship expert" in January 2019, to lead on the development of a self-assessment benchmarking tool for apprenticeship systems, support countries in formulating projects that can improve areas of their apprenticeship system and provide advice on the design and delivery of the technical assistance activities informed by the benchmarking

It was necessary to design a pilot benchmarking tool quickly so that it could be discussed and tested at an International Workshop in London in March 2019 involving the four countries together with TVET policy makers from across the UK governments and international agencies. Each country was asked to use the tool to undertake an analysis of their own system, using a national steering group to form a national consensus on the key issues emerging. Other analysis tools were then used to consider project options and identify the most effective intervention given project time and resource constraints. Projects were agreed in May 2019 to be completed by February 2020.

The following design parameters were agreed for the Benchmarking Tool:

- To cover the breadth of the apprenticeship process including policy and implementation
- A tool with sufficient detail to allow countries to undertake detailed analysis against a clear standard for quality apprenticeship
- A tool that was sufficiently "binary" in terms of choices, to stimulate debate and facilitate comparative benchmarking between countries
- An intuitive tool that would not require detailed guidance to deploy
- Able to work in different country contexts and at different levels of system maturity
- Helping countries to take an objective view of their systems, while avoiding judgement.

The development process began with a detailed review of existing apprenticeship benchmarking tools and frameworks and consideration of how the most relevant aspects of each could be used to inform the development of the British Council benchmarking tool.

The most significant tools and frameworks identified were:

- The ILO Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships, Volume 1: A Guide for Policy Makers<sup>2</sup>
- Apprenticeships for the XXI Century: A model for Latin America and the Caribbean? IADB<sup>3</sup>
- The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships<sup>4</sup>

It was also helpful to consider the revised Common Inspection Framework<sup>5</sup> from the UK Office for Standards and Education (Ofsted), which was being tested in draft form in Spring 2019. This uses a “3I” concept, (Intent, Implementation and Impact), as a way of framing the overall inspection and review process for Schools and Colleges:

**Figure 1: The 3 I concept**

The 3 I concept	
Intent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy, context and positioning</li> <li>• Purpose, objectives, accountability and ambition</li> </ul>
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum design</li> <li>• Quality of teaching and learning</li> <li>• Assessment and testing</li> </ul>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attainment, progression</li> <li>• Sustainable jobs</li> </ul>

The ILO policy model is constructed around 6 building blocks which provided a strong foundation for the Policy section of the Tool:

**Figure 2: The ILO policy model**

The ILO Policy Model	
Meaningful social dialogue	Equitable funding arrangements
A robust regulatory framework	Strong labour market relevance
Clear roles and responsibilities	Inclusiveness

<sup>2</sup> The ILO Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships, Volume 1: A Guide for Policy Makers, Nov. 2017. The ILO has subsequently published a second volume of the guide, focussed on implementation. This was not available at the time the Benchmarking Tool was being developed. [https://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS\\_607466/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_607466/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Apprenticeships for the XXI Century: A model for Latin America and the Caribbean? IDB, Fazio, Fernandez and Ripiani, Oct. 2016 <https://publications.iadb.org/en/apprenticeships-xxi-century-model-latin-america-and-caribbean>

<sup>4</sup> The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, European Union, March 2018 [c.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/content/european-framework-quality-and-effective-apprenticeships](http://c.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/content/european-framework-quality-and-effective-apprenticeships)

<sup>5</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/822103/Further\\_education\\_and\\_skills\\_handbook\\_July\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/822103/Further_education_and_skills_handbook_July_2019.pdf)

The IADB apprenticeship model is based around 10 Steps for Action:

**Figure 3: IADB 10 steps for action**

IDB 10 Steps for action	
1	Alignment with country development strategies
2	Adequate governance arrangements,
3	High levels of employer engagement
4	Appropriate funding and incentive structures
5	Robust curriculum design
6	Robust curriculum delivery
7	Robust assessment methodologies that are relevant to the occupation in which the apprentice is being trained
8	Certification and opportunities for further progression for the apprentice
9	Suitable support in the form of apprenticeship career services for apprentices
10	Strong quality assurance mechanisms

The EU Quality Apprenticeships Criteria model offers a slightly different perspective focussing on two main areas, criteria for learning and working conditions and criteria for framework conditions:

**Figure 4: EU criteria for learning and working conditions**

Criteria for learning and working conditions:	Criteria for framework conditions:
Written contract	Regulatory framework
Learning outcomes	Involvement of social partners
Pedagogical support	Support for companies
Workplace component	Flexible pathways and mobility
Pay and/or compensation	Career guidance and awareness raising
Social protection	
Work, health and safety conditions	

It was agreed to build the Benchmarking Tool around a similar three-part structure to that of the Ofsted 3i model:

- Policy (effectively the intent of Apprenticeship system design)
- Implementation
- Monitoring and Evaluation (to identify outcomes and impacts)

## SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY APPRENTICESHIPS

The most relevant elements of each different model were considered and brought together to create a structure based on 13 overall criteria and 49 more detailed characteristics, (21 for Policy, 20 for Implementation and 8 for Monitoring and evaluation).

The 13 criteria are set out in Fig. 5. The full framework is illustrated at Annex 2.

**Figure 5: The 13 overall criteria**

Policy	Implementation	Monitoring and Evaluation
Purpose and Positioning	Employer Engagement	Quality Assurance
Social Partnership	Designing and Delivering Labour Market Relevant Apprenticeships	Positive Outcomes and Impact
Roles and Responsibilities	Teaching and Learning	Learning and Improving
Regulatory Framework	Assessment and Certification	
Funding and Incentives	Public Awareness	

## SECTION 4: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOL AND HOW IT WAS USED

The page of the pilot tool shown at Figure 5 illustrates the basic design and layout of the Benchmarking Tool.

The actual tool was presented in A3 landscape format. The 13 Criteria and 48 Characteristics discussed above, form the first two columns of the document. There is then a detailed set of self- assessment questions designed to test each of the main characteristics.

The areas of questioning were drawn from each of the models discussed above, but the questions were designed to be as specific as possible and force a clear and objective conclusion.

Higher level questions seek whether there is “strong evidence” of an attribute, whether policies and issues are “clearly defined”, and whether specific “mechanisms in place”. These are followed by more detailed questions to clarify specific detail such as, “who has primary responsibility for this” with a drop-down list of options or “does this define” a, b or c. This is quite different from tools that ask a smaller number of more general questions.

The third column provides for a binary Yes/No response to each question. This is to press respondents to establish a clear position on each issue. It is also important to allow for analysis and comparison of responses between countries.

The next two columns to the right side of the tool allow respondents to amplify their Yes/No responses, to note any general comments about the relevance or effectiveness of specific questions and record evidence to support their analysis

Figure 6: Pilot benchmarking

Criteria	Characteristics	Self-assessment questions	Y / N	Country response	Comment and reflection	Existing projects	
<b>Policy</b>							
Purpose, Positioning and Leadership	Strategy/Ambition - scale of programme, targets and desired outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there Evidence of a clear a national <b>strategy</b> for apprenticeship?</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who publishes this?</li> <li>Ministry of Education?</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Industry?</li> <li>Other, (who)?</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does this sit within or link to a wider <b>TVET or other government strategy</b>?</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a clearly defined and widely understood difference between Apprenticeship and other forms of work-based learning such as Internship, Learnership, Traineeship/pre-apprenticeship and job placement?</li> </ul>					
		Are <b>targets</b> set which demonstrate the <b>ambition</b> for apprenticeship including:					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starts/registrations?</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completions?</li> <li>Timely completions?</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drop out?</li> <li>Qualifications obtained?</li> </ul>					
		Numbers by:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of apprenticeship?</li> </ul>							

The apprenticeship experts appointed in each I-WORK country were consulted about the pilot tool as it was developed. Advice was also sought from senior government TVET officials in each of the 4 nations of the UK together with the ILO, the Global Apprenticeship Network (GAN), including to ask them to pilot test the tool and attend the March workshop in London.

The teams<sup>6</sup> from each country were briefed at the start of the workshop on latest apprenticeship policy developments in the UK and internationally, together with clarification about the timetable and next steps in developing and taking forward their I-WORK projects. Teams were then advised about on the development of the pilot benchmarking tool and asked to work together in country teams to test the tool in practice.

The teams found little difficulty in understanding or using the tool as the basis for their discussion on the key characteristics of their apprenticeship models. Each team used the tool in a slightly different way, but all were very positive about its potential in helping them to order their thinking and take a comprehensive look at the quality of their apprenticeship systems.

Feedback from the teams indicated that while benchmarking identified areas they already knew to be problems, it helped them to set these in a wider context and to also see issues they had not previously considered. A strength of the tool is that it forces a comprehensive and objective review where each issue is considered equally and there is less of a tendency to be attracted to fashionable issues and solutions.

Feedback included the need to refine specific questions to improve clarity, to remove some degree of repetition in questioning and to add tables to assist the collection of data. The most challenging issue was expecting recipients to agree a Yes/No response to each question.

South Africa asked that the Country Response column should be modified to allow qualification of responses using “substantially/partly/not in place”. A further column was requested to allow respondents to catalogue existing initiatives to reform their system and to note possible areas for project development. These changes were added to the post workshop version of the benchmarking tool.

Following the workshop, country teams from Ghana, Malaysia and South Africa continued to develop their benchmarking analysis, with support from the international consultant, and agreed a final version with their steering group. South Africa and Malaysia both used the tool as initially envisaged, making full use of the structure and closely following the logic and flow of the questions. Their use of the Yes/No questions was coherent with the more detailed comments they added to the form. Ghana used the tool in a more flexible way, adding additional detail. For India, the exercise started later, given country elections and the time it took to set up arrangements with the State finalised to work with. Subsequently, Punjab was designated as the lead and in consultation with them, the national expert began to develop the benchmarking analysis. This was more fully refined and completed towards the end of project period.

Leading advisers from the Governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also completed the tool to provide comparative analysis from nations in the UK. The benchmarking work was repeated in each country at the end of the project period in February 20, this time using a refined on-line benchmarking tool

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<sup>6</sup> India was only able to send one person, their apprenticeship expert, to this first meeting

## SECTION 5: FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOOL

Having tested the tool at the March 2019 workshop in London and made some minor adjustments to improve usability, it was agreed to move to an Excel based version of the tool. This was developed in parallel to countries finalising their individual analysis and required retrofitting of country data into the Excel version from the final Word versions they had completed. Further development then brought the final version for each country together into an All Country Excel model to allow for easier comparison and analysis, see Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: All country excel spreadsheet

SOUTH AFRICA				INDIA				GHANA				MALAYSIA					
Self-Assessment Questions	Y / N	Country Comments and reflections (substantially/ partly /not yet in place)	Existing/ Potential Projects and Initiatives	Self-Assessment Questions	Y / N	Country response (substantially/ partly /not yet in place)	Comments and reflection Projects and Initiatives	Self-Assessment Questions	Y / N	Country response (substantially/ partly /not yet in place)	Comments and reflections	Existing/ Potential Projects and Initiatives	Self-Assessment Questions	Y / N	Country response and reflections (substantially/ partly /not yet in place)	Comments and reflection Projects and Initiatives	
POLICY				POLICY				POLICY				PURPOSE, POLICY AND LEADERSHIP					
Is there Evidence of a clear national strategy for apprenticeship?	Y	Substantially called a National Artisan Development Strategy, but it is the basis for modern development of 21 <sup>st</sup> Century (A21 – Refer Gazette 41704.	Centres of Specialisation (COS-Strategy, but it is a National Development Plan (NDP) National Skills Development Plan (NSDP)	Is there Evidence of a clear national strategy for apprenticeship?	Y	India has a dedicated Apprenticeship Policy 1961 which was amended and brought into its implementation phase in 2014. Apprenticeship has been mandated under law for all establishments having more than 5 employees (including contractual employees) to engage apprentices.		Is there Evidence of a clear national strategy for apprenticeship?	Y	Ghana has not developed a national strategy for apprenticeship but has TVET documents that spell out strategies for apprenticeship development.	Government is committed to transformation and has established an agency responsible for coordination of TVET. Formulation of a national apprenticeship policy is necessary. National Vocational Training Institute has a policy for apprenticeship.	There are projects such as SKILLSUP by ILO, GSDI by GIZ, REP by IFAD/AIDB, Ghana TVET Voucher Project (GTVP) by KfW, and JICA Projects	Is there Evidence of a clear national strategy for apprenticeship?	N	PARTIAL	Fragmented by different stakeholders.	NDTS, HRDF7, WBL, ZUZI, Polytechnic KPI success factor 75%, WBL mode by 2020 (currently at 30%), DSD and HRDF under MOHR. Not available for partnership programme

Later in 2019 the British Council decided to further develop the tool in an on-line format to support comparative benchmarking of apprenticeship systems on an international basis. This has moved the tool on from a prototype format to a more professional presentation that can be made available on a wider basis with more structured guidance to lead the user through the benchmarking questions in systematic way.

Formstack was chosen as the platform for this new version because it offered the necessary structure and simplicity whilst remaining open access for clients of the system.<sup>7</sup>

Having built a basic form of the on-line tool, considerable work was then required to refine specific questions, remove repetition and build in multiple choice options to facilitate use. It was clear that a more “binary” approach would be required than for the prototype, using clear choices between Yes and No answers. Without this constraint, it would be very difficult to make clear comparisons and highlight differences between countries. The end result is illustrated at Figures 7 and 8.

<sup>7</sup> [https://britishcouncil2.formstack.com/forms/i\\_work\\_benchmarking\\_tool](https://britishcouncil2.formstack.com/forms/i_work_benchmarking_tool)




Figure 8: On-line benchmarking tool

**I-WORK BENCHMARKING TOOL**

Thank you for visiting the British Council apprenticeship system benchmarking tool.

As apprenticeships assume ever more importance across the globe we wanted to provide a space to compare practice and policy in different countries. There is no one, right, way to run an apprenticeship system but what we hope this tool does is illustrate the choices you have made and allow you to compare your approach with that of other nations. The answers you submit will be added to the database of available information from countries around the world and we hope will show how your system compares to others, what areas have been comprehensively implemented and what gaps might exist for further development. Please note that the British Council cannot be held responsible for the answers submitted, these will be the interpretation of the individual completing the questionnaire, we would ask that you are as rigorous in your considerations as you would wish others to be. We reserve the right to exclude submissions from the global report updates if they are inaccurate or incomplete.



This should take around an hour to complete and once submitted we will send you a link to your report and our global report so you can compare with other countries. Your results may also be added to future versions of the global update to broaden the depth of comparative data.

We would advise you to review a full list of the questions [here](#) before completing the tool so that you can make sure you have the relevant information to hand. We do hope this is useful and our team would be delighted to speak with you further about the results and any areas you are looking to develop as a result of this exercise. This tool will evolve so if you have any suggestions for how it could be improved please do get in touch with us.

The British Council would like to use the information you provide for the purposes of research and service improvement. We may use your contact details to send you research materials such as questionnaires or surveys. We do this in our legitimate interest.

However, you can choose not to participate by contacting [skills@britishcouncil.org](mailto:skills@britishcouncil.org).

**Data Protection**

The British Council complies with data protection law in the UK and laws in other countries that meet internationally accepted standards. You have the right to ask for a copy of the information we hold on you, and the right to ask us to correct any inaccuracies in that information. If you have concerns about how we have used your personal information, you also have the right to complain to a privacy regulator. For detailed information, please refer to the privacy section of our website, [www.britishcouncil.org/privacy](http://www.britishcouncil.org/privacy) or contact your local British Council office. We will keep your information for a period of 7 years from the time of collection.

Figure 9: Example questions

17-) What are the stated aims of apprenticeship policy? Is your approach primarily positioned as:

- An educational reform
- A social reform
- An industrial skills / productivity issue
- A combination
- Unclear

18-) Who decides on the aims of the apprenticeships policy?

19-) Are these aims clearly set out in a plan?

- Yes
- No

For this question and other we understand that providing a definitive answer may not be straightforward in a binary sense, however we hope that the exercise of considering this is useful in and of itself. We would guide you that answering 'yes' generally should mean that it is in place (not being developed unless the questions specifies that) and commonly used or implemented by the intended target audience

20-) Are apprenticeships primarily focussed on:

- The employability of young people between ages of 18 - 24?
- Supporting skills development of adults in the workplace?
- Both

## SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY APPRENTICESHIPS

30-) What are the forums for engagement?

- Public consultation
- Workshops
- Round table discussion
- Online
- Other:

If Other, please specify.

31-) Which groups are consulted and roughly how often?

	Constantly	Regularly	Occasionally	Hardly ever	Never
Employers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Colleges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Independent training providers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chambers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Leaders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trade bodies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sector Skills Councils	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trade Unions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Learning from experience with the pilot, consideration was given to how to minimise distortion from countries choosing to interpret a Yes answer in different ways. This has led to changes in question design to clarify the meaning of a Yes and the use of some multiple-choice answers including limited use of a “to some extent” option to improve consistency and reliability of the data. This new version has been pilot tested by asking the I-WORK countries to re-run their benchmarking analysis as their projects came to a close in February 2020. International experts have also completed the on-line tool for Scotland and Switzerland with the British Council offering a tentative analysis for England to provide some comparative data for demonstration purposes at an international workshop in London on 6 March 2020 where it attracted considerable interest. The British Council would welcome offers to test and trial this new version of the tool and advice on how best it can be developed further as a unique vehicle for comparative end to end benchmarking and analysis of country apprenticeship systems.

## SECTION 6: TOP-LINE FINDINGS ON THE BENCHMARKING CONDUCTED BY COUNTRY AND CRITERIA

The results of this benchmarking work have been analysed to examine what patterns and overall lessons can be drawn from response data from the four countries, comparing their original assessment using the Word prototype tool and their revised assessment using the on-line tool in February 2020 and by comparing this to the overall conclusions drawn by each country in a more discursive form in the Action Planning section at the end of the tool.

Ideally, there would be a strong correlation between the raw data and the countries summary assessments.

### Analysis of responses

Analysis involved preparing a grid which drew together the total number of “Yes” responses by each country for each section of the benchmarking tool and then adding up the totals for the three main areas of the tool, Policy, Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation. This was compared with the results from revised country assessments as a percentage of “Yes” to the total number of relevant answers, see Figure 10. A more detailed category analysis was also generated where results above 50% are shown as green. The results are at Annex 4<sup>8</sup>.

**Figure 10: Summary showing percentage of “Yes” responses**

Country and main benchmarking category	Initial “Yes” responses using Word tool March- May 19	Revised “Yes” responses using On-line Tool February 20
<b>Policy</b>	<b>126 Questions</b>	<b>76 Questions with a Y/N reply</b>
S Africa	89%	75%
Ghana	55%	73%
Malaysia	39%	37%
India (Punjab)	52%	50%
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>77 Questions</b>	<b>63 Questions with a Y/N reply</b>
S Africa	96%	81%
Ghana	57%	78%
Malaysia	57%	44%
India (Punjab)	30%	49%
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	<b>23 Questions</b>	<b>23 Questions with a Y/N reply</b>
S Africa	61%	65%
Ghana	74%	96%
Malaysia	30%	52%
India (Punjab)	17%	70%

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that not all questions called for Yes/No responses. Some were seeking numerical information. Countries interpreted this differently and some chose to also mark the Yes/No box. This was a flaw in the pilot questionnaire design and was corrected in the on-line analysis. It should also be noted that not every Yes response indicates a strength of the system. Some, such as “is there a legal requirement for employers to take apprentices” could be interpreted as a strength or an issue. For the sake of simplicity, Yes has been taken as a positive for the purpose of this analysis

It is important to note that at this early stage before yes and no were clearly defined the subjective classification of each criteria needs to be treated with caution. A higher % of yes answers does not correlate to a stronger system at this stage.

This analysis shows that South Africa initially identified many positives in its policy environment and moderated this slightly in their revised analysis. Ghana and India both initially assessed about half their policy responses as positive, with Ghana increasing this substantially on revision. Malaysia identified more areas for policy development than the other countries in both versions of their analysis. On implementation, South Africa identified many positives initially and moderated this slightly at second use. Ghana and Malaysia were initially similar but diverged at second use. Punjab used the tool with increasing clarity in the course of the project and has moved closer to the average. On monitoring and evaluation, South Africa and Ghana reported a high number of positives with Malaysia and Punjab identifying more positives at second analysis.

In more detail, South Africa indicated a positive environment for apprenticeships with only one area at less than 70% positive. They moderated their scores in their second analysis, especially on roles and responsibilities and teaching and learning.

Ghana's initial results were also very positive, but with development needed in their policy environment. Their revised analysis reflects considerable improvement in policy responses and public awareness as a result of their I-WORK project on apprenticeship policy development.

Malaysia highlighted a range of policy, implementation and monitoring gaps. Positive areas at first use included funding and incentives, designing and delivering quality apprenticeships and quality assurance. Less strong areas were, purpose and positioning, regulatory framework, assessment and certification, public awareness, measuring positive outcomes and impact and learning and improving. Their revised analysis shows significant shifts with less positive results for roles and responsibilities, funding and incentives, employer engagement, quality assurance and sharply better results for their regulatory framework and assessment and certification.

Initial results for India (Punjab) show a number of positive areas relating to policy development, but with challenges in relation to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Their analysis necessarily had a lot of gaps at this early stage. Their revised analysis was much more positive about all aspects of implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

A further level of analysis was then used to compare these benchmarking findings with countries own analysis of strengths, gaps and challenges in the final Action Planning section of the benchmarking tool. Each country drew on the issues highlighted in their report to identify a range of possible areas of focus for their I-WORK projects. The tool defines strengths as:

- “areas where systems and processes are substantively in place and there is evidence that they are working effectively.”

Gaps and challenges are defined as:

- “areas where there is less evidence that systems and processes are effective.”

Three countries chose to use this final section of the tool. Malaysia chose instead to use a colour coding system throughout the tool with Green and Yellow highlighting areas for development. The detailed results for each country are set out at Annex 5. It is interesting to consider whether this approach was a strength or a weakness. Initially it felt problematic because their data lacked the action plan detail that gives important context to the raw results, but on reflection the use of a colour coding system by Malaysia could be considered as innovative and indirectly led to the idea of developing a heatmap of all the data for analysis purposes.

These options were then further refined through country workshops, using “Problem Tree” analysis as part of a suite of project definition and management tools supplied by the British Council. The final projects were reviewed by the consultant and the British Council before being ratified by the National Advisory Committee in each country.

When we compare the benchmarking data analysis against the more detailed country commentary in their Action Plans, it is encouraging to see broadly complimentary outcomes. South Africa highlights many areas of strength, but it is interesting to see how many detailed gaps and areas for development are highlighted. This would seem to show a country where they are able to confirm much of the policy and most operational arrangements are in place, but the tool has helped them to reflect on further points of refinement and development and in particular, to work to reinforce clarity about respective roles and responsibilities of the actors in the system. They said:

“the benchmarking tool and process, underpinned by the subsequent problem tree analysis, allowed for progressive, simple mechanism to identify the most pressing need in the country for the role out of its quality apprenticeship system – to get all the stakeholders onto the “same page... It helped us focus on one thing that was seriously missing and to focus on what needs to be done”.

Ghana’s action planning highlights a set of gaps and areas for development that look much more substantial than might initially emerge from data analysis. For example, they highlight the operation of the traditional apprenticeship system for the informal sector as a strength, but emphasise the need to “incorporate apprenticeship both in the formal, informal and non-formal sector”, arguing the need for a national apprenticeship policy, addressing “fragmentation and multiplicity of programmes” and tackling “a lack of co-ordination amongst TVET stakeholders”. The lesson here is that context is very important in understanding and interpreting raw benchmarking data. The difference between an effective traditional model of apprenticeship and Ghana’s aspiration for a new apprenticeship model for the future, helps understanding of why they mark many policy questions as Yes whilst arguing the priority need for a national apprenticeship policy. They said:

“Promoting quality apprenticeship hinges on a National Apprenticeship Policy that provides a framework to streamline the design and implementation of training apprentices in Ghana”.

India (Punjab) presents a further challenge in the sense that the benchmarking tool is being applied at the level of a single state, whilst at the same time reflecting broader national policy. The positive policy environment they record, reflects much recent work to redefine apprenticeship laws at national level and to push through a major programme of reform. The focus of this project on Punjab was because India as a whole is too large and disparate for a project of this kind, which is better suited to intervening at State level. Specifically, the difference between National and State level implementation provides context which helps to bring the data from India to life. They said:

*“The state of Punjab has a strong resolve to strengthen the implementation of the Apprenticeship Policy. It is for this purpose that the State joined hands with the I-Work project to take a “360 degree” approach to institutionalising the apprenticeship system and commence work on a few mutually agreed priority areas. This partnership will enable the State to improve the image and bring about a positive perception towards apprenticeship and ensure stakeholder participation”.*

*“We used the benchmarking tool as a self- assessment tool. It has developed as we were going ahead. We tried to learn through it as much as possible. It’s a great learning tool for us”.*

Malaysia recorded the lowest percentage of “Yes” responses under the Policy criteria, a reducing number under implementation and an increase under Monitoring and Evaluation due to a marked upwards shift in their positive outcomes and impact scores. Most of the policy questions were initially judged to be “partly in place”, whether or not they are scored as a Yes or a No. This reflects a concern about fragmentation of policy responsibility and practice between different agencies of government and other stakeholders. There is a sense of making Yes/ No decisions on fairly fine margins and setting quite a high bar for recording a Yes. For the Implementation criteria, there is also a mix of Yes and No answers that reflect issues “partially in place”, but there are more clearly defined Nos that mean “not yet in place”. The Monitoring criteria responses are mainly quite distinct in the sense of being “substantially in place” or “not in place”. Understanding this context helps us to understand why Malaysia chose to focus their project on Implementation issues, where there were an interlinked series of gaps relating to employer engagement that could be realistically addressed through the project, rather than on trying to tackle policy fragmentation which would have been an unrealistic objective given time and cost constraints. They said:

*“due to the fragmented and rapidly changing landscape of TVET in Malaysia, it seemed to be more realistic to focus our efforts on a subject that would stand the test of time i.e. employer engagement. Through feedback given to us in the stakeholder workshops, employer engagement seemed to be a universal issue that affects every range of apprenticeships course offered in Malaysia, from handcrafts to manufacturing”.*

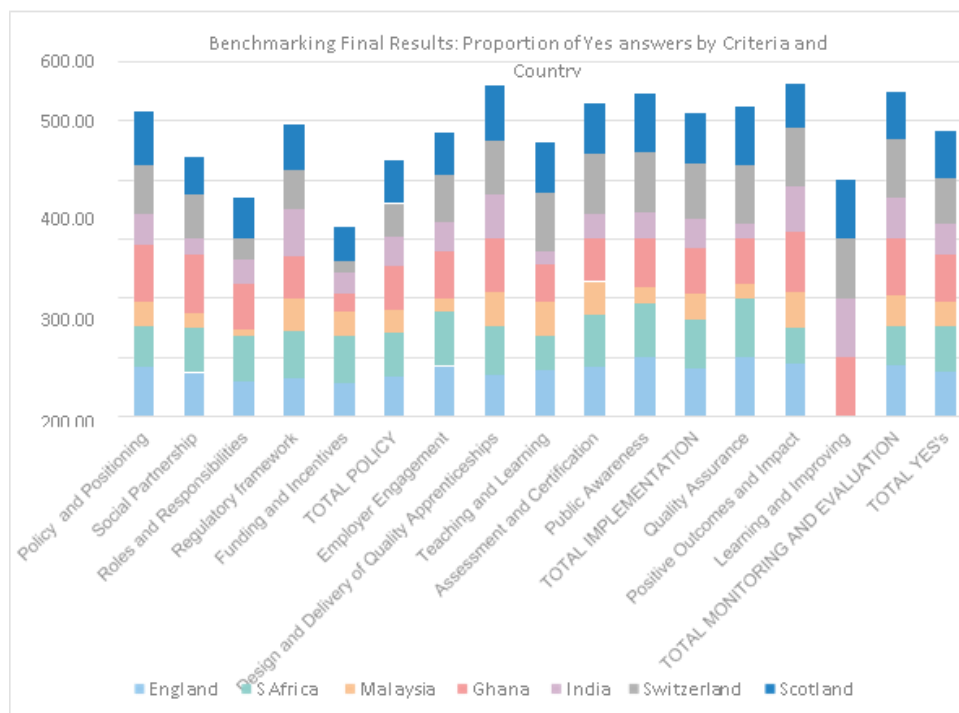
The cases discussed here show how one has to be careful in overanalysing the raw data from the benchmarking tool and that context is very important. Fine margins can tip an answer from a Yes to a No and different people can have different expectations of what a Yes means. On this evidence, it would be dangerous to assume, for example, that the system in Ghana is stronger than that in Malaysia even though it has a higher proportion of Yes responses. It just means they are different systems and are assessed through different eyes. The positive is that, taken in the round, the analysis at Annex 4 does provide a useful picture of the strengths, gaps and challenges faced by each country and would seem to demonstrate that benchmarking using a fairly binary approach can yield valuable results provided it is supported by some contextual narrative. Being seen to set a high bar could also be a real strength for the system as it develops, encouraging others to challenge themselves before scoring a yes and encouraging a more rigorous appraisal process.

The on-line tool has been designed to help overcome some of the inherent weaknesses of the initial benchmarking approach and in particular to allow more effective comparison between countries.

## SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY APPRENTICESHIPS

Figure 11 shows the way in which on-line data can be presented to draw out general conclusions from the whole population of countries data. In this case, it is interesting to see which areas of the tool get a higher and lower proportion of “Yes” answers. This is only a very small sample, including the four I-WORK countries plus England, Scotland and Switzerland, but makes the general point. Funding and incentives and roles and responsibilities come out as lowest because the percentage of “Yes” scores for these categories, from each country, is lower than say for policy and positioning. The relative heights of the bars in each column show the difference in percentage scores between countries for each country. The maximum height of each column is 100 x the number of countries, in this case 700.

**Figure 11: Presentation of sample data in the on-line system**



The on-line tool then lets us compare on a question by question basis to show more detailed analysis. Figure 12 illustrates this.

**Figure 12: More detailed comparative analysis using the on-line benchmarking tool**



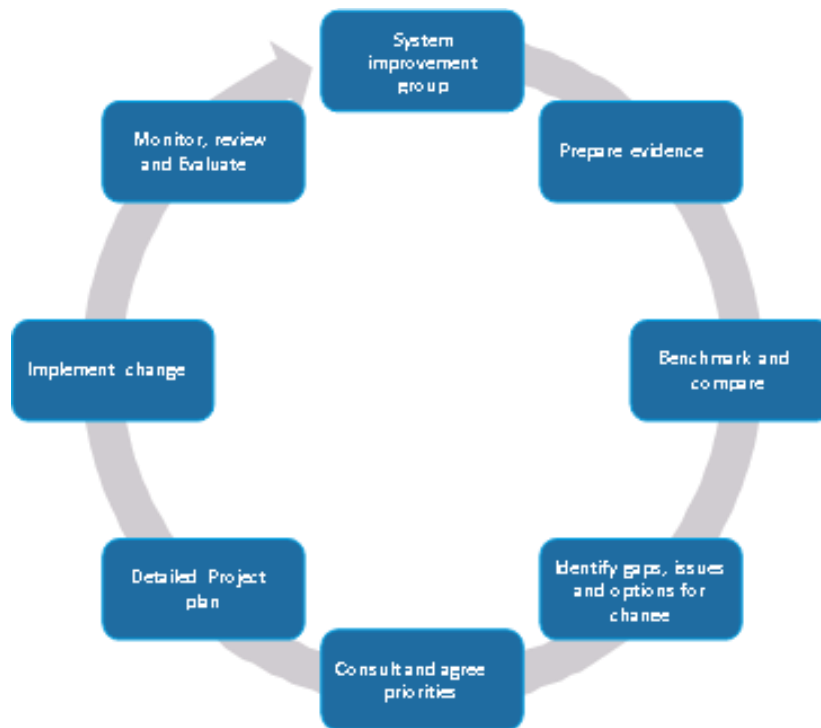
Once the number of participating countries grows, the value of this analysis will increase considerably. At this stage it simply shows what is possible. As a country using the tool, it will be possible to see which other countries are facing similar challenges or have developed successful solutions at a general level and then, as your country analysis begins to highlight specific areas for attention, to be able to explore responses to individual questions in more detail. It will of course be important to continue to recognise the degree of “optimism bias” that may be built into the responses of specific countries and the influence of culture and politics. A full list of the results is available in *“A comparative analysis of results from the Apprenticeship Benchmarking tool”* available to countries who complete the tool themselves.



## SECTION 7: HOW COUNTRIES CAN USE THE BENCHMARKING TOOL TO SHAPE PRACTICAL ACTION

Given the experience and learning that has emerged from the I-WORK project, an eight-step process is recommended to help countries review the quality and effectiveness of their current apprenticeship system or to begin the process of apprenticeship systems design. This is set out in Figure 13 and 14 below.

**Figure 13: Benchmarking for systems improvement**



**Figure 14: Guidelines to support benchmarking for systems improvement**

<p><b>Step 1: Set up an Improvement Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set up a small team of people who are committed to system improvement and can bring leadership, balance and objectivity to the process</li><li>• An apprenticeship expert to facilitate the work, gather evidence and provide insight</li><li>• A wider steering group or committee to gain buy in to the process and commit to taking the necessary change actions with government backing at the highest level.</li></ul> <p><b>Step 2: Prepare evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An initial workshop to scope the work, examine the structure of the benchmarking tool and agree to its use.</li><li>• Work as a team and with the apprenticeship expert, to gather evidence and data about each of the 13 main criteria that make up the tool.</li></ul> <p><b>Step 3: Benchmark and Compare</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete the benchmarking tool on-line, challenging each other about whether there is strong evidence that each question can be answered positively and ensuring you have consensus about your responses.</li><li>• Compare your assessment with the on-line benchmarking data from other countries that have similar characteristics. Are they addressing similar issues? Does the pattern of your responses seem about right compared with others?</li></ul> <p><b>Step 4: Identify Gaps and Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review your full set of responses for each main section of the tool (Policy, Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation) and then draw together an overall Action Plan that identifies:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Strengths</li><li>○ Gaps and challenges</li><li>○ Existing and planned initiatives (to avoid duplication of development effort)</li><li>○ Practical opportunities and options for further development</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b>Step 5: Consult and agree priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consult the steering group on your draft benchmarking responses and seek their approval, updating the tool as necessary</li><li>• Debate the possible options for development and where best to start. It is important to untangle cause and effect. Asking why /how questions, or using problem analysis tools, is useful to check you are not just chasing the symptoms of deeper problems</li><li>• Test the options for development with stakeholders and agree with the steering group:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Which are the priorities?</li><li>○ What actions are likely to generate the most positive improvement at ground level for employers, training providers and apprentices?</li><li>○ Which option is most realistic and achievable within time and resource constraints?</li></ul></li><li>• Confirm completion of the on-line tool so that results can be added to the international database for comparison purposes</li></ul> <p><b>Step 6: Develop project plans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss with the British Council how plans and implementation might be developed and use British Council planning tools</li></ul> <p><b>Step 7: Implement change</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drive forward the change programme drawing on advice and support. Be prepared to adjust course as necessary</li></ul> <p><b>Step 8: Monitor, review and evaluate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a process in place to regularly review progress and consider what changes are necessary to the project. Formally evaluate the outcomes and impact of the work including to re-use the benchmarking tool to identify what has changed.</li></ul>
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## **SECTION 8: CONCLUSIONS**

Designing and delivering high quality apprenticeship programmes is a challenge for all countries. Apprenticeships are widely recognised as a powerful tool for economic development, social progression and youth employment. Every country has some outstanding training provision that has characteristics of apprenticeship, whether for its family businesses or high-tech industry. The challenge is incentivising and developing this at a national and regional level to build consistent quality at scale.

Apprenticeships are built from a fairly complex and interrelated set of policies and processes which come together to form one large integrated system. The problem is that systems of this kind are only as good as their weakest point and this can be difficult to pinpoint in the midst of complexity.

There are a number of common challenges:

- Policy can become fragmented, falling between different government ministries and agencies
- There tends to be a focus on volume rather than quality
- Employer engagement can be difficult, affecting the relevance of programmes and quality of delivery
- The regulatory framework can create barriers to engagement
- Sustainable funding is difficult to attain, and incentives can create unintended consequences
- It takes too long to set up apprenticeships and their administration is too slow, stretching the patience of employers
- The importance of high-quality teaching and learning and rigorous quality assurance is central to success, but is often neglected
- There is a tendency not to track progress and outcomes, or measure impact and Return on Investment.

The I-WORK programme has attempted to find a new way to support countries that wish to improve and develop their apprenticeship models, by giving them a benchmarking tool and other diagnostic methods that pick up challenges like the ones listed above, help them to systematically assess the strengths, gaps and challenges with their current approach and then choose appropriate interventions to drive practical and effective change.

We have learned a number of important lessons from this work:

- Benchmarking can be against an agreed standard for “what good looks like” as well as on a comparative basis between countries
- It is important that the standard does not come to be seen as a prescription. It should simply be a series of prompts against which countries form their own policy and implementation decisions. Asking, for example, whether countries have an employer levy, does not imply that levies are necessarily a good thing, simply that their role is worth consideration in shaping a sustainable funding strategy.
- The benchmarking framework developed for this project has been well received by all four countries and two international agencies and the content has required only minor change

- The pilot version did require adjustment to improve the clarity of certain questions, but the non-judgemental approach adopted in the questions has been successful in gaining traction with each country
- There has been discussion running through the project about whether the tool should be more binary in approach; forcing Yes/No answers, or more discursive, allowing flexibility and commentary in responses. We now conclude that both approaches have value and need to work together. The discursive approach is helpful in adding detail and commentary when the tool is used by teams, in country, to consider their own system, but runs the risk of starting from a point where existing bias and preconception can overinfluence the result. The binary approach generates debate and challenge about whether characteristics of a system are really in place and should lead to a more objective analysis which is less influenced by the noise of public debate. The action planning element at the end of the tool has also been important in contextualising the binary data and providing a commentary which connects the binary and discursive data.
- It is not possible to construct an international on-line benchmarking tool in the same way. This needs to be based on a simpler range of responses to allow coding, analysis and presentation on a comparative basis. The challenge is adding in sufficient context material to assist comparison and allow interpretation of the results. From the small sample described in this report, it looks like the inclusion of action plan detail from the tool would be sufficient to provide this context without adding undue complexity.

In general, the design parameters for the benchmarking tool have stood up well through the project. The tool has:

- Covered the breadth of the apprenticeship process including policy and implementation
- Had sufficient detail to allow countries to undertake detailed analysis against a clear standard for quality apprenticeship
- Been sufficiently “binary” in terms of choices, to facilitate comparative benchmarking
- between countries, although context is important
- Operated as an intuitive tool that would not require detailed guidance to deploy, although we would recommend a facilitated approach using external expertise to help maximise the value of benchmarking
- Been able to work in different country contexts and at different levels of system maturity.
- Helped countries to take an objective view of their systems, while avoiding judgement

## **SECTION 9: RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report describes the process of designing, piloting and utilising an Apprenticeship System Benchmarking tool to inform improvement in Apprenticeship policy and practice.

The project provides encouraging evidence that benchmarking helps countries to take a broad and objective view of the effectiveness of each element of their apprenticeship system against a clear quality standard and against other countries, providing them with a strong basis for action planning and programme development.

The I-WORK countries made the following comments at the second international workshop in March 2020, which helpfully sum up views about the benchmarking component of the I-WORK programme:

- “Even if a country does not have some of the components (levy system, stipends etc) the Benchmarking tool helps us to learn and start thinking about these things”
- “The Benchmarking tool is very good for debating specifics. The value is not so much in the content but in the possibility to debate the process”.
- “The Benchmarking tool provides a structure to compare our landscape to the others. It is the basis for comparison of systems of the different countries. All questions about the system are in one place in this benchmarking tool”.
- “It is very important that the benchmarking tool was developed as an online tool. With online benchmarking, we moved from subjectivity to a more objective approach”.

We believe that the initiatives and developments that have come about through I-WORK should encourage more Governments and agencies with an interest in apprenticeship system improvement to use the on-line version of the benchmarking tool to diagnose the strengths and gaps in their approach and to draw comparisons with other countries.

We urge greater international collaboration to promote benchmarking and to debate some wider questions to help us to further refine our approach.

These would include:

- Is there one ideal way to design and run apprenticeship systems that we can capture in a benchmarking tool?
- Are we clear enough about the policy drivers for apprenticeship and how can we capture these?
- Can a benchmarking tool with sufficiently binary responses to allow country comparisons, also provide the stimulus to challenge existing country plans and shape new strategy?
- We recommend that facilitated system wide self-assessment using on-line benchmarking, following the eight-step process set out above, should now be widely adopted to support countries as they develop quality apprenticeships.

## **ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE I-WORK PROJECT**

The I-WORK project will work in four Official Development Aid (ODA) countries, Ghana, India, Malaysia and South Africa, but will disseminate the lessons and practice innovation across the Commonwealth. It will focus on the TVET and apprenticeships sectors. Three result areas which integrate work at system, institution and individual levels are:

Strand 1. Skills training centres implement more effective approaches to skills development which are employer led and more inclusive of disadvantaged groups

Strand 2. Research, benchmark and provide technical assistance to improve the provision of apprenticeships in our target countries. Working with government TVET Authorities we will benchmark the current systems, identify areas for improvement and design, and deliver technical assistance projects to Improve Apprenticeships policy, management and delivery. These projects will aim to address challenges facing systems and skills gaps to improve apprenticeship provision and in-work learning.

Strand 3. We will support the dissemination of lessons and good practice with institutions and policy makers in each country to encourage wider take-up of the practices identified and encourage adoption of good practice. Regional and international forums will provide a platform to share challenges and form networks of leaders from across the participating countries. We will also make materials created available online that can be accessed by representatives from all Commonwealth nations.

## ANNEX 2: THE STRUCTURE OF THE BENCHMARKING TOOL

Policy		Implementation	
Criteria	Characteristics	Criteria	Characteristics
Purpose and positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision/Ambition-scale of programme and desired outcomes</li> <li>• Aims and objectives</li> <li>• Positioning within wider TVET strategy</li> <li>• Links to education and qualifications policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion and engagement strategy</li> </ul>
Social partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue with social partners</li> <li>• Consensus on the aims, objectives and structure of apprenticeships</li> <li>• Agreement on priorities and targets</li> <li>• Agreement on responsibilities and funding</li> <li>• Oversight of delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing and delivering quality apprenticeships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LMI</li> <li>• Standards</li> <li>• Curriculum design</li> <li>• Qualifications</li> <li>• Learning Materials</li> <li>• Delivery mechanism</li> </ul>
Roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity about responsibilities and accountability</li> <li>• Clear communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demanding and coherent programmes, on and off the job</li> <li>• Teaching methodology</li> <li>• Use of technology</li> <li>• Assessing and recording progress</li> <li>• Providing and integrated learning experience</li> <li>• Training provider capacity and facilities</li> <li>• Supporting Apprentices to learn and succeed</li> </ul>
Regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall legal framework</li> <li>• Apprenticeship definition</li> <li>• Definition of responsibilities</li> <li>• Employer obligations</li> <li>• Detailed contractual and other conditions</li> <li>• Updating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and certification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress and final assessment against agreed standards</li> <li>• Skills recognized through NQF</li> </ul>

## ANNEX 3: ANALYSIS OF BENCHMARKING RESULTS

These tables show two examples of the overall results from using the benchmarking tool. The first table shows early responses to the original version of the tool and indicates the percentage of “Yes” responses to total responses for each section of the tool. Colour coding highlights where more than 50% answers are “Yes”.

Analysis of benchmarking: First results with I-WORK countries: (ratio of yes' to total no. of Qs) criteria	Key: >50% yes answers = green			
	S Africa	Ghana	Malaysia	India (Punjab)
	%	%	%	%
<b>Policy</b>				
Total	89	55	39	52
Purpose and positioning	79	55	32	45
Social partnership	84	58	37	26
Roles and responsibilities	94	78	39	61
Regulatory framework	93	52	19	89
Funding and incentives	92	38	71	38
<b>Implementation</b>				
Total	96	57	57	30
Employer engagement	100	62	54	31
Designing and delivering quality apprenticeships	96	79	75	54
Teaching and learning	94	56	67	6
Assessment and certification	100	67	22	33
Public awareness	92	8	38	15
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>				
Total	61	74	30	4
Quality assurance	100	100	100	0
Positive outcomes and impact	53	68	21	5
Learning and improving	100	100	0	0
Overall total	88	58	44	40
% Completion	100	82	95	75



## SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY APPRENTICESHIPS

This second table is drawn from data added to the on-line tool at the end of the projects. It shows the percentage of “Yes” answers to the total of the 162 questions that could be answered Yes or No.

Analysis of final on-line benchmarking results with I-WORK Countries: (ratio of yes' to total no. of Y/N Qs) criteria	Key: >50% green			
	S Africa	Ghana	Malaysia	India (Punjab)
	%	%	%	%
<b>Policy</b>				
Total	75	73	37	50
Purpose and positioning	68	94	42	53
Social partnership	75	100	25	25
Roles and responsibilities	76	76	12	42
Regulatory framework	77	72	56	78
Funding and incentives	78	28	43	36
<b>Implementation</b>				
Total	81	78	44	49
Employer engagement	93	79	21	50
Designing and delivering quality apprenticeships	82	88	59	76
Teaching and learning	57	64	57	21
Assessment and certification	86	71	57	43
Public awareness	91	82	27	45
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>				
Total	65	96	52	70
Quality assurance	100	75	25	25
Positive outcomes and impact	61	100	61	78
Learning and improving	0	100	0	100
Overall total	76	78	42	52
% Completion				

Strengths	
Gaps and challenges	
Practical opportunities for further development	

## ANNEX 4: ACTION PLANNING USING THE BENCHMARKING TOOL

This table shows how each country used the Action Planning section as the end of the benchmarking tool. It uses unedited content drawn directly from their work except in the case of Malaysia.

South Africa	
Strengths	<p>Well-articulated legal framework with new regulations in place that align to national 2030 strategies. Sustainable funding model in place that is linked to employment and economic growth that could be strengthened. Extensive and well-resourced career guidance system in place. Growing public and employer support for modern apprenticeship model that puts the employer in charge of skills development.</p> <p>Strengthening relationships between SETAs and public provider system including TVET Colleges, Community Colleges and University Sector. Centralised quality control system for qualifications development and implementation that is progressively removing an often dysfunctional and duplicating sector-based approach. Growing technical, vocational and occupational learning systems and infrastructure in schooling system. Growing capacity for foundational learning bridging programmes within post school system. Private sector skills development provider capacity and expertise. Increasing number of registered occupational qualifications.</p>
Gaps and challenges	<p>Can be delivered in standardised and effective manner across all sectors by all providers but that allows for flexibility for customisation at implementation level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simpler and more pragmatic policies and processes that allow employers in the formal and informal economy to take up more learners into workplaces with necessary funding support and/or incentives, especially for SMMEs</li> <li>• Qualified and experienced but not certificated staff in SMME's to mentor the apprentice</li> <li>• Increased number of better equipped decentralised accredited assessment centres</li> <li>• Lack of teaching and learning capacity within the entire system in the country, particularly in Technical and Vocational pedagogy</li> <li>• No clear and shared understanding of the entire world of work in South Africa and how both the informal sector, rural community areas or simulated learning opportunities could play a part in expanding the world of work.</li> <li>• Lack of recognition by employers of competencies developed by learners during learning programmes (school and/or post school) that results in an insistence by employers for formal certification (trade test) as the preferred basis of employment or enrolment onto learning programmes – require more credit accumulation recognition.</li> <li>• Not significant enough involvement of enough employers in the system as yet, with the same often large corporate employers continuing to carry the entire system.</li> <li>• Not enough utilisation of skills development data analytics outputs and/or outputs from monitoring and evaluation processes to continually improve the apprenticeship system.</li> </ul>
Practical Opportunities for further development	<p>The above challenges were subjected to a broad discussion/engagement using three filtering criteria proposed at the National Advisory Committee Workshop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on Employment i.e. more apprenticeships</li> <li>• Alignment to current work not new work</li> <li>• Must be a quick win with significant impact</li> </ul> <p>The subsequent discussion indicated that the preferred solution that could over time address all of the above challenges and even more would be a digitally based roles and responsibilities mechanism that ensures that all affected stakeholders know, agree and implement their respective roles but that is flexible to allow for continuous change and revision. It was felt that a start should be made on small prototype or pilot of such a mechanism that could be delivered on within the May 2019 to November 2019 period, but with a clear impact evaluation at pre and post stages of the prototype development process.</p>

## SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY APPRENTICESHIPS

South Africa	
	<p>A detailed problem tree was then developed and shared with panel post the workshop for comments and inputs. The detailed problem tree analysis is attached as Annexure A to the Framework.</p> <p>The final agreed project was to build an online roles and responsibilities mechanism.</p>
Malaysia	
Strengths	<p>Department of Skills development takes charge of the National Dual Training system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One accrediting &amp; certifying body</li> <li>• Existing national occupational skills standards, developed with some industry involvement</li> <li>• Government funding exists to encourage apprenticeships</li> <li>• Levy system exists to aid employers with engaging in apprenticeships</li> </ul>
Gaps and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low employer engagement</li> <li>• Very low learner engagement and marketing of apprenticeship programs</li> <li>• Difficult processes and tedious application processes</li> <li>• Inconsistent funding from government</li> <li>• Lack of general awareness of apprenticeships as a suitable higher learning option</li> </ul>
Practical Opportunities for further development	<p>Areas highlighted included employer engagement, employer clarity on role and requirements, measures by training providers to engage employers and build partnerships, and support for informal sector companies and smes. Active marketing and careers work and robust monitoring and evaluation also highlighted.</p> <p>The final agreed project focussed on tools for more effective employer engagement</p>
Ghana	
Strengths	<p>Systems and documents are available for the implementation of CBT apprenticeship training programme. COTVET LI serves as a guide in the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience in apprenticeship programme</li> <li>• Existence of indigenous apprenticeship system</li> </ul> <p>A lot of documents available as a guide in TVET activities and apprenticeship</p>
Gaps and challenges	<p>Apprenticeship is focused on the traditional informal apprenticeship system. There is therefore the need to incorporate apprenticeship both in the formal, informal and non-formal sector.</p> <p>Employer involvement in apprenticeship is minimal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality assurance process not being adhered to</li> <li>• Non-existence of standards for some traditional (e.g. plumbing, air-conditioning) and emerging trades (e.g. robotics, oil and gas) at the various levels of the NTVETQF</li> <li>• Low involvement of industry</li> <li>• Weak cooperation between industry and TVET institutions</li> <li>• Data Information</li> <li>• Poor technical know-how regarding CBT and its implementation process and procedure</li> <li>• Inadequate data and information on apprenticeship</li> <li>• Awareness creation a challenge</li> <li>• MIS needs much improvement</li> <li>• insufficient financial support for apprenticeships</li> <li>• Inadequate government fund allocation to TVET</li> <li>• Unsustainable finance mechanism</li> </ul>

## SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY APPRENTICESHIPS

South Africa	
Practical Opportunities for further development	<p>Development of a National Apprenticeship Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBT curriculum development for Plumbing and air conditioning and emerging trades</li> <li>• Implementation of CBT apprenticeship programme for about 20 learners including disadvantaged groups, e.g. PWDs for garment or electronic trade area.</li> <li>• Promotion of employer/</li> <li>• industry and training provider cooperation.</li> </ul> <p>The final agreed project focussed on development of a National Apprenticeship Policy</p>
India (Punjab)	
Strengths	<p>The Apprenticeship (Amended) Policy 2014 is a landmark step towards acknowledging the positive role of apprentices and benefits of the apprenticeship system.</p>
Gaps and challenges	<p>The main gaps have been found in the areas of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination amongst stakeholders and</li> <li>• Awareness building due to which systemic change has not taken place.</li> <li>• Lack of convergent inter-departmental efforts in reaching out to industries/employer.</li> <li>• Long and laborious on-line registration process. The session keeps expiring with no saving option which results in the user to keep going back to the start screen and fill the online from over and over again,</li> <li>• Lack of clear information flow</li> <li>• Limited capacity of Training Institutions to provide large scale training</li> <li>• Lack of qualified trainers</li> </ul> <p>Absence of updated equipment</p>
Practical Opportunities for further development	<p>Building upon the existing partnership agreement between the Punjab Skills Department and the British Council, the I-WORK objectives were discussed and thereafter the benchmarking analysis was carried out by the national apprenticeship expert along with the nominated advisory leads. Once the exercise was completed, the findings of the benchmarking analysis was shared with the Principal Secretary and the advisory leads in a meeting and on department's further validation, the priority areas were decided. This was in keeping with the short project period and at the same time be realistic of what would be the most beneficial and implementable proposition for the government which can set out a path for sustainable change for improving employer and wider stakeholder engagement. The priority areas were subsequently reflected upon and analysed in a day long workshop using the problem tree approach.</p> <p>Final agreed project focussed on stakeholder engagement with focus on employers, state government officials and apprentices</p>

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