CEDEFOP

european
journal
of vocational
training

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The publication appears three times
a year in Spanish, German,
English, French and Portuguese.

The opinions expressed by the
authors do not necessarily reflect the
position of Cedefop. The European
journal vocational training gives
protagonists the opportunity to
present analyses and various, at
times contradictory, points of view.
The journal wishes to contribute to
critical debate on the future of
vocational training at European level.

Cedefop assists the European Commission in encouraging, at Community level, the promotion and development of vocational education and training, through exchanges of information and the comparison of experience on issues of common interest to the Member States.

Cedefop is a link between research, policy and practice, helping policymakers and practitioners, at all levels in the European Union, to have a clearer understanding of developments in vocational education and training and to draw conclusions for future action. It stimulates scientists and researchers to identify trends and future questions.

The *European journal of vocational training* is provided for by Article 3 of the founding Regulation of Cedefop of 10 February 1975.

The journal is nevertheless independent. It has an editorial committee that evaluates articles following a double-blind procedure whereby the members of the Editorial Committee, and in particular its rapporteurs, do not know the identity of those they are evaluating and authors do not know the identity of those evaluating them. The committee is chaired by a recognised university researcher and composed of researchers as well as two Cedefop experts, an expert from the European Training Foundation (ETF) and a representative of Cedefop's Management Board.

The *European journal of vocational training* has an editorial secretariat composed of experienced researchers.

The journal is included in the list of scientific journals recognised by the ICO (*Interuniversitair Centrum voor Onderwijskundig Onderzoek*) in the Netherlands and is indexed in the IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences).

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New image
for the Journal

Éric Fries Guggenheim
Editor-in-chief

No, there's no mistake – it really is the **European journal of vocational training** you are holding and are about to read.

The European journal has changed its format and acquired a new image. This change of format completes the long journey made by the European journal since the 1977 publication of the first *Bulletin of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training*, entitled **Vocational training** (Image 1).

The story of the European journal is the story of the gradual and successful emancipation of this Bulletin from Cedefop, in the interests of all the stakeholders involved in the development of vocational training in Europe.

So next year we shall be celebrating the journal's 30th anniversary.

The Bulletin was provided for from the outset in Cedefop's founding Regulation of 10 February 1975, Article 3(1):

The centre shall take the measures necessary for the attainment of its objectives. It may in particular:
- *organise courses and seminars;*
- *conclude study contracts and commission or, where necessary, carry out pilot projects or individual projects to assist the implementation of the centre's work programme;*
- *publish and distribute useful documentation, including a Community vocational training bulletin.*

And the editorial in the very first issue, No 1 of 1977, specifies that in publishing this Bulletin, the Centre '*is continuing the work done by the Directorate-General for Social Affairs of the Commission of the European Communities in establishing and developing the Bulletin'.* Thus at the outset it was conceived as *an instrument of the Centre's Information Service*, and was designed to contain information and articles supporting the Centre's work programme (seminars, conferences and study projects).

Nonetheless, from the outset the Bulletin published themed dossiers alongside information on the Centre and the conferences it organises. These dossiers comprised two or three articles written and signed by vocational training experts in Europe.

In 1981 the Bulletin acquired an editor and an editorial team composed of Cedefop experts.

From 1982 onwards, the journal retained the title **Vocational training**, but was no longer presented as a Bulletin from Cedefop but as a *'regular publication of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training'* (inside front cover), which was immediately rendered in German as *Zeitschrift* (periodical) (Image 2). The editor, Duccio Guerra, became *'Editor-in-chief'*, and in his editorial in issue No 8 of May 1982, he described the journal's relaunch as follows:

'With the change in graphic design and editorial presentation the VOCATIONAL TRAINING BULLETIN has been given a new look. The publication now has three sections: feature articles, an 'information dossier' covering a specific subject and a column 'Europe' describing the activities of international organisations and Community bodies in the field of vocational training. [...]

VOCATIONAL TRAINING, which started out as an information bulletin, has undergone a gradual maturing process and today professes to be a journal capable of being part of the cultural debate on the major themes relating to vocational training and making its own original contribution.

It is a Community publication not only in respect of the area of observation it covers but more especially in its role as a promoter and disseminator of information provided by Community bodies based on the conclusions drawn from their technical and scientific work.'

Although the Community nature of the journal was reaffirmed, Duccio Guerra's definition of its target readership was much broader than what one would expect from a Community bulletin: *'The publication is addressed to decision-makers, those who develop and supply technical and scientific decision-making aids and finally those required to implement these decisions.'* This description already explicitly includes researchers, the social partners and the players on the ground expressly targeted today.

So the birth of the **European journal of vocational training** can be more precisely dated as May 1982, with the publication of issue No 8, even though, as Duccio Guerra says, it had been a gradual process spread over seven years.

Between 1982 and 1993, **Vocational training**, which was based on topics or dossiers covered by commissioned articles, and also incorporated, as necessary, articles arising from unsolicited proposals, gradually became a forum for exchanges and dialogue on major vocational training issues in the broadest sense, and a full participant in major vocational training debates. Another significant innovation, as from issue No 2/1986, was the introduction of a bibliographical section called *Documentary information* and other sources and *Reading,* arranged by Member States and partner countries, which still exists today under the heading **Reading** (Image 3).
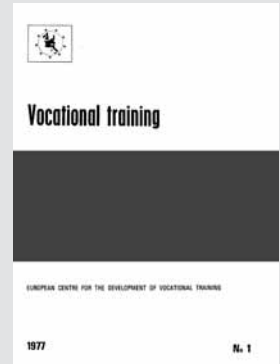
Image 1

Image 2

By the end of 1993, we had come a long way from the 1977 Bulletin, *Vocational training*. Indeed, everything was in place to make it genuinely possible to describe the publication no longer as a Bulletin, but rather as a scholarly journal.

Use of the word 'scholarly' is not coincidental, since while the journal wished to make room for articles publicising the results of original research in the field of initial and continuing vocational training, it had no desire to become a journal in which specialists communicated with specialists. The European journal was aimed at a very broad target readership. As Duccio Guerra said as far back as 1982, it was addressed to all those who contribute to the development of vocational training, to decision-makers, the social partners, trainers, researchers and to private and public actors.

The first issue of the *European journal [of] vocational training* was published in nine languages in the second half of 1994, with the Spanish version being published at the beginning of August and the English version at the end of August, while the German version brought up the rear, appearing in March 1995. Unfortunately, throughout the metamorphosis of the Bulletin into a scholarly journal the editorial team invested in and focused on the content to such an extent that it neglected certain of its formal aspects such as its size, which remain in A4 format, and above all the title of the journal and its front cover presentation. Since the title was not sufficiently well defined, there was a certain imprecision in the names used, including by the editorial team, with a number of names sometimes appearing in the same issue of the journal. This may seem to be of secondary importance, but it is extremely important when it comes to citing articles published in the journal, classifying it in bibliographical databases, and carrying out bibliographical research; and this undoubtedly harmed its visibility. Thus, the journal appeared under different names depending on the database, and it was even possible to find it under different names in the same database – *'Vocational training', 'European Journal – Vocational Training', 'Cedefop Journal'*, etc.

In 1994 Cedefop decided to concentrate on quality, which led to a more rigorous method of selecting articles for publication and the establishment of an Editorial Committee that was largely independent of the agency financing the journal, namely Cedefop. The first Editorial Committee of the *European journal [of] vocational training* was chaired by Jean-François Germe and comprised seven academics and academic researchers, three representatives of associations and the social partners, five Cedefop experts, and one representative of Cedefop's Management Board, with a trade-union background (Image 4).

There have been three Chairmen of the Editorial Committee since January 1994, first Jean-François Germe, Professor at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM), France, then Jordi Planas,

Professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), Spain, and thirdly the current Chairman, Martin Mulder, Professor at the University of Wageningen (WUR), the Netherlands. There have also been three Editors-in-chief, namely Fernanda Reis, Steve Bainbridge and Éric Fries Guggenheim.

The Editorial Committee currently comprises 13 members – 9 lecturers/academic researchers, one expert from the European Training Foundation (ETF), 3 experts from Cedefop, and one representative of Cedefop's Governing Board, who represents the Government's Group. The representatives in these three categories all have a solid academic training, and were recommended by the Editorial Committee for this reason. The rule is that all new members of the Editorial Committee are appointed by Cedefop's Director on a recommendation from the Committee.

Image 3

In July 1999, an Editorial Secretariat was created on the initiative of Steve Bainbridge, the then Editor-in-chief of the journal. This Secretariat assists the Editorial Committee in its work and has become particularly important since, at the instigation of its current Chairman Martin Mulder, the Editorial Committee adopted the double-blind peer review as its working method. This means that members of the Editorial Committee and, in particular, the reviewers, do not know the identity of the authors of the articles submitted to them, and the authors do not know the identity of their reviewers. The Editorial Secretariat is responsible for anonymising proposed articles received and for acting as intermediary between authors and the Editorial Committee and its reviewers.

Image 4

The number of proposed articles sent directly to the journal's Editorial Secretariat was steadily increasing, and so in 2002 it was decided to publish regular 'general' issues of the journal, presenting articles without predetermined links to a given topic. This makes it possible to publish very interesting articles within a reasonable time limit – articles that would otherwise have to wait until an appropriate topic was addressed. However, the concept of the themed issue was not abandoned, and as often as possible unsolicited articles are combined around a key topic. Moreover, the Editorial Committee continues to plan a themed issue at least once a year. There is already a long list of themes for future issues – Competence and vocational training for issue No 40, January-April 2007, a dossier on candidate countries for issue No 41, May-August 2007, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for issue No 42, September-December 2007, and, in the medium term, special issues on 'workplace training', 'universities and vocational training', 'survey of continuing vocational training in enterprise (CVTS)', and so on.

At the instigation of the Editorial Committee's current Chairman, Martin Mulder, the journal has also decided to establish an ***Editorial Advisory Board*** comprising well-known personalities and researchers in the field of vocational training who will serve as ambassadors, as it were, for the European journal, in the vocational training world. This Editorial Advisory
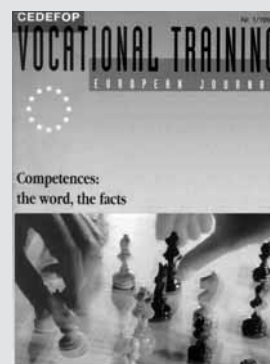
Board, which met for the first time in Thessaloniki in October 2005, is being called on to play an increasing part in orienting the journal's editorial policy.

As we have already said, the European journal will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2007. It is a genuinely mature publication, which occupies a special niche in the initial and continuing vocational training (ICVT) publishing world. Not only is it published in five European languages (English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish), but it also accepts articles in 28 languages, the 21 official languages of the European Union, including Irish, which has now been recognised as an official EU language, the two additional languages of the European Economic Area (Icelandic and Norwegian), the languages of the two countries due to accede to the EU in 2007 (Bulgarian and Romanian), and the languages of the three candidate countries (Croatian, Macedonian and Turkish). This is because the European journal's Editorial Committee believes that one can express oneself effectively and persuasively only in one's mother tongue.

Today, the journal is completely independent of Cedefop as regards its editorial policy. However, it is Cedefop that finances the journal, whose cover price and annual subscription rate remain very low to reflect Cedefop's European public service mandate. In return Cedefop asks for only two undertakings on the part of the European journal, namely that Cedefop's logo should be included on the journal's cover, and that when articles published in the journal are used and cited, explicit reference should be made to the source and to the fact that Cedefop publishes the journal.

The field of publishing occupied by the journal is, of course, that of initial and continuing vocational training (ICVT). However, this field has been interpreted very broadly ever since the journal began. Thus in addition to articles directly addressing vocational training issues, naturally it publishes articles on lifelong training, on the relationship between training and employment and labour-market access, and on the relationship between work and training. However, it also publishes articles on *educational sciences*, *the philosophy of education, history*, *the sociology of education*, *economics*, *law* and *political sciences* when they are addressing an issue directly associated with ICVT or an issue of general interest with direct consequences for ICVT.

It is not easy to get an article published in the journal. The Editorial Committee requires strict compliance with its format (see http://www2. trainingvillage.gr/etv/editorial/edcomm.asp) and sets very high standards for the scholarly nature of papers published in the journal. It is very rare for an article to be published as it is, without a request for revisions. Admittedly the rejection rate is quite low for an international journal, ranging at first reading between only 30 % and 40 % of articles submitted. However, the Editorial Committee asks authors to make many complex revisions with regard to both the substance and the form of the article.

Fortunately, authors are very ably assisted by the journal's Editorial Secretariat, which endeavours to ensure that authors receive requests that are as clear and detailed as possible, so that they can provide the best possible response to the Editorial Committee's comments and requests. Thus the Editorial Secretariat monitors the articles as they evolve. The revision process is quite an ordeal, however, as an article may be sent back to the author as many as three or four times, which is why some authors become discouraged along the way and in the end only 40 % of the articles submitted to the journal end up being published.

The scholarly nature of the articles is an essential condition for the Editorial Committee, but the type of articles accepted and published by the *European journal of vocational training* varies widely. Naturally it publishes articles written by researchers, reporting the results of their research. However, it also publishes analyses of initial and continuing vocational training policy in Europe as well as case studies. Thus the journal aims to provide a means of expression for an enormous group, ranging from people on the ground to academic researchers, via policy-makers and the social partners, and a publication in which they can obtain information on ICVT policy and practice in Europe. With regard to the geopolitical field of reference, the European Union, the European journal particularly values articles with a comparative European dimension. However, the fact that the journal is European does not prevent it from taking an interest in policies and experiences in the rest of the world, on condition that such articles place the reality, practices and policies of ICVT in Europe into perspective.

After almost 30 years of developments in the course of which the publication has evolved from the *Cedefop Bulletin – Vocational training* into the *European journal of vocational training* in its present form, our publication has become a scholarly journal to be reckoned with in the vocational training landscape. It has outgrown its youthful excesses, and it was becoming more apparent every day that presentation in A4 format, with covers of varying degrees of colourfulness and authors' photos at the head of their articles, was inconsistent with the scholarly nature of its content (Image 5).

This is what led the journal's Editorial Committee to opt for B5 format, which is much easier to handle, and to use only one colour on the cover in addition to black and white. So the journal has acquired a new image, but it has not changed course or become any less rigorous. It has simply brought its appearance into line with its practice – serious and sober. So even though the change effected with this issue, No 37, January-April 2006, is much more obvious than that effected in issue No 8 in May 1982, it is actually much less radical. Your journal remains unchanged as regards its content, which naturally we are constantly working to improve.

We should also like to draw your attention to the change in the online presentation of issues of the European journal of vocational training:

Image 5

http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/ publications.asp?section=18. For articles published within the past year, which means that they are not yet downloadable, tables of contents, authors' CVs and photographs, and summaries of the articles will now be available. For issues published over a year ago, you now have a choice between downloading the entire issue, as in the past, or simply the article that is of immediate interest to you.

We should be delighted to receive your comments and opinions both on the journal's new appearance and on its content, and we hope that you will continue to read it regularly for many years to come.

Happy reading!

ICT skill supply
in the UK and Germany
How firms cope
with skill supply challenges

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SUMMARY

This paper compares the supply of specialist ICT skills in the UK and Germany from higher education and from apprenticeship and assesses the relative impact on companies in the two countries. In contrast to the UK, where numbers of ICT graduates have expanded rapidly, the supply of university graduates in Germany has not increased. German firms have turned to a newly developed model of apprenticeship to supply routine technical ICT skills. This strategy contrasts wiwith British firms which recruit from a wide range of graduate specialists and invest more heavily in graduate training. Probably in part as a consequence, apprenticeship in ICT occupations in the UK has failed to develop.

Introduction

This paper reports a selection of findings from a study by German and British researchers which analysed the contrasting national strategies of ICT skill supply in the UK and Germany and the impact on firms in both countries.

Germany has fewer ICT practitioners (defined as those employed full-time on software development, ICT maintenance, sales and servicing) than the UK. Using an occupational measure developed by Dixon (CEPIS, 2002) Germany has about 550 000 compared to 850 000 in the UK. ICT practitioners represent 1.45 % of total employment in Germany and 2.1 % of service employment. In the UK the corresponding figures are 2.33 and 3.1 % respectively.

To examine the impact of skill supply policy on firms, around 90 firms in the UK and Germany were interviewed during 2002-03. These were selected at random from trade literature and the Internet in a total of four sectors: financial services, retailing, motor manufacture and software development. In this way, we hoped to cover users of ICT in services and manufacturing together with a specialist ICT sector. Around half of those firms originally approached agreed to be interviewed within the time-frame of the project. Half the interviews were carried out face to face by two researchers, one from Germany and one from the UK. The remainder were interviewed by one researcher through telephone interviews. In both cases a structured questionnaire was used and, in the course of discussion, core questions and issues were put to our respondents in the companies in both countries. The resulting data was logged and analysed.

A full report of our research is published as Centre for Economic Performance Discussion Paper No 575 and can also be downloaded at http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/default2.asp?pubyear=2003. A shorter version has also been published by the Anglo-German Foundation which contributed financial support to the research. This can be consulted at http://www.agf.org.uk/pubs/pdfs/1358web.pdf

This paper is structured as follows. Section 1 summarises trends in the supply of skills in the core ICT areas, in particular those supported in whole or in part by public funding. Section 2 reports on company skill procurement and deployment strategies, based on the results of our visits to companies in the two countries. Section 3 presents our conclusions.

Section 1: trends in ICT skill supply in Germany and the UK

In this study we aimed to assess how the skill supply from publicly-funded education providers impacts on companies' skill strategies. In the UK, skill supply is characterised by:
• a rapidly expanding university population;
• an above-average increase in students on ICT courses but with lower than average A-level points scores;
• three-year first degree (Bachelor) courses;
• low university drop-out rates;
• almost no use by companies of government-funded apprenticeship programmes;
• increasing use of work permits to import ICT skills;
• extensive use of contractors and outsourcing.
    Skill supply in Germany is characterised by:
• a relatively small number completing university courses in computer science with a long study period of between six and eight years;
• *Fachhochschule* (FHS) graduates who study for four years and often spend two six month periods working in companies ([1]);
• an increasing number of apprentices;
• difficulty in attracting/integrating employees from other countries to work in Germany under the green card arrangements;
    substantial use of contractors and some outsourcing.

ICT skills from the tertiary sector
The output of computer science graduates from German universities and *Fachhochschule* (FHS) institutions was in the region of 8 000 in 2002/03. In the UK in 2002/03, some 18 000 computer science graduates left university with first degree qualifications. This puts the UK ahead of Germany by a factor of 2.25.

    The relatively low numbers qualifying at graduate level in computer science have had an important impact on the skill supply strategies of German companies. German companies pay higher real starting salaries to graduate entrants than in the UK, and continue to experience concerns about future supply. The pool of contractors available to German companies is smaller than in the UK, probably as a result of the relative scarcity of graduates.

    The German language is a barrier to employment of non-German speakers in ICT occupations, even though English is the working language in ICT. As some German companies pointed out to us,

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[1] In Germany two kinds of HE institutes exist: traditional universities with a common study period of at least five years and universities of applied science (*Fachhochschulen* (FHS)) with a study period of four years including one semester of internship at a company for practical experience.

employees still need to communicate with other colleagues and customers and to fit into the working environment. Lack of knowledge of the German language had proved a significant barrier. Because of this, German companies considered that they were losing out to Anglo-Saxon countries in the competition to attract good ICT practitioners from abroad, precisely because foreign workers usually had English as a second language and preferred to work in an English-speaking environment. However, the situation has eased since 1999-2000 (see also Dostal, 2002).

German companies have experienced a much lower supply of university graduates with computer science degrees than in the UK. Together with the difficulty of recruiting from overseas, this may well contribute to the smaller relative numbers in ICT occupations in Germany. This problem has been greatly compounded by German companies' reluctance to recruit and train graduates from disciplines not connected with computer science as is common practice in the UK.

The very long lead time taken to produce graduate level skills in Germany and the high drop-out rate have resulted in very low annual output of ICT graduates (IWD, 2000; Heublein et al., 2002). Numbers have now been expanded but increased supply will not be available for some years. In the UK shorter courses and lower drop-out have led to a steady increase in ICT graduates.

An important advantage of the British system is that there is flexibility to move from first to postgraduate degree (bachelor and master are usually consecutive courses in the UK). It is also possible to change between subjects when moving from the first to the postgraduate degree. Those with first degree and some years of experience often return to university for additional one or two year courses to attain a master degree.

In Germany the courses at traditional and applied university are parallel and take at least four years; changeover between subjects is cumbersome and time-consuming and rarely occurs. However, introduction of newly-designed bachelor and master courses in Germany will eventually lead to greater opportunity for subject change and higher graduate output. Currently, however, there are only a small number of graduates from these shorter degree courses: 350 bachelor and 95 master graduates in 2003 ([2]).

However, the length of German degree courses means that universities cannot react in a timely fashion to changes in market demand. Together with high attrition rates this leads to waste of public resources devoted to higher education in Germany. At the same time, the government incurs heavy costs of further training courses for unemployed graduates. To reduce the attrition rates the government has announced measures to improve provisions for studying.

([2]) Data provided by the German Federal Statistical Office.

Relative skill supply at intermediate skill level: ICT apprenticeship in the UK and Germany

In 1997 the decision was taken in Germany to establish four new ICT apprenticeship occupations. This was widely perceived as a test of the 'innovative potential' of the dual system. Could the concept of *Beruf* be redefined as a dynamic process-oriented qualification that would allow employees to adapt to the rapid pace of change and highly competitive environment of ICT activity? (Ehrke, 1997; Schelten and Zedler, 2001; Baethge and Baethge-Kinsky, 1998).

Institutional rigidities affecting the supply of graduate skills in Germany and the associated higher costs help to explain German employers' strong support for the initiative to increase the number of young people entering a career in ICT through the apprenticeship route. German employers cooperated with the government and with the trade unions in planning the curriculum and regulations governing the new apprenticeships. Since the apprenticeships were launched in 1997, German companies have recruited and trained some 50 000 young people in the three year apprenticeship programme; a further 60 000 are currently in training.

The new qualifications were developed in about a year, in contrast to the accepted wisdom that the development of apprentice qualifications was an inevitably lengthy and cumbersome procedure. Four occupations were identified and the apprenticeship programme incorporated much that aimed to ensure that those who graduated acquired relevant and cutting edge skills and competences. The training programme is composed of core competences and optional elements which allow for specialised training relevant to the apprentice's training firm. Training in project management and team building are also included and a proportion of assessment is based on successful completion of a project. Employers were thereby allowed greater freedom to determine the content of the work-based training element than was the case in many traditional apprenticeships (Schmidt, 1998).

German employers were clear from the outset that one aim of promoting apprenticeship was to produce the skills the company needed at a lower cost. 'Skilled manpower trained within the dual system (apprenticeship) are to replace the overly costly higher education graduates' was the expectation put forward by an employer representative at a conference held in Germany in the early years of the German apprenticeship programme (Dubiella, 2000).

While in training, German apprentices are paid around one third of the full rate for their respective occupation. The data we collected on apprentice salary levels when qualified confirmed that salaries for those with completed apprentice qualifications are around two-thirds of graduate salaries. Many of the German companies with apprentices in training expected that apprentices would take on some tasks similar to those now carried out by graduates. Other companies hoped to develop

a core of personnel which did not aim for fast promotion and provided stability at the base of the firm. In line with the APO project for continuing qualifications, it was emphasised that apprentices would need to continue training and study [3]. However, if that condition was satisfied, there was confidence that they would play a significant part in combating skill shortages in the future.

There is a huge contrast between employers' enthusiasm for apprenticeship in Germany and British employers' almost complete neglect of the British modern apprenticeship in the ICT sector. Just under 1 000 young people gained a qualification in a technical ICT apprenticeship in the UK in 2002/03 compared to 21 400 in Germany.

We must also recall that in Germany, there is no tradition of apprenticeship training in an industry as young as the ICT industry; in fact the ICT modern apprenticeship in the UK was established in 1995, two years before the establishment of the four German ICT apprenticeships discussed here (e-skills, 2000). A tradition of training cannot therefore explain the higher investment by German employers in ICT apprenticeship.

It cannot be argued that British companies do not need or use intermediate skills in ICT occupations as an explanation for the neglect of modern apprenticeship. On average, only around two thirds of those employed in ICT in the UK have been educated to degree level, the remaining third almost invariably have reached at least the equivalent of A-level (ISCED 3) (CEPIS, 2002). Many of the companies we visited in the UK, in particular those in the 'user' sectors, recruited young people at A-level and devoted a considerable proportion of their own resources to training them in ICT occupations. Therefore, it is not possible to argue that British companies do not need intermediate skills below graduate level, or that they are not interested in training at this level.

Two factors may help to understand the difference between German and British companies in their attitude to developing intermediate skills. First, British companies have benefited from a larger supply of graduates and have been more flexible in their attitude to employment of non-ICT graduates. Second, a larger pool of contractors and a relaxed attitude to the issue of green cards for foreign workers has also helped to ease skill shortage problems.

British companies undoubtedly suffer from an information problem in relation to apprenticeship. Hardly any of those we spoke to had heard of modern apprenticeship and so we could not explore with them reasons for not taking it up. By contrast, German managers we spoke to were familiar with the introduction of the new ICT apprenticeships and had

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[3] APO, *Arbeits-Prozesse Orientierte* (work process orientated). The continuing education qualification levels specified in the German skills matrix can only be obtained while in employment and, in most cases, the minimum prerequisite is a completed apprenticeship (Borch and Weissmann, 2002).

usually considered whether or not to take apprentices on. Campaigns by the German government and the chambers of commerce had informed them, the public and school-leavers about the new ICT apprenticeships.

Perhaps the most important difference between the two countries, however, is the difference in the pool of young people available to enter apprenticeship. When, as in Germany, around two thirds of all young people expect to enter apprenticeship (of whom around 20 % will subsequently enter university or FHS), the pool of those able to take on a challenging apprenticeship such as ICT is relatively large. Thus the relatively small numbers in Germany entering university proves to be a positive advantage when promoting an intermediate skills route. When, as in the UK, around 50 % of the age cohort is aiming for university on the A-level route, the pool of those able to work to the demanding standards required in an ICT apprenticeship is considerably smaller. This pool is further reduced when companies recruit young people with A-level to their own training schemes.

While the behaviour of the German companies in the face of skill shortages appears rational, that of the British companies cannot be so easily understood. We must conclude that a combination of factors explains that behaviour. The first is information failure; companies may not have sufficient information about modern apprenticeship to appreciate possible advantages. Second, anecdotal evidence from discussions with two British companies that have taken on ICT apprentices suggests that the regulations governing the assessment and certification of modern apprentices in the UK are burdensome and costly to companies. Third, evidence from training providers who try to place young people on ICT apprenticeships suggests that insufficient young people with the requisite educational level are currently coming forward.

Section 2: comparison of company skill procurement strategies

Companies in the two countries were faced with very similar challenges of reacting fast and flexibly in a rapidly changing technological and competitive environment. Both British and German companies were keenly aware of the vital importance of the role played by skills in achieving profitable operation (Licht et al., 2002).

British companies were extremely flexible in their attitude to recruiting skills. New employees were predominantly graduates; however, little attention was paid to degree qualifications once sufficient experience had been obtained. We were told that 'the last three jobs' were what really counted in the recruitment decision. Graduates seeking first employment could be employed from a wide range of academic disciplines and not just from ICT or cognate courses. This obviously widened the pool of recruits

to encompass those who were self-taught, had switched careers, or were seeking permanent employment after a spell in self-employment. However, lack of discrimination in recruitment led to problems in narrowing down the pool of applications and locating good quality from the pool. British companies used recruitment agencies (and incurred high costs as a result) to assist with this task.

It was not difficult for British companies to get work permits for skilled ICT staff and there was a ready supply of skilled personnel overseas willing to apply. A number of British companies recruited skills from overseas or outsourced to other countries but British companies in general showed lack of innovation in recruitment practices below graduate level. Few had considered taking advantage of the public funds available for ICT apprentice training in the modern apprenticeship initiative; instead, a considerable number continued to meet all the costs of training for non-graduate entrants. The corollary of a flexible approach to graduate recruitment is, of course, relatively high initial training costs. British companies trained new graduate recruits for longer and more intensively than was the case in Germany, although at lower salary costs.

German companies were less flexible in their recruitment strategies. Mostly, they mistrusted those who had been through ICT 'conversion courses' from the Ministry of Employment, even when those who came from these courses already had a first degree. Companies sought a mix of graduates and non-graduates, as in the UK. However, they sought almost exclusively ICT graduates or those from a closely cognate discipline. Inevitably, this restricted the pool of potential recruits. German companies spent longer than British locating skills and rarely used recruitment agencies. It was harder for German companies to persuade non-German speakers from outside Germany to apply for work permits and lack of German language skills created difficulties for teamwork.

We had the strong impression that German companies expected university and FHS graduates to become fully effective at a relatively high level within a short space of time. Certainly, German companies supplied much less off-the-job training to new graduate recruits than did the British; most learning was on-the-job through projects and short seminars. It was rare for German companies to invest in graduate recruitment programmes as found in the UK in order to enlist and train top managers. This requirement was met instead by recruiting university graduates who, it will be recalled, had studied for five to seven years and were likely to be aged around 28 on graduating.

However, a number of sources of additional flexibility were used by German companies that were not taken up by British companies. German companies paid higher salaries than British companies to new graduate recruits and, perhaps for this reason, were conscious of the need to reduce costs at this level. Substantial numbers of interns (university undergraduates) were employed for three month periods or longer and, we were told, made a useful contribution to the company. Many German

companies had taken on apprentices in the new ICT apprenticeship programmes. These non-graduate entrants would be paid only two-thirds of graduate earnings once qualified and would require no additional training once employed. While in training (usually two and a half to three years), apprentices were paid a training allowance of around one third of their earnings when qualified. It was hoped that, with experience and further training, apprentices could fill many of the posts currently taken by graduates.

British companies usually expected employees to cross occupational boundaries and acquire the skills needed by the company as required by the work programme. It is not clear how well this worked or how high the retraining costs were. However, few British companies complained that employees were unwilling to work flexibly in this way. Indeed, for those contemplating self-employment, a broad skills portfolio acquired while in permanent employment could become a personal asset. A number of German companies suggested that employees were finding it difficult to adjust to this sort of flexible working. However, we did not get the impression that German companies were allowing this to stand in the way of necessary restructuring.

The use of contractors in British and German companies
Contractors were used extensively by the firms visited in both the UK and Germany. Contractors almost invariably elect their status following a period of employment as a member of an ICT department. This means that a good part of their skills portfolio has been obtained while in permanent employment. The skills obtained will have resulted in part from on-the-job experience and in part from company investment in their training. These skills, being highly transferable and portable, are then appropriated and exploited by the individual in his/her capacity as contractor. Normally, it might be supposed that this investment would be lost to the company; however, it is fairly common, in England at least, for employees to change to contractor status and to stay working with the same company.

We were surprised to discover the extent of contractor use in Germany. We had initially supposed that the well-known greater inflexibility of German employment legislation would make it more difficult for employers to take on contractors and also lessen the attraction of contracting to individuals. In fact, the total number of contractors employed in the companies visited relative to all ICT staff was 14 % in both countries.

'Interns' and 'sandwich' students

Around half the German companies interviewed were employing 'interns', university/FHS students who were spending several months working in the company as part of their programme of study. Usually the students were also writing a dissertation as part of their course assessment and the companies arranged a work-based project for them which they could write up and present in order to fulfill this part of their degree requirement. Interns constituted a surprisingly large proportion of all ICT employees in the firms employing them: 7 % in the financial sector, 3 % in retailing, 10 % in motor manufacture and 5 % in the software companies. The German companies were generally enthusiastic about the contribution made to the company by interns. They could be entrusted with or participate in projects that were useful to the company, their salaries were considerably lower (often they worked for free) than those of graduate employees and their suitability for permanent employment could be assessed during the internship. It is clear that the requirement for university and FHS students to write up a project in dissertation form as part of their degree benefits both students and the companies that employ them.

The closest we come to internships in the UK are 'sandwich' students who spend part of their course in employment as a course requirement. Only one of the British companies interviewed employed a student as part of a sandwich course. A further five companies offered paid summer placements which were open to any students who applied. There was no great enthusiasm in the British companies visited for employing students in this way. Companies complained of the difficulty that ICT departments had in finding suitable projects for the students and their consequent reluctance to take them in.

Section 3: summary and conclusions

It is widely accepted that differences in national institutions have a significant effect on the national economy through their effects on the behaviour of firms and individuals. One source of major institutional difference between countries is the national education and training system which can affect productivity and product quality (Steedman, and Wagner, 1989; Prais, 1995).

This study of how firms in the UK and Germany source and secure ICT skills points to important differences between the two countries in external constraints, originating in the education system, on the supply of highly-educated ICT graduates and graduates in cognate disciplines. Combined with other factors discussed below, these have impacted differentially on firms in the two countries and led to substantially different recruitment and training policies.

In the UK, the supply of graduates has increased substantially in the latter half of the 1990s and early 2000s (Mason, 1999). The supply of graduates from ICT degree courses has increased even faster. This has been made possible by a high degree of responsiveness from universities (providing additional places) and students (choosing courses where demand from industry is high). In addition, government funding has met part of the cost of expansion; low drop-out and short (three year) courses have meant that lead times for skill production from British universities are relatively short.

In Germany, in contrast, there was, until recently, no strong expansion in numbers entering universities and applied universities; universities and FHS have not been able to find places for all those who applied to study computer science. The very long lead times to degree qualification (between five and seven years) and high drop-out rates have resulted in very low numbers qualifying at the time of particularly high demand around 1999/2000. While numbers studying have now increased substantially, those who complete the course will qualify at the earliest in 2006/07.

Company approaches to recruitment in the two countries have also been structured and conditioned by different traditions of occupational identity. In the UK, occupational identity is relatively weak except in certain recognised professions (law, medicine, etc.) and the older industrial crafts. Employees in the service sector are used to carrying out a variety of tasks as required, and shifting into new areas of work. New employees are recruited on the basis of relevant experience and those hired straight from university frequently hold qualifications that are unrelated to the job they are expected to do. Firms expect to provide this latter group with substantial training and place them in 'starter' positions within larger teams where they can acquire relevant knowledge and experience.

Most German firms visited adhered to the occupational model of competence, where each employee is expected to possess and apply a recognised set of skills compatible with the occupation trained for and practised within the firm. While this model may well lead to greater breadth and depth of technical competence it undoubtedly creates difficulties when a flexible reaction is required to fast-moving technological change. Further, the model can create difficulties in integrating new employees from abroad and new employees without the recognised occupational preparation, for example, those from 'conversion' courses.

These factors – the unresponsiveness of higher education and the occupational competence model – were, in our view, important reasons for the difficulties that German companies experienced in recruiting the skilled employees that they were seeking in the late 1990s.

However, these same difficulties may have also spurred German

companies on to work together to bypass the universities and create a system of skill production – apprenticeship and continuing work-based training structures – that is more flexible and offers the prospect of training large numbers of highly-skilled ICT employees. These will undergo principally work-based training and constitute a pool of work-ready employees at lower cost than graduates. While graduates will still be needed and recruited, company-based skill production will supply many of the middle level posts which had previously proved difficult to fill.

British companies have benefited from a relatively plentiful supply of graduates and a flexible approach to skills. Individual companies have invested heavily in training new employees and upskilling existing employees to combat skill shortages. However, because companies were able to cope using these strategies, there has been little concerted action on the part of companies to tackle future skill shortages comparable to that undertaken by German companies.

In both countries, public institutions which generate high-level skills are of prime importance to all companies requiring specialised ICT practitioner skills. When, as is the case in Germany, importing skills or outsourcing work is more difficult for linguistic and cultural reasons, the power of these institutions to restrict or open up the supply heavily constrains companies' ability to respond to new business opportunities. The UK benefits from the universality of the English language and strong cultural links to Asia and the Indian sub-continent. Importing skills and outsourcing is less problematic. However, a plentiful supply of relatively unspecialised graduates has shaped company behaviour in the UK, and created a need for substantial company investment in initial training of new graduate employees. But this plentiful supply of graduates and flexible recruitment practices have led to neglect of the potential of apprenticeship in the UK compared to Germany. Nevertheless, we conclude that shortage of specialist ICT skills has had less of an effect on British than on German companies. ∎

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The concept of skill and its social construction

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SUMMARY

The article argues that identifying and developing vocational skills is a social as well as a technical process, influenced by existing power and social structures. After giving several examples of the social construction of skill, it suggests that current national and European policies on skill definition do not really address inequities arising from the social construction process and ends by giving examples of initiatives which can have a positive impact.

Introduction

From the mid 1970s, unacceptably high levels of continuing unemployment and the transformation of production processes by ICT have pushed the concept of skill and its acquisition to the centre of debates on appropriate employment policies for modernising economies. Too often, in these debates, the concept of skill is taken for granted and its complexity is ignored. The main argument of this paper is that the search for greater clarity on the concept of skill needs to begin with an appreciation of its social construction. As Wood (1981) points out, 'for a sociologist all skills are socially constructed in that none are the result of some technology which has fallen from the sky'. The first part of the paper provides several examples of how skill is socially constructed, the second part considers the implications of the social construction of skill for current policy developments, and the final section points to some initiatives which may help to avoid some of the negative consequences of social construction.

The social construction of skill

Discussions of the concept of skill have tended to focus on its technical/professional dimensions, manipulation skills and the knowledge associated with the techniques of the work process, developed via training and experience. However, evaluating, identifying and developing skills, it is argued, should not be seen as primarily objective processes but very much the result of social construction. In this section several examples are given of ways in which social processes impact upon the definition of skill.

Employer-employee relations

The actors most intimately involved in this process of social construction are workers and employers. Workers selling their labour are likely to define their skills differently from employers buying them. For workers, their skills are a combination of the knowledge, skills and experience they have acquired both before entering employment and during their careers. Their definition of their skills is likely to include elements they use in their present jobs, in previous jobs and even elements they have never used but could if required. This concept can be called effective skill. Employers, on the other hand, tend to define skill more narrowly, from the point of view of the requirements of the job after due analysis. This narrower definition can be termed nominal skill, which is normally the only skill employers are prepared to recognise (and reward).

Inevitably, employers have to take into account the skills available in the labour market; they may be unable to impose their narrow definition of skill completely during recruitment. Nevertheless, there is often a difference between the skills an employer considers necessary to do a job and the views held by the worker. These differences can contribute to situations of underqualification but, more commonly, to the type of overqualification found in Spain, where one third of workers between 25 and 29 years of age are overqualified for their job, most of them graduates (Iribar, 2004). Disputes and negotiation are likely to occur around them because of their impact on the pay of the worker.

The difference between effective and nominal skills can be influenced by a variety of factors in a given situation, among which the pertaining power relations are prominent. Trade unions and professional bodies will seek to impose a definition of skill nearer to the effective model. At a time of labour scarcity the difference will be less because of the greater power of the worker to impose their 'effective' definition of skill. Jobs in which there is an emphasis on tacit skills tend to find the worker in a weaker position. Employers will tend only to recognise tacit skills if the worker can persuade the employer to assign some formal criteria to them, e.g. assigning value to years of service in a particular role. In general, it is suggested that the more democracy that exists within the enterprise, the smaller the difference between effective and nominal skills.

Women's employment

The impact of the social construction of skill can be seen clearly in relation to women's employment.

Predominantly men's jobs are systematically characterised as more skilled and better paid than women's jobs because the latter are undervalued, often as a result of social definition of skill. Employers, to divide the workforce, or groups of predominantly male workers, to protect a privileged position, operate in internal labour markets to use their economic power to maintain their skills at a higher level than those of women workers. Gomez Bueno (2000) examined the collective agreement for the Spanish textile industry (a sector with a largely female labour force). The criteria used in the textile sector for grading jobs were degree of autonomy, supervisory authority, responsibility, initiative required, complexity and training. Gomez Bueno suggested these criteria were so general and ambiguous that they permit a high degree of discretion so that a job such as sewing (largely occupied by women) could be classified as unskilled while cutting out (largely occupied by men) is classified as skilled.

Women's jobs are undervalued because their employment features a significant proportion of jobs with an emphasis on tacit skills, e.g. social skills of caring, or on skills developed during family socialisation, e.g. sewing, which are less subject to measurement.

An example is domestic work, mainly carried out by women employed under poor terms and conditions. To what extent is this a result of their low level of technical skill? Anderson (2000) argues that domestic work is more than the enumeration of different tasks. It is skilled both in terms of the variety of tasks performed and the management of these tasks, often inextricably linked and operating at the same time. Anderson suggests that 'when men do household work they, like children, help by task: it is women who manage the process'. However, women's skill in managing and performing domestic work finds no reflection in their status or employment conditions in the sector: because their work is socially devalued, their technical skills are not recognised.

Service sector employment

Occupations in the service sector similarly tend to be undervalued. Jobs such as messenger, delivering pizzas, waiters, and security guards certainly do not appear to require many special skills. However their skills, when objectively defined, are not as limited as is normally assumed: rather the low degree of social recognition of these skills contributes to their low status. Lower status service sector jobs tend to emphasise interpersonal skills. Such skills tend to be tacit, derived from experience and not objectified in qualifications and they tend to be very different from the benchmark skills traditionally associated with manufacturing industry. As Thompson, Warhurst and Callaghan (2000) point out, the traditional model of the skilled or knowledge worker is someone who has access to,

learns and is qualified to practice an explicit body of knowledge; interactive service work depends upon skills located within each worker, e.g. quality of verbal communication. Such work, emphasising 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 1989), is often exploited as an 'invisible' skill. The employer's nominal definition predominates, contributes to a low labour market status and is used by employers to justify poor terms of employment (Korczynski, 2002). The devaluation of service sector work is also made more likely by the high proportion of women and young workers in the sector's labour force. Both of these groups have less power in employment relations and are likely to be disadvantaged in the process of the social construction of skill. Thus the question must be posed: 'Is the young motor cyclist delivering pizzas to people's homes really less skilled than the dockworker?'.

Employees in small firms
Another group of workers whose skills tend to be undervalued are those employed in small firms. The skills developed by workers in small firms tend to be acquired tacitly, on the job. Given the limited presence of trade unions and the importance of individual relations, the power balance in the small firm tends to favour the employer. Such formal training as does take place tends to be directed largely at management reflecting the pertaining power structure (AJEMAD, 2001). Nominal skills, the skills an employer considers necessary to do a job, carry more weight than any concept of effective skill held by the worker. As a result, regular examples of overqualification may be found, as in the case of graduates employed for work that does not require a university degree. The tacit skills acquired in the small firm tend to be defined by the short-term specific needs of the organisation and, being often particular to that company, may be difficult to transfer to other employment settings.

The above discussion has sought to show that skill can be socially constructed and that the problem of skill cannot be reduced to purely technical questions. As a social construction, skill has been shown to be a result not only of the system of employment relations in a narrow sense but, most clearly in the case of the position of women in employment, of the pertaining pattern of economic and political relations in society.

Policy implications

The social construction of skill has implications for public policy on skill definition and development. We begin by considering the concept of competences and then take a look at current national and European approaches.

Since the 1980s, the concept of competence has increasingly displaced that of skill, particularly in literature on human resource management. What implications has this emphasis on competence for the emphasis on the social construction of skill? Competences place an emphasis on outcomes specified clearly and transparently and their assessment is separate from particular academic institutions or learning programmes (Wolf, 1994). As such they are to be distinguished from the concept of skill under Fordism with its emphasis on formal qualifications which could be applied to different groups of workers and which specified the knowledge necessary to discharge a particular role.

It is understandable that employers operating in the globalised environment of the last two decades should have difficulties with the traditional concept of skill. The development of increased flexibility and multi-skilling has made less relevant many traditional skills 'compartments.' In addition, in areas of the growing service sector, traditional skills models were never really implanted. However, the development of the concept of competence does more than reflect the changed business environment in which employers are operating. It also reflects a change in the social relations between employers and workers. The decline of collectivism in employment relations and the increasing emphasis on individual relations in the workplace have facilitated the development of a concept which favours much more the employer's nominal definition of skill than the employee's effective definition and takes for granted the association of the worker with the employer's 'project'.

The tendency of the concept to emphasise the acquisition of tacit skills on the job at the expense of explicit skills devalues the qualifications the worker brings to the organisation, creating a closed system which underwrites the established skill hierarchy. The area for negotiation between employer and worker is thus reduced. Employers developing multi-skilling are able to avoid paying for the new skills acquired by the workers by designating them as competences. Employer-driven conservatism and the limited knowledge underpinning associated with the concept tend to result in a set of competences being not much more than a description of the 'normal way of doing the job' with the consequence that they do little to prepare the worker for future development, promotion, and the challenge of change. The acquisition of competences tacitly, in informal learning contexts, makes it more difficult for them to be recorded and certificated and therefore portable, reducing their added value to the worker.

Competences are, therefore, just as subject to social construction as more traditional models of skill. Their significance is that they reflect a modification in power relationships between employers and employees. Employers, facing a more deregulated, competitive environment and less differentiated labour supply, with the expansion of higher education, have taken advantage of the weakness of employee organisation to seek to introduce a definition of skill which approximates more to their nominal definition than that existing under Fordism. In this context it is no coincidence that the development of competences has progressed furthest in those western countries where deregulation and the decline of collective worker power has advanced most.

Proponents of national public policy initiatives to ameliorate the problems created by the current process of social construction face several difficulties. Such initiatives will need to be interventionist to affect embedded structures and therefore will be seen as running counter to the prevailing emphasis on flexibility, decentralisation and deregulation which dominates much contemporary discourse. Political institutions cannot be presented as playing a purely technical role, dictating the framework and the guidelines for new methodologies and systems, but will need actively to facilitate a bottom up, participative process of skills definition. As Bjørnåvold (1997, p. 70) points out, 'the state has to try to balance the competing interests of employers, employees, educators, professional associations, citizens, etc. Legitimate and widely accepted mechanisms ... can only be established on the basis of this kind of broad based participation'.

Current dominant institutional models for skills definition, nationally located and selective in terms of the interest groups involved, tend not to be adequate for creating this kind of participation. A clear example of this has been the development of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in the United Kingdom. Employer involvement in developing NVQs was largely relegated to sectorally based groups at national level. Not surprisingly, employers have been resistant to implementing the results of national deliberations because they are unlikely to fit their perception of their requirements. As Wolf (1994) points out, it is problematic to assume that an agreed notion of competence can be achieved at national level, because of the lack of consensus. A key feature of the role of competences as an expression of employers' nominal definition of skill in a fragmented and rapidly changing business environment is that they often only make sense in a very specific employment context, with the result that employers are reluctant to go along with any collective definition. Inevitably, therefore, national systems of definition like NVQs run the risk of mass employer abstention, particularly on the part of smaller enterprises. Thus, in a UK context, as Matlay (2002) found, NVQs appeal predominantly to larger firms, being used by only 10 % of firms with 50-250 employees, 3 % of firms with 11-49 and less than 1 % of firms with 1-10. NVQs tend to be ignored in favour of demonstrable employee

abilities to meet present or anticipated organisational needs (Skinner, Pownall and Cross, 2003). The development of NVQs also lacked consensus because of the limited involvement of employee representatives; trade union nominees had very much a minority role on decision-making committees.

It would be wrong however to attribute the problems of the development of NVQs to the weakness of social dialogue in the UK and therefore see them as peculiar to the system of employment relations in that country. Even those countries with a stronger recent tradition of social partnership will have difficulty in effectively reflecting a wide enough range of interests in respect of skill definition. Trade unions find it difficult to reflect the interests of constituencies discussed earlier (interactive service workers, workers in small firms, and women) because these collectives, which will increasingly represent a majority of workers in the European Union, tend to be employed in sectors where union organisation is weak or non-existent and social dialogue quiescent. Employers' organisations face similar problems of representation in the same sectors.

What are the likely implications for these constituencies of the Copenhagen Declaration on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training? At one level, implementing elements of the declaration in areas such as greater transparency, information and guidance, and developing common reference levels, common reference systems, and common measures, would seem to offer opportunities to review skill systems which have resulted in the inequities discussed earlier. However, the methodology adopted for implementing the declaration is likely to limit its effectiveness in this respect. Basing the development of a single qualifications framework on the experiences of those countries that already have national frameworks, and involving existing stakeholders, is likely to lead to a conservative result because the consequences of the social construction of skill are embedded in those experiences and reflect the interests of those stakeholders. Quality assurance would seem to offer positive opportunities. It is possible to envisage measures and targets for VET performance, which could have a positive effect upon the recognition of skills such as the obligation to establish qualification reviews of particular collectives. However, too much emphasis on bottom-up cooperation in this area is likely again to serve existing interests.

This part of the paper has emphasised the difficulties in reducing the inequities resulting from the social construction of skill by public initiatives which reflect largely employer interests, as is the case with competences, or which largely build upon existing structures of qualification and interest, as appears to be the case with current European initiatives.

Relevant initiatives

Effective initiatives to foster a more balanced involvement in the social construction of skills need, therefore, to overcome the shortcomings. While recognising that systems of skills definition need a national framework to facilitate transferability and accreditation, they also need to include mechanisms which encourage local involvement on the part of employers and employees and which are sensitive to the full gamut of employment contexts. Given the current balance of power in skills definition, a priority of these mechanisms would seem to give more opportunity for the worker's effective definition of skill being articulated. Several examples of initiatives exist which indicate the form such mechanisms could take, reflecting a mixture of collective and individual approaches.

The framework of action for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications, adopted by the social partners in 2002, is likely to be more effective in focusing on the skills deficiencies of a horizontal constituency such as workers in small firms where there is general social partner commitment. European projects led by UEAPME, such as Protein, to identify new competences produced in informal training in SMEs and craft enterprises and to produce new criteria and practice for identifying and validating them, are examples of such a focus. In the UK the social partners have lobbied successfully for resources to help more small businesses achieve the Investors in People standard. However, in the case of vertical constituencies, such as workers in the interpersonal service sector, where sectoral social partners are weak, there is a need for a focus to be adopted by the central organisations.

A recent collective approach is represented by the establishment by statute in the United Kingdom in 2003 of the figure of the union learning representative. This is a union member at enterprise level, representing employee skills interests, advising them on and organising training opportunities. The limitations of the role are clear. Their rights are significantly less than health and safety representatives in terms of rights to consultation and information. In practice the emphasis in the legislation is much more on their role advising union members than on consulting and negotiating with employers. In addition the legislation confines their role to unionised workplaces (unlike health and safety representatives). However, if these problems were resolved, learning representatives could play a useful role in representing employee views on skills. It is recognised that in the smallest firms the emergence of such representatives, even with comprehensive legal backing, is unlikely. Hence, the initiative needs to go further in establishing the figure of territorial learning representatives with rights in relation to small firms in a region: a relevant precedent is the figure of the territorial safety representative (Walters, 2001).

Another collective approach is provision for group training plans aimed at workers in small and medium sized companies contained in the tripartite agreements for continuous training in Spain, which began in 1993. A group training plan would typically be aimed at the workers in small firms in a particular sector in one province and would involve several different courses. Plans had to be sponsored and managed either by a relevant trade union or employers' association. Thus, for example, in 1999-2000, 26 % of the group plans in engineering (with an average of 1 344 trainees per plan) and 47 % of the plans in the hospitality sector (with an average of 532 trainees per plan) were promoted by unions (Rigby, 2002). Most of the union-sponsored training took place outside working hours and therefore was not controlled by employers. It typically provided training which was less specific than the largely on-the-job training made available by employers. As such it gave a wide range of workers the opportunity to develop their skills profile independently of employer control, helping to change the balance of power by equipping them with more explicit skills and increasing their mobility. The contents of plans were determined by surveys of employees and employers in the sector.

The emphasis on informal learning through work experience which has been associated with the development of the competence approach to skill inevitably poses the question of how to provide more recognition for informal learning. The worker who has developed implicit skills, which his/her employer has little incentive to recognise explicitly, needs rights and an infrastructure of support to translate those skills into a recognised and transferable form. The recent agreement by the French social partners (EIRO, 2003) provides an example of the form such individual rights could begin to take. The agreement signed in September of 2003 consolidates a number of rights, many of which were already in place but whose use is now facilitated. As well as individual rights to training, the agreement provides for a training passport, drawn up at the request of the employee, who takes responsibility for it and which lists the knowledge skills and occupational aptitudes acquired either in initial and continuing training or through professional experience. It also establishes that employees with 20 years' work experience will be eligible for a skills audit and will be given prioritised access to the recognition of their work-derived experience. For rights of this type to operate effectively there needs to be in place local centres where employees can obtain guidance on how to carry out their audit. There is logic in locating those centres in vocational educational institutions given the expertise which already resides there.

A second area of individual rights which has a role in supporting employees in skill definition is equality legislation. A considerable body of European legislation has been put in place over the last 30 years, initially to tackle sex discrimination related to pay, working conditions and social security, more recently extended to tackle discrimination on several additional grounds. Access to training is already covered by this legislation. The issue of skill is covered by equality legislation in equal

work for equal value. Thus when an applicant claims equal pay on grounds of equal value, comparisons are made between the applicant's work and that of the named comparator 'under such headings as effort, skill, and decision'. However, the degree to which effective mechanisms for implementing this equality legislation exist varies considerably in the European Union. The development of more effective equality legislation on skill recognition would have particular implications for women workers but would also be of benefit to other groups whose labour market power tends to be weaker, e.g. older and younger workers. It could take the form of obligations upon employers when assessing competences. Strebler, Thompson and Heron (1997) suggest several options in this respect which, although specifically developed in relation to gender, could be adapted for wider use. These include obligations on employers to check that competence headings apply equally to all groups, review whether self-assessment and peer assessment could be added to line managers' assessment of competences, and train line managers to interpret competence headings and be aware of potential biases in interpretation.

Conclusion

This article has sought to show that skills are defined as a result of a social process, a process which has produced inequities reflecting existing structures of power. The development of a comprehensive approach to VET, reflected in the Copenhagen Declaration, represents an opportunity to address these problems. Taking this opportunity will involve developing mechanisms to give a voice in the process of skills definition, development and delivery to collectives which, until now, have been largely silent – workers in small firms, the service sector and women workers. Traditional sectoral and national institutions have been unable to do this. There is a need for a multi-level approach which embraces the enterprise and individual employees but which, at the same time, recognises the need for national intervention to reach out to those sectors and collectives where the social process of skill definition is continuing to produce inequities.

   Current developments in implementing the Copenhagen Declaration have tended to emphasise the status quo with an emphasis on building on existing national structures. It has been stressed that such an approach is unlikely to result in significant progress. This is not an argument against the importance of a national framework of skill and qualifications; it suggests that such a national framework should take into account the issues raised by the social construction of skill and embrace the kind of initiatives on a more generalised basis. ∎

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Official recognition of professional knowledge acquired through experience
Towards the convergence of social policy in Europe

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SUMMARY

The processes of the evaluation and official recognition of knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal learning or work experience have to be analysed and interpreted in order to find solutions valid at any given time. The 2002 Copenhagen Declaration and the latest advances in this field within the European Union need to be translated into concrete action in the Member States.

This article presents experiences and points of view intended to contribute to the series of approaches to this important topic and to provide an example of models for its widespread use. The analysis consists of two parts: 'a broad view' which systematises some of the general requirements of such schemes, and a 'brief tour' of the experience of the Region of Navarra (*), a precursor to the forthcoming implementation of these policies in Spain.

(*) See www.pnte.cfnavarra.es/cualificaciones

Introduction

The Lisbon European Council of March 2000 was a milestone in the development of policies to promote the knowledge society as a tool for the socio-economic development of the European Union. One of the keys to implementing this strategy is to expand high-quality vocational education and training which will equip states with a skilled working population that is competent and versatile and able to adjust to changing demands in the production sector. Subsequently, the European Council Resolution on lifelong education [1] signalled that one of the priorities is for Member States and sectors to recognise and validate each other's qualifications resulting from formal, non-formal and informal learning and urged the removal of barriers between these forms of learning. The European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training built, accepted those proposals and demonstrated, in the Copenhagen Declaration [2], their willingness to give priority to skill- and qualification-recognition processes through enhanced cooperation in the field of vocational training.

In this context there have been many debates, conferences and publications on the processes for the certification of non-formal learning, most of them in Europe and often promoted and organised by Cedefop [3]**.** However, many countries, Spain among them, are at the critical stage of devising the technical and social measures necessary for

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[1] Resolution 2002/C 163/01. OJ C 163, 9.7.2002, p. 1.

[2] 'Copenhagen Declaration'. Declaration of European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, and the European Commission, convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training.

[3] The following are particularly noteworthy:

- *Agora V, Identification, evaluation and recognition of non-formal learning.* Cedefop Panorama series 46. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2002.
- Bjørnåvold, Jens. *Making learning visible: identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2002. (Cedefop Reference series 3013 EN.).
- *Validation of competences and professionalisation of teachers and trainers.* TTnet Dossier No 5, Cedefop, 2002.
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- *Common European principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning*. Final proposal from 'Working Group H' (Making learning attractive and strengthening links between education, work and society) of the objectives process. DG EAC B/1 JBJ D (2004).
- Descy, P.; Tessaring, M. *The foundations of evaluation and impact research***.** *Third report on vocational training research in Europe: background report*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004 (Cedefop Reference Series 3040).
- Leney, Tom. *Achieving the Lisbon Goal: The contribution of VET. Executive summary 4-11-04*. Available at: http://www.vetconference-maastricht2004.nl/pdf/bgstudy_Exec Summary.pdf.

making such processes generally available. It is therefore worthwhile recalling some of the factors behind the growing recognition of occupational skills, particularly those acquired through work experience.

As in the case of technological research and development, theory and practice need to be closely connected, especially during the phase of development and 'marketing'; the administrative, technical and social models adopted for the accreditation of skills need to ensure that the means do not detract from the ends or, conversely, that the ends being pursued are realistic.

Evaluation and certification of knowledge acquired through experience

Some countries have already been promoting processes for the assessment and accreditation of skills for several decades, while many others are now introducing the subject into social, employment and training policy. The importance of official accreditation of professional skills acquired through work experience or by other non-formal means of learning is accepted for a variety of reasons (⁴). Those reasons can be divided in three categories: socio-political, labour and strategic.

The *socio-political reasons* include the following**:**

(a) The first reason, as already mentioned, is concerned with *social and industrial justice*. In a State governed by the rule of law, the point of reference for the legality of something is its official nature. When it comes to professional advancement, this often translates into the need for objective and documentary accreditation of merits and skills. While younger people in the main possess such accreditation, many people who never had the opportunity to obtain occupational knowledge through formal learning systems and acquired it thanks to their work experience, are in less of a position to cope with the risks stemming from professional mobility.

(b) The knowledge society, with the transitory nature of knowledge and its unstoppable dynamism, accepts the need to promote systems for the accreditation of knowledge and skills acquired throughout life. While people live, they learn, sometimes subliminally, and although initial training and the education system perform a socialising function and develop basic abilities and knowledge, professional development rapidly outstrips them. Consequently, the social and occupational survival gear that people usually acquire when they are young needs to be updated and improved. It would be inconceivable for us to engage in an occupation with only the knowledge and skills we

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(⁴) Daniel Hernández analyses the reasons behind such measures in Latin America in *Política en certificación de competencias en América Latina*, Cinterfor Bulletin No 152, 2002. Bjørnåvold also discusses the subject in TTnet No 5, p. 18.

acquired during formal initial training. As Hernández ([5]) points out, initial training is more the beginning than the end of the learning process. The logical consequence of this that there should be a legal follow-up instrument which facilitates the accreditation of new knowledge acquired and also fosters the desire to learn new things**.**

(c) *Social cohesion and European integration*: as already mentioned, some EU countries are developing systems for the official certification of skills, which is why, in order to avoid fragmentation of the labour market, workers' rights and employers' recruitment possibilities, all Member States should advance in parallel**.**

The following are four of the *industrial policy* reasons that most directly affect workers:

• the first is the *close link to employment policy*. Objective recognition of individuals' occupational abilities has repercussions on their employability; in some cases, the regulations governing an occupation actually require official recognition;

• *people's motivation and job satisfaction* and the possibility of getting a better job are very relevant factors. Official recognition of professional knowledge frequently has a radical impact, in human and professional terms, on older workers;

• another major advantage of professional recognition is *greater labour-market transparency* and an improvement in collective bargaining processes, fostering the creation of consistent frames of reference for hiring and better employer/employee relations;

• given the upward trend in functional, geographical and professional mobility, guaranteeing the possibility of certifying different types of experience and technical knowledge acts as a *defence against labour-market turbulence* ([6]). The fact that a worker in a developed economy occupies on average between five and eight different posts, in one or more companies, in the course of his working life, means that he or she needs three forms of support: careers guidance, certification of knowledge and training for the job.

Finally there is one very important reason connected with *corporate strategy*. The various theories of corporate competitiveness stress the skills of human resources as a key determinant of success. Sound knowledge and good management of labour and professional relations in companies are made easier by the existence of a standardised official system for the objective recognition of acquired skills ([7]). A consequence of this is something of an organisational revolution**:** *it is to recognise, facilitate and manage the workplace as a place of continuing learning*.

([5]) Hernández, D. *Op. cit.* p. 37.

([6]) Fries Guggenheim, Éric*: Mobility and social cohesion*, in Agora V. *Op. cit.*

([7]) Mertens, Leonard: *La gestión por competencia laboral en la empresa y la formación profesional.* Madrid: OEI, 1998.

This means that agreements and workers' rights should include the possibility of performing skilling tasks and following job routes leading to complete occupational profiles. It also offers advantages from the corporate strategy point of view, because it means that people's job range and versatility are enhanced. And in some cases the official accreditation of workers' knowledge and skills form part of the requirements of quality standards.

Principles governing assessment of occupational skills gained through experience

Since our competence and skills keep growing, it is logical to provide mechanisms for their recognition in so far as they are relevant and useful to employment. While this guiding principle is accepted by all Member States of the European Union, it is difficult to put into effect. Even countries with considerable experience fail to agree on common models and procedures for assessment and certification of professional knowledge obtained by non-formal means or in the course of work.

A number of points concerned with assessment and recognition of work experience need to be considered if we are to make progress with a common policy on which there is a minimum of agreement [8].

Social construction. Assessing, accrediting and recognising professional knowledge is not simply a technical process, but also – and above all – a process of social construction in which consensus and agreement are essential [9]: consensus and agreement between worker and assessor, company and worker, or between the body issuing the official certificates and the company and associations. The value of the certificates and their recognition are closely bound up with the involvement of the various protagonists in getting the system under way, for which the proposal made by the European social partners offers encouragement [10].

Just as happens with money [11], a certificate can only be useful if it is underpinned by some form of guarantee. Certificates issued without the backing of a guarantee and not recognised by industry at large will be

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[8] Jens Bjørnåvold summarises the main aspects – how to measure and how to validate – in *Validation of prior learning in training occupations in Europe*, TTnet Dossier No 5.

[9] Vincent Merle stresses the supreme importance of agreement and concertation. Cf. The evolution of systems of validation and certification. In *European Journal Vocational Training* No 12, 1997.

[10] *Framework of actions for the lifelong development of competencies and qualifications.* ETUC, UNICE, CEEP, UEAPME, Brussels 2002.

[11] Several authors have used this simile. Cf. Jens Bjørnåvold in: *A question of faith? Methodologies and systems for assessing non-formal learning require a legitimate basis.* European Journal Vocational Training, No 12, *op cit.*

nothing more than mere paper, with no value in the workplace and very little social value.

Official nature of the processes. This is the corollary of our previous point. If the processes for assessing and certifying professional skills are institutionalised and made official to a certain degree, this helps to guarantee quality and to endow the certificates with a social value. An official body has the advantages of legal status, neutrality, objectivity and resources. An official centre provides a physical and legal point of reference whose authority society accepts more easily ([12]). One way of ensuring this official nature is through organisations and institutions; another is through independent technical bodies.

Funding. Given the objective of making it possible for citizens to choose to have their occupational skills assessed, an economic criterion is needed to adapt the means to the ends. There is a saying that the best is the enemy of the good. Thus it would be disproportionate, for example, when assessing and certifying the occupational skills of a welder in employment but without formal training, to make him undergo each and every one of the many possible tests that can be derived from the corresponding assessment criteria. Instead, it would seem more reasonable to group together sets of skills and establish contextualised and grouped systems for their assessment. The cost of assessing a unit of competence for an individual should not exceed, say, EUR 100 (approximately EUR 1 per hour of training).

Another related question is who should bear the cost of assessing skills. There are three basic possibilities, with the various combinations of the three for co-funding. These are the worker, the company and the government.

Accessibility to avoid divisions. Just as a society which puts into circulation a 'value', such as money, creates a certain divide between those who have it and those who do not, introducing official certification of skills acquired through experience risks creating a certain degree of division. When this is based on an objective assessment that is valid and reliable and on equality of access, by making the system democratic and generally available, the divide may be said to be positive. In other words, workers should be able to cope financially with the cost of having their skills recognised. There must be ways of making work compatible with recognition of skills, and the system must be geographically balanced. Finally, workers must be assisted in their dealings with those operating the system (obtaining information, organising their dossier, and guidance

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([12]) This is a feature that María Irigoin and Fernando Vargas attribute to the certification of skills in *Certificación de competencias. Del concepto a los sistemas*. Cinterfor Bulletin 152, *op cit*.

and support in overcoming any difficulties that arise). Otherwise, there is a risk that a negative system of assessment could emerge which creates a real risk of divisions between professionals: between those who work in towns and those who work in rural areas; those whose company can assist them in gaining skill accreditation and those who are more isolated; those who can afford to pay their share of the costs and those who are less well off; and those who have been trained and are equipped to cope with the system and those who are not. The introduction and implementation of accreditation policies must provide clear solutions to these difficulties.

Integration of services. A process for the recognition of skills must be closely linked to the systems for providing information, advice and occupational guidance. When people choose, or are obliged, to seek another type of job or to move to a new location, they should be able to rely on their work credentials being appropriate. For this to be so, the information and advice provided by a workers' organisation or employment service must include the possibility of the person concerned acquiring an official document accrediting the knowledge and skills that he or she has acquired to date.

Social effects of accreditation. There is no doubt that official recognition of occupational skills brings personal satisfaction to those concerned. While many people claim this as the sole reason for undergoing assessment, accreditation must also carry some social recognition and value.

The social effects of accreditation are directly proportional to the involvement of the various parties. The social construction already referred to is a necessary condition for giving a certificate tangible value. It would, for example, seem logical to think that institutional recognition of the accreditation of a qualification for an official post would arise only if the authorities have been involved in some way in the assessment, recognition and registration process. In the same way, acceptance of accreditation of a unit of a worker's competence by either a public- or private-sector company will be subject at least to the condition that the skills concerned are directly related to the job and that there is some guarantee that the person actually possesses the skills certified – in short, that the system is credible.

Transferability. One of the chief problems requiring a solution in our own model is that of ensuring a certain degree of transferability of skills and qualifications between the various sectors and occupations. Certifying skills typical of a given job in a certain type of company at a particular time may suit the company concerned and a specific group of workers, because the skills accredited are very closely linked to the performance

of the jobs they are doing at that particular time. However, the degree of transferability to other situations and to other periods of time may be very low. Then again, certifying skills that are too general may hinder recognition of skills at the workplace, while certifying team-work ability, creativity or communication skills would be inappropriate. No doubt, as Aristotle pointed out, virtue is in the mean.

Assessing complex abilities and values. Every technical worker is first and foremost a person with human, ethical and democratic values. What is more, an accepted view of professionalism includes these qualitative aspects of personality. But professionalism also includes other complex abilities and values of the person concerned, such as the capacity for team-work and problem-solving, creativity, etc.

One of the challenges in assessment is to break down professionalism, dividing it up into different skills which, while forming part of a complete and global concept of qualification, enable solutions to be found to the main methodological and ethical problems associated with assessing these elusive elements. Determining the ethical limits in an assessment of skills and being aware of how the whole can be divided into parts whose sum is a reasonable approximation of the whole, is an exciting subject of debate for those doing research in this field.

The risk of neo-Taylorism in the field of skills and training could militate against the reasons given here in advocating a system of assessment and recognition of occupational skills. We should not forget the experience of the 1960s and 1970s, when *dirigiste* techniques were used to break down tasks excessively in order to assess occupational skills ([13]).

Intervention model. There are many ways of approaching the assessment of a workforce's skills and abilities, but there are certain clear principles governing the way in which it is performed.
Besides the general points already made, we should not forget that 'the devil is in the detail' and that minor problems can undermine a worker's motivation, a company's expectations and the neutral role of the assessor ([14]).

When seeking to launch systems with which people are unfamiliar, such as the recognition of skills obtained by non-formal means, it is important to ensure that the model adopted takes care of small details and observes procedural regulations. This does not mean burying the guidance counsellor, the assessor or the candidate in a mass of red tape, but being able to answer a host of small questions such as 'Where do I

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[13] See Vossio, Raimundo. Certificación y normalización de competencias. Orígenes, conceptos y prácticas *Cinterfor Bulletin* No 152, 2002, p. 54.

[14] Ollin, Ros & Tucker, Jenny. '*The NVQ and GNVQ Assessor Handbook*'. Kogan Page, 1997.

have to go for information, advice and help or to make a complaint?', 'How and when can I start the process?', 'What is the value of the accreditation I can obtain?', 'How is recognition of skills integrated in the sectoral agreement or the company?', 'What steps should be taken by a company that wishes to base its human resource management on recognising its workers' skills?', 'What attitude and specific training do assessors and guidance counsellors require?', 'What IT tools exist for a candidate's self-assessment and positioning?, 'How can I get access?', 'What agreements on the exchange of information need to exist between employees, companies, and the employment and education authorities?', 'How do the qualifications of different countries relate?', 'Which certification model will be used to allow mobility of labour within the European Union?', 'What criteria and planning will be involved in developing the assessment process?', and so on.

In some countries considerable progress has been made with a model that combines legal, occupational, methodological, economic and democratic sources. In most of them efforts are being made to provide an effective and efficient response to a demand that may exceed the financial and managerial capacity of companies, organisations and government authorities. It is important to bear in mind that this is a policy involving large numbers: one in two workers (the figure varies between regions and countries) does not possess an official accreditation of the skills which he or she uses at work.

The risk of being assessed. It is often said that assessment is 'the hidden garden of the curriculum' since in it one encounters many complex subjects connected with social structure, values, and more complex technical and methodological aspects. If this is true for formal learning systems, it is even more so when we delve into the subject of passing judgement on an adult worker. For example: skilled workers whose knowledge and skills are already recognised by their employers, may have serious doubts about proceeding with assessment for official recognition of their skills. In some cases, the personal and professional risk of having their knowledge of the job in question subjected to summary judgement may cause them to abandon the idea or even to reject such processes.

This gives rise to a number of important principles as to how this should be done. In the first place one should begin by informing the candidate what is to be assessed, when and how. In other words, one must start by analysing how closely the occupational competence to be accredited is matched by the skills to be assessed. A process of direct and indirect mentoring, and self-assessment and positioning tools, should be used to obtain an initial self-assessment. If this is positive, it is a strong indication that the candidate will be successful in the accreditation process. A second principle which assessors should bear in mind is that of focusing the certification process on what the candidate knows, not on

what he or she does not know: on praise rather than criticism. As Eric Fries Guggenheim has put it ([15]), *'There is no such thing as a man without qualities'*.

Motivation. People must have good reasons for deciding to spend time, effort and money on having their experience and knowledge assessed. Some of these may have a lot to do with the satisfaction of obtaining professional recognition of a parcel of knowledge. In the same way, how a worker stands in relation to a given sectoral qualification may point him or her in the direction of appropriate further training. Other, extrinsic reasons for embarking on skills assessment include job mobility, improving one's job situation with one's present employer, greater job security, and legal requirements for an official qualification.

There are two factors to be borne in mind when it comes to ensuring that people are sufficiently motivated not just to embark on, but also to see through, the process of having their working competence assessed. The first is the interests of the worker concerned, and his or her job and family situation. The second is the assistance and support systems available to that worker. So far as the first factor is concerned, there is no doubt that the facilities and support which an employer can provide – flexible working hours and shifts, learning on the job, etc. – are a considerable help. Government assistance should definitely also form part of a system for certification of occupational skills.

Information sessions, personal counselling, tutoring and mentoring all contribute to enhancing motivation and sustaining interest over time. The career advice and support services are particularly important where a person's social and occupational skills are very weak.

Approved assessors. The role of a skills assessor or auditor should not be confused with that of a trainer/assessor. It is very important to separate conceptually the assessment skills from the formal learning process. This should oblige the teacher/trainer, when acting as an assessor, to make a great effort to understand the purpose of the assessment in a situation that is not necessarily linked to the training process.

Assessors have to be familiar with the techniques, the possibilities and the limits of assessment. In addition they need to possess a excellent sense of fairness and trustworthiness combined with certain interpersonal skills.

In addition to the knowledge and abilities mentioned, an assessor must have a thorough grasp of the relevant qualifications system so as to be able to use them as technical point of reference for his or her judgements. Another field of knowledge very relevant to assessing skills and

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([15]) Fries Guggenheim, É.: *Mobility and social cohesion.* Agora V. *op cit.* p. 68.

knowledge concerns the social and working environment and the company's organisation. All this means that assessors need to be officially approved. In fact, the task of setting up a system of assessment and certification of skills should begin with the accreditation and approval of assessors. Given the serious lack of professional experience in the field, this would call for a formal system of training in the relevant techniques and attitudes.

In the final analysis, a skills auditing service derives its reliability, credibility and results from the work of the guidance counsellors and assessors. Ensuring the competence, appropriate training, accreditation and approval of these professionals must form part of the preliminary groundwork.

Project for assessment, recognition and accreditation of skills: the example of Navarra

The Law on Qualifications and Vocational Training and its implementing regulations ([16]) provide Spain with a legal framework for creating a general system of occupational training, guidance and recognition. The model is still in its initial stages and it will be some years before we can tell whether it can meet the social, administrative and economic expectations of it.

Navarra is a region of Spain with a high degree of autonomy over policy decisions and considerable economic growth: GDP per head is 5 % above the average of the EU 15 and the unemployment rate is below 5 % ([17]), with a labour market in which an appreciable percentage of the workforce have no official accreditation of their occupational skills. Some years ago, the Department of Education of the Government of Navarra launched pilot projects with the aim of making progress in this field, and it is one of these that is described below.

At the national level, the General Council for Vocational Training, which is a body that advises the Spanish Government on vocational education and training and is made up of representatives of the public authorities and the main employers' organisations and trade union bodies, endorsed the development of the ERA project on the evaluation, recognition and accreditation of acquired knowledge and skills. This was to be coordinated at national level by the Directorate-General for Education, Vocational Training and Educational Innovation, in collaboration with the National Institute for Qualifications and the National Institute for Employment.

([16]) Available at http://wwwn.mec.es/educa/formacion-profesional/files/LeyCualifyFP.pdf

([17]) For more information: http://www.navarra.es/home-es/Navarra/Asi+es+Navarra/Navarra +en+cifras/

The purpose of the ERA project was to experiment with and develop – for the first time at a national level – a method for assessing, recognising and accrediting experience gained by workers in the course of their work and by other non-formal means.

The Navarra Council for Vocational Training, composed of representatives of the Departments of Education and Labour and the social partners, supported the involvement of Navarra in the project, and the Navarra Institute of Qualifications, which comes under the Department of Education's Vocational Training Service, took responsibility for implementing and coordinating the project in this region.

Project design: stages and tools

The ERA project was designed to assess candidates by units of competence corresponding to the only certificates currently officially recognised in Spain, namely the *certificados de profesionalidad* or certificates of professional competence awarded by the employment authorities, and the certificates of specific vocational training awarded by the education authorities. Thus, families of occupations were selected and, within them, units of competence at ISCED Level 3 that largely coincided with the two sets of certificates. Various groups of experts, working with teachers and workplace professionals, developed standardised skill benchmarks for each family of occupations.

At the same time, it was decided that the assessment procedure for each family of occupations should be carried out in two Autonomous Communities so as to permit the results to be compared. In Navarra units of competence for the occupations of gardener and home care assistant were assessed.

The project was conducted in four stages between June and December 2003:

Information stage

As this was the first government initiative aimed at assessing skills and knowledge acquired through experience, and the procedure involved was entirely unfamiliar, it was vitally important to inform potentially interested workers. A major publicity effort was therefore made to reach workers who might be interested in the scheme.

Since only two types of occupation were involved and Navarra is a Community with a population of around half a million, the fact that almost 500 people attended the information meetings organised to present the project in detail gives some idea of the interest aroused.

Selection stage

The general guidelines for the project prescribed that the skills assessment process should be restricted to about 20 people for each family of occupations in each Autonomous Community because of the time constraints applying to the project. This meant that candidates had

to be selected from among the people applying to participate. In Navarra, it was decided that the sole criterion for selection of candidates should be documented years of work experience in the occupations covered by the project. This led to 22 candidates being chosen for each occupation.

Guidance counselling stage

The team responsible for this stage of the project was composed of three (female) guidance counsellors who normally carry out careers guidance for the employment authorities or union organisations. The whole counselling team, as well as the assessment team to which we shall refer later, were specially trained for the project by the government's technical coordination team.

This stage had several objectives:

• to get to know the candidate. This involved compiling a dossier of his or her previous training and work experience as well as looking into his or her reasons for taking part in the project and aspirations;

• to help the candidate with self-assessment. For this the guidance counsellor worked through the official printed Self-assessment Guide produced by experts from each profession for use at the national level;

• to decide whether to continue with the procedure. On the basis of the results obtained from the Self-assessment Guide and her conversations with each candidate, the guidance counsellor decided who was suitable to proceed to the assessment stage. It was desirable that this decision should be taken jointly and accepted by the candidate who, if not recommended for the following stage, was given guidance as to the additional training needed;

• to help the candidate prepare for the assessment. Once it had been decided that the candidate should proceed, the counsellor gave the candidates advice and help in compiling their personal skills dossier.

All the gardening candidates, and 18 of the 22 home care assistant candidates were successful in the guidance counselling stage.

Assessment stage

The original project proposal stated that there should be one assessor for every five candidates. However, given the experimental nature of the project, it was decided in Navarra to use a team of two people for each occupation to make all the assessments. Each team was composed of one expert in the occupation concerned and a professional trainer in the particular subject-matter being accredited. This was designed to ensure that the assessment criteria were uniform and that the assessors' joint assessment would allow a better 'assessment of the assessment'. In some cases the assessors worked alternately as assessor and observer so as to streamline the process as far as possible while it was in progress.

A variety of tools were available to the assessors for determining the competence of candidates. These included the personal skills dossier, a work-related conversation with the candidate, direct observation of

performance at the place of work or in a simulated work situation in an appropriate environment, and supplementary written tests. All these tools used as their standard of reference the 'Guide to evidence of competence', a document which, like the Self-assessment Guide, was produced by experts from each occupation and was used by assessors nation-wide as a reference document when weighing up the evidence supplied by candidates and judging their skills accordingly.

In Navarra, regular use was made of the personal skills dossier, the work-related interview and observation of the candidate at work at least in a simulated situation; other tests were used in specific cases.

In all, 21 gardening and 17 home care assistant candidates were assessed as competent in the units in question. The six candidates who did not pass one or other of the stages received occupational guidance on the training available to meet their needs.

Evaluation of the project
The project evaluation was carried out from the perspectives of the various people involved.

The candidates' view
In order to discover the candidates' opinions, we asked 34 of them who had passed through all four stages of the procedure to complete a written questionnaire. This was designed as an open questionnaire to allow respondents to give their views on organisational, personal and work-related aspects and the like. The results were as follows:

(a) candidates initially found it difficult to understand the procedure because they had no previous knowledge or experience of ways of assessing the knowledge and skills acquired through work experience, although subsequent work with the guidance counsellors made things perfectly clear;

(b) obtaining all the evidence required for the personal skills dossier was not easy for a number of reasons. Sometimes companies no longer existed, former employers were hard to contact, and it was difficult to obtain detailed confirmation of tasks actually performed at a given company, of the content of training courses**,** etc.;

(c) obtaining a successful assessment would not merely provide them with official recognition of their skills but would also enable them, among other things, to gain social recognition of their occupation and would give them personal satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment, broadening the chances of further training and career advancement and enhancing their professional competence.

The view of the specialist team
The team of guidance counsellors and assessors were unanimous in their opinion that the project had been a success overall, as the objectives set had been largely attained. Among the detailed comments were:

(a) the guidance process is of prime importance for candidates, as is coordination of the work of counsellors and assessors;

(b) the reference material used – the self-assessment and evidence of skills guides – were essential to ensure that the process was conducted properly;

(c) a climate of mutual confidence between candidates and specialists was vital for the smooth conduct of the guidance and assessment process. This was achieved in the course of the experiment;

(d) the most useful tools for assessment were the work-related interview and observing candidates at work in their actual or a simulated working environment. The skills dossier, on the other hand, generally failed to justify the hopes placed in it because it was not specific enough, due to the lack of contributions from employers. It was therefore felt that whenever possible candidates should be observed at work in a genuine work situation so as to minimise the disturbance of an unfamiliar environment.

The view of the project coordinators

The Navarra Institute of Qualifications closely monitored and coordinated the project in Navarra. Looking at the project as a whole, it came to the following interesting conclusions:

• there is considerable social demand for systems allowing for knowledge and skills acquired through work experience or in other non-formal ways to be assessed, recognised and accredited. The reasons behind the demand vary considerably; some, such as the personal satisfaction and sense of fulfilment of the person concerned, the social recognition of the occupation, the interaction with others in related occupations and the fact that the way is opened up to more and better training, are not customarily given sufficient consideration;

• considerable effort must be made to spread the culture of accrediting knowledge and skills among the public at large, and employees and employers in particular. Awareness of the importance of such procedures is still seriously lacking in Spain. On the one hand, employers have a clear interest in making the skills of their workers visible, but this means finding a way of recognising these in terms of career advancement, salary, etc. It would help to expand social dialogue, particularly between companies and workers, so that this process is given the impetus and priority needed to ensure that it becomes firmly established;

• cooperation and coordination of the work of the guidance counselling and assessment teams is fundamental to the process so as to ensure that it takes maximum account of the individual characteristics of each candidate. Similarly, it is important that the counsellors and assessors taking part in the procedure are carefully chosen as they should combine the relevant technical knowledge with the ability to implement the procedure;

- the procedure generates a valuable volume of information that can be used in designing workers' continuing training;
- once the guidance counselling and assessment procedure has become general practice, the costs involved should prove reasonable. In our experience the cost of certification of a unit of competence ([18]) varies between EUR 100 and EUR 200, which could be shared between employer, employee and government without imposing too much of a financial burden;
- although this process focuses on summative evaluation, the element of formative evaluation is not insignificant since the people assessed become aware of their skills and are given considerable encouragement to progress in their respective occupational fields. In our particular experiment, all the candidates who were assessed positively were offered the chance of suitable additional training, which enabled 90 % of them to obtain an official vocational training qualification awarded by the formal education system within six months;
- we consider that this procedure is valid, reliable and replicable. A number of Spanish Autonomous Regions are in fact conducting further experiments in the assessment of skills based on this model;
- the structure of the new National Catalogue of Occupational Qualifications will make it easier for the validation process to focus even more sharply on better measurement of learning outcomes, as is recommended in the proposals that have arisen out of the Copenhagen process;
- the consequences of this focus on validation will be greater transferability between the different learning contexts and increased transnational transparency and mobility, especially when the European credit transfer system becomes better established in the field of vocational education and training ([19]).

([18]) This estimate is based on the assumption of an ongoing process, using on the skill benchmarks and assessment guides developed, and the guidance and assessment teams set up as required.

([19]) 'Towards a European qualifications framework (and a credit transfer system for vocational education and training). European Commission. Directorate-General For Education and Culture. Brussels, 3 December 2004. Available at: www.vetconference-maastricht2004.nl/doc/EQF_Maastricht.doc

Conclusion

If the countries of the EU are to achieve the European Commission's aim of leadership of the world economy, it will be important to pay special attention to the occupational skills of its human resources. The contribution that Europe should bring to the international scene is that of ensuring balanced development in the economic and social spheres. The history of Old Europe makes it more sensitive than other countries and regions to the need to strengthen the social systems that enhance people's well-being.

Integrating social and economic policies and ensuring their compatibility are the great challenge facing the 21st century. The process of assessing, recognising and accrediting knowledge and skills obtained by work experience is one of a small but select group of measures that will make it possible to move forward together with great synergy on both the economic and social planes. Let us not miss the opportunity. ∎

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Two or three vocational training pathways?

An assessment and the current situation in Spain [1]

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SUMMARY

This article outlines the development of vocational training in Spain through the provisions of the major education Laws of 1970, 1990 and 2002. It discusses the extent to which vocational training has been introduced into the education system, i.e. has been converted into regulated vocational training, and how many pathways have been developed. The pathways are the result of the combination of tracks designed by education systems and social initiatives by individuals and social actors. In spite of the education reforms, the types of vocational training pathway retain a certain continuity.

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[1] This article is a reflection based on research done for the author's doctoral thesis entitled 'From the vocational training counter-reform of the LGE to the LOGSE counter-reform. Vocational training pathways and training cycles after comprehensive secondary education', guided by Jordi Planas i Coll and presented on 10 July 2002 at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to take stock of the development of (regulated) ([2]) vocational training in secondary education, particularly in Spain which experienced major reforms in 1970 and 1990. A third reform in the pipeline since 2002 has been held up by political vicissitudes ([3]). One of the fundamental aspects of the legislative reforms is the relationship between academic education and vocational training in secondary education, and more specifically the merging or segregation of training pathways in lower secondary education, especially after completion of compulsory education (up to the age of 16). Although it has become common to use the concept of 'pathways' (Spanish *itinerario*) for the route mapped out by the education system, it is essential to distinguish between these 'official' training routes and those that young people actually follow in practice (Raffe, 2003). This is why we prefer to use the term 'tracks' (Spanish *vias*) to refer to the division between academic and vocational training and the term 'pathways' to describe the actual passage of young people through the education system. As we shall see, this distinction is pertinent when we look at how, in the case of Spain, the aggregate action of individuals can change the number of tracks proposed by the education system.

For many years the debate about whether secondary education should be merged or segregated was the origin of educational reforms. In Europe, the relationship between general and vocational pathways has given rise to three types or models of education system (Jackson, 1999):
• 'tracked system' (Germanic countries), where secondary education is segregated into general and vocational tracks which are only loosely connected;
• 'unified system' (Nordic countries), where secondary education is integrated and there is very little differentiation between specific pathways;
• 'linked system' (France, Spain since the General Law on Education 1970), where secondary education is separated into different tracks but with bridges or contact points between the different tracks.

([2]) In Spain, regulated vocational training is any training to enable the trainee to engage in an occupation included in the education system. It is thus different from occupational training, which is promoted and financed by the labour authorities, normally at a basic level for young people or designed to retrain adult unemployed people. Historically, there have been two levels of regulated vocational training, levels 2 and 3 in accordance with the European Union's classification of qualifications. The connection between those two levels has been through ups and downs, as explained in the article.

([3]) In 2002 the Law on the Quality of Education was passed which transformed compulsory secondary education; but the change of government in March 2004 brought the implementation of this Law to a standstill and led to a slow process of debate with the education community which is just starting to bear fruit (December 2004). We will return to this point at the end of the article.

Ministry of
Education and Science

Spanish Education System

AGE	General Education		
	University Education	**3**rd cycle	
		2nd cycle	
		1st cycle	

Advanced Technician Diploma

Higher Level Training Cycles of Specific Vocational Training

18

Certificate of Higher Secondary Education

| Y2 | • **Natural sciences and health** • **Technology** • **Humanities and Social Sciences** • **Arts** • **Baccalaureate** |
| Y1 | |

Technician Diploma

Middle Level Training Cycles of Specific Vocational Training

16

Certificate of Lower Secondary Education		**Certificacion**
Y4	**Compulsory Secondary Education**	**2**nd cycle	**Social Guarantee Programmes**
Y3		
Y2		**1**st cycle
Y1	

12

Y6	**Primary Education**	**3**rd cycle
Y5		
Y4		**2**nd cycle
Y3		
Y2		**1**st cycle
Y1	

6

Y6	**Pre-primary Education**	**2**nd cycle
Y5		
Y4		
Y3		**1**st cycle
Y2		
Y1		**Specific Vocational Training**

3

0

Special Education

Artistic Studies

Language Studies

Certificate equivalent to
University Diploma

Higher studies in conservation
and restoration of cultural
properties, ceramics,
drawings and glass

Higher Certificate
(equivalent to
University Degree)

Higher Level

Higher Certificate
(equivalent to
University Degree)

Higher Level

**Advanced
Technician Diploma**

Higher Level
Training Cycles
in Plastic Arts
and Design

**Certificate of Higher
Seconary Education**

Vocational Diploma

Technician Diploma

Middle Level
Training Cycles
in Plastic Arts
and Design

3rd cycle

Y6

Y5

Middle Level

2nd cycle

Y4

Y3

**Higher
Cycle**

Y4
Y3
Y2
Y1

1st cycle

Y2

Y1

**Elementary
Cycle**

Y4
Y3
Y2
Y1

**Elementary
Level**

Y4
Y3
Y2
Y1

⬤ **Specific test**

☐ **Entrance examination**

**Plastic Arts
and Design**

Music and Dance

Dramatic Arts

These three different types of system, which reflect diverse social, economic and political histories, are undergoing a process of European 'convergence' (Green et al., 2001) towards the 'linked system', i.e. countries with a tradition of segregation are introducing common curricular or organisational elements, and countries with a more integrated tradition are introducing more diversified pathways. But we should not forget that 'societal' traditions (in the sense used by Maurice, 1994) also carry considerable weight.

The evolution of the Spanish system is typical. Prior to 1970 it was a highly segregated system, with vocational training practically outside the school system. Then in 1970 there was an unsuccessful attempt to integrate vocational training into secondary education, which led to a counter-reform placing it in the second zone, so called by Grignon to emphasise the subordinate and marginalised role of vocational training (Grignon, 1971), albeit with some links to the baccalaureate. A second attempt at integration was made in 1990, but its implementation encountered numerous difficulties. Since 2000 discussion has focused almost exclusively on the possibilities of unifying lower secondary education; the pedagogical theory of comprehensive education underlying unification (in other words, that measures taking account of diversity would make it possible to have a unified curriculum up to the age of 16) has been extensively examined, as have organisational patterns within this phase. It is as if the system evolved from a 'tracked system' into a 'linked system' via a 'unified system'. Let us look at some details.

Vocational training in the General Law on Education (Ley General de Educación, LGE, 1970)

The General Law on Education of 1970 had the task of responding to the growing demand for education in the post-compulsory schooling phase and of adapting the Spanish education system to the standards of the developed countries. Clearly developmentalist in inspiration, in the fashion of theories of human capital, but without being able to shake off the rhetoric of the Franco regime, it is the first Law to introduce the notion of comprehensive education - without, however, mentioning the word – by unifying primary education, eliminating the elementary baccalaureate and extending unified schooling up to the age of 14 thus creating general basic education (Educación General Básica) from 6 to 14 years of age (Carabaña, 2002; Lorenzo, 1996). Furthermore, it also integrated vocational training into the education system in a process of institutionalisation, formalisation and structuring (Casal et al., 2003) which led to the establishment of regulated vocational training with the clear objective of providing initial training for employment, but within a

school context. The vocational training was incorporated on the basis of comprehensive principles, i.e. in the form of short training courses after each stage of education – not as alternative tracks. There was also a meritocratic component to progression through the education system: the Law envisaged first-level vocational training for students who had completed basic general education, second-level vocational training for students who had acquired the baccalaureate, and third-level vocational training for students who had completed a short course of university education. To some extent, vocational training was seen not as parallel tracks but as extra training in a specific professional field after each stage of academic education.

The implementation of this educational reform led to a real counter-reform (Planas, 1986): due to pressure from the social partners (linked to the private sector) and a chronic shortage of public resources, the Decree of 1974 regulating vocational training introduced compulsory first-level training for students who failed their basic general education, second-level training which could be entered from first-level training after taking special courses (which ended up accounting for more than 90% of enrolled students) and abolished third-level training. Thus, first- and second-level training and the BUP-COU (Polyvalent Standard Baccalaureate – the academic track giving access to university, the baccalaureate) remained as the two typical tracks defined by Baudelot and Establet (1976) ([4]). Despite this, the pathways that emerged as a result of action taken by individuals, students with their strategies and expectations, teachers with their assessment practices, and local implementation by training schools can be said to be of three kinds (Merino, 2002):

- pathways which led to lack of schooling or, more accurately, a lack of a training pathway and young people dropping out of school. Even though first-level vocational training was compulsory for pupils without a school-leaving certificate, the fact that many of them were discouraged and the lack of effective control by the education authorities meant that a significant percentage of pupils under the age of 16 were already outside the education system, either because they did not enrol for vocational training, or because they dropped out in the first or second year (approximately 30 %);
- continuous pathways between primary education and vocational training. Although in the dual track approach this pathway lacked status, it has to be recognised that half of the enrolled students had the school-leaving certificate but, for various reasons, preferred vocational training. In fact, it was those students who had the best prospects of completing second-level vocational training;
- continuous pathways between the baccalaureate and university. Despite its name, the Polyvalent Standard Baccalaureate (BUP) was

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([4]) See Annex 1.

standard to some extent but not very polyvalent, while the Pre-University Course (COU) turned into a kind of fourth baccalaureate with 'natural' continuity in selection and university entrance. Although the growth in vocational training meant that fewer enrolled for the baccalaureate (Carabaña, 1997), this did not prevent strong growth in university enrolment during the 1980s, with university too no longer being the closed and elitist institution it was in former times.

A fourth pathway has to be added to these three, namely, the students who were secondary school graduates but did not opt for BUP and went on to take second-level vocational training as their second course. This phenomenon was recognised by vocational training institutions, which had specific groups of 'BUP-ists' ('*buperos')* ([5]) (Merino, 2002). This was a third network which Baudelot and Establet (1976) refused to recognise as a real network. Not only was it numerically larger, it also represented one of the fundamental features of alternance systems.

Vocational training in the Law on the General Regulation of the Education System (Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo, LOGSE, 1990)

The Law on the General Regulation of the Education System (LOGSE) was passed in 1990 ([6]) under the banner of comprehensive education and after a trial period with the so-called common 'trunk' (i.e. the unified curriculum up to 16 years of age). Paradoxically, this Law also contained elements capable of negating the comprehensive principle, and the trial period was too short to convince the education community and too long to maintain the hopes and expectations of the actors involved.

One of the objectives of the Law was to remedy the deficiencies highlighted by implementation of the LGE, such as the dual certificate after completion of basic schooling at the age of 14 and the poor image of vocational training ([7]). In order to do so, the Law applied organisational and didactic solutions from socio-pedagogical theories inspired by comprehensive principles. However, what it did was to unify the curriculum for 12-14 year-olds by eliminating first-level vocational training

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([5]) This was the name commonly given to the groups of pupils coming from the BUP and entering directly into second level vocational training. In some schools they were grouped separately from students coming from first level vocational training.

([6]) See Annex 2.

([7]) For many years it was thought that vocational training schools were only for students who did not want to study and had not been successful in compulsory education. The fact that many public vocational training schools were located (segregated from academic schools) on the outskirts of large and medium-sized cities only contributed to this image of marginalisation and of a place to 'park' troubled young people. The fact that many of the teaching staff were demotivated also contributed to this gloomy picture.

and building a bridge between basic education and the baccalaureate, even though the Law gave part of basic vocational training to compulsory secondary education (ESO, from the ages of 12 to 16) by introducing curriculum variability through variable credits – optional courses that pupils choose in principle but which teachers take as background for organising pathways on the basis of the academic performance of pupils. In other words, although an optional part to the curriculum was introduced, it was the differences in performance and the guidance of the teachers which ensured that the different subjects offered by the institutes allowed pathways to be created in line with the type of studies to be followed after compulsory education. So the strong comprehensive nature of lower secondary education in practice meant a fundamentally academic curriculum, and in the first years of application it was already clear that this comprehensive element would have to be toned down ([8]).

During the trial period a phenomenon occurred which handbooks of sociology classify as 'perverse effects'. The demand for the so-called 'common trunk' was very widespread in the most progressive sectors of the education community. However, in some of the schools which volunteered to try out the reform, the common trunk was provided in parallel with BUP, or with vocational training, and with both BUP and vocational training in the private officially-approved schools that joined up for the trial period. In other words, these private schools offered the three tracks at the same time. And the students who went in for the common trunk were those who did not have the required level to do the baccalaureate (by common agreement between the students, families and teachers) but who felt that vocational training alone was not enough (Merino, 2002). We can say that, paradoxically, instead of bringing the general and vocational tracks closer together, the creation of a common trunk merely forced them further apart. However, with the general implementation of the reform this effect is no longer in evidence, but it partly explains subsequent pressure to establish training pathways within the 'common trunk'.

The application of comprehensive criteria, combined with meritocratic criteria, led those who drafted the LOGSE to adopt – intentionally or unintentionally – the model of the regulated vocational training in the LGE, eliminating the first level or steering drops-outs from compulsory secondary education into the Social Guarantee Programmes, and setting up two courses with a short cycle of professional development after a stage of academic training, i.e. the Intermediate-Level Training Cycles (Ciclos Formativos de Grado Medio - CFGM) for holders of the secondary school leaving certificate, and the Advanced-Level Training Cycles

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([8]) This was needed not only for the organisation of groups who could use the variable credits, but also to underline the necessity of creating internal and external training measures for students with serious difficulties in following the normal rhythm because of their attitudes or aptitudes. These measures emphasised manual apprenticeship and basic social skills.

(*Ciclos Formativos de Grado Superior* – CFGS) for secondary school graduates. In theory, the CFGM was intended to provide pupils with an alternative to the baccalaureate, not because they did not meet the entry requirements, but because of their interests, and in the same way the CFGS would provide an alternative to university [9].

The possibilities of a counter-reform, as happened with the LGE, point in two directions. The first is that the CFGM becomes the second option for those who fail the baccalaureate. In fact, since entry requirements for the academic and vocational track have been made the same (a certificate of secondary education is necessary to enrol both for the baccalaureate and for the training cycles of the intermediate level), and the intermediate and advanced levels have been left unconnected, enrolment for the baccalaureate far exceeds enrolment for the CFGM, and each year the proportion of students enrolling for the baccalaureate is increasing (Merino, 2002). Furthermore, a significant but unquantifiable number of pupils with secondary school-leaving certificates have been upgraded by their teachers, who know that students without a school-leaving certificate are caught in a dead-end, and they agree to give the certificate on condition that the students enrol for a CFGM, a condition which the family then does not keep. In any event, failure in the baccalaureate highlights the option of the CFGM. The second direction is a link between the CFGM and the CFGS to prevent the former becoming another dead-end. Many actors in the education community have called for such a link, and it has been tried out in a number of places such as Catalonia, but it is strongly opposed by the education authorities and vocational trainers, who do not want to lose vocational training for academic (baccalaureate) students.

In any event, we again encounter three pathways:

• failure of compulsory schooling. Ending compulsory schooling without a school-leaving certificate is the consequence of educational careers consisting of an accumulation of failures, maladjustment to school and low expectations, and probably stems from the transition from primary to secondary education. We have two variants in this first group: students who enter training schemes (social guarantee programmes (PGS) or others provided by the local community) and students who enter the labour market directly [10];

[9] This, incidentally, lowered the demographic pressure on the university, where the debate on mass entry had popularised two more than dubious ideas: that the university did not serve to promote integration in the working world and that the students and their families placed excessively high expectations on the university as an institution. No one seemed to realise that the application of LOGSE was being undertaken in a situation where demographic cohorts were declining, which meant that, if the problem in the 1980s was that of mass entry of students, in the first ten years of 2000 the problem would be precisely the opposite, namely the lack of enrolment. Furthermore, in many vocational branches, completing the CFGS was a preliminary and not an alternative to university. In the case of Catalonia, 40 to 60 credits were recognised (almost a complete academic course) in many technical engineering subjects for the industrial CFGS courses, and in education-oriented subjects for CFGS courses dealing with community services.

- secondary school-leaving certificate and entry into professional life with or without a fail in the first cycle of the baccalaureate. There can also be other forms, such as the young people who decide to enter the labour market after the CFGM because they think they have already had enough training, or the opportunity costs are too high, (they can get jobs in the short term) and the option costs for a continuation of studies (reversibility of options, Vincens, 2000) are very high. The young people who decide to extend their training and professional development are those who, through different mechanisms, enrol in a CFGS. The expectations of a higher status mean that the expected benefits of the decision outweigh its costs;
- secondary school-leaving certificate and a continuation along the academic track. Under the LOGSE, the academic track of post-compulsory secondary education is reduced to two courses, the gap between the end of compulsory schooling and entry into university is reduced to two years, which brings it much closer. Here too, there are two variants: university entrance after the baccalaureate and the entrance examination, or access to a CFGS. This latter variant would update the fourth pathway produced following implementation of the LGE, albeit with a higher status.

The attempt at reform of the Organic Law on the Quality of Education (2002)

The real counter-reform of the LOGSE started in 2002 with the entry into force of the Organic Law on the Quality of Education (LOCE) ([11]), but in a slightly different sense from the LGE counter-reform. The LOCE is expressly opposed to the comprehensive principle, to which it attributes many of the ills afflicting Spanish education, and it automatically attributes beneficial effects to measures designed to destroy it. However, the LOCE is based on a fundamentally ideologically anti-comprehensive discourse, a discourse committed to combating the ideological assumptions of progressive tendencies in education. Under the label of 'quality for all' segregation is introduced into lower secondary education, which ceases to be highly comprehensive. On the other hand, it introduces practically no measures to reduce the mild comprehensive component of post-compulsory secondary education ([12]), which remains a paradox. Furthermore, the creation of pathways in compulsory secondary education (ESO) was a common practice in many secondary-level

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([11]) See Annex 3.

([12]) Nor did the Law on Vocational Training and Qualifications, more preoccupied with the avatars of the relationship between regulated training and non-regulated occupational and continuing training, and the complex subject of recognition and accreditation of competencess acquired from diverse sources.

institutions, based on those mechanisms which LOGSE itself envisaged. LOCE sanctions these pathways, translates them into pedagogical dogma and in effect reduces compulsory and common education to 15 years with the introduction of the Vocational Initiation Programmes (*Programas de Iniciación Profesional* – PIP). Finally, a second cycle of compulsory secondary education (15-16 years) has been designed with pathways geared to the type of education (general or vocational) that students are to follow afterwards, and with the possibility of leaving the education system to enter unregulated training schemes.

Obviously, young people, their families, teaching staff, schools and the various levels of education authority have not had time to act and to influence the construction of educational pathways. Therefore, we can only surmise the possible pathways constructed from the tracks outlined in the new legislation:

• early school-leaving channelled through PIPs. The replacement of the PGS (Social Guarantee Programmes) by PIPs is unlikely to resolve the problems created beforehand. The fact that PIPs last for two years reminds one a little of the now defunct first-level vocational training, and that its role is to provide a second chance academically (giving access to the secondary education leaving certificate) may change the plans and expectations of the young people who enter these programmes;

• early professional development within compulsory secondary education with more or less natural continuity in the CFGMs. The scope of the classification of students in the second cycle of compulsory secondary education, the cachet of technical and professional education groups, and the discretionary nature of teachers' assessments will determine the expectations and options of young people;

• early entry into the academic track. The specialisation in scientific and arts subjects in the second cycle of compulsory secondary education in effect represents a return to the four-year baccalaureate and clearly prepares students to continue their studies in higher education. Once again there are two variants: university and CFGS.

Some conclusions on the current confused situation

The change of government in March 2004 brought the implementation of the new legislation to a standstill. There is a great sense of uncertainty in the education community, and at the time these lines are being written (December 2004) there is only one discussion document which the Ministry has published for public debate (Quality education for all and between all: www.debateeducativo.mec.es) which criticises the LOCE pathways and proposes vague measures to foster diversity which hark

back to measures already defined in LOGSE. One of the intentions of the new ministerial team ([13]) is to avoid vocational training being associated with poor students, and to ensure that failure in school does not lead to social exclusion. They have not been able to finalise a proposal on tracks, with ages and access requirements for each track.

The dual or triple track debate has developed into the (old) familiar debate on the prestige of vocational training and strategies to 'lend more dignity' to vocational training. As De Pablo says, the problem is not that there are two tracks but that one of them is the Royal Road and the other is discredited. The solution, according to De Pablo, is to set up many different tracks, as in Sweden and Germany, with different regimes (De Pablo, 1996). Other authors think exactly the opposite, and say that in order to find a solution the different tracks should be increasingly integrated into an upper secondary level; this has been the objective of a number of recent reforms in Norway and Australia (Skårbrevik, Båtevik, 2001; Polesel, 2001). From another point of view, Carabaña claims that vocational training should be given a formative value which cannot be measured by the results of vocational integration, nor should one believe that these measures will change the social status of manual labour. Despite this, vocational training should give students training in general content which should not be confused with the baccalaureate (Carabaña, 1988), and should thus avoid creating an excessively technical vision because, in the words of Gramsci, the aim of vocational training is not to produce 'little monsters with an infallible eye and an unfailing hand' (Manacorda, 1985).

The situation is at present confused. A great many people in the world of education question the chances of success of the education reform. Indeed, people have begun to say it is impossible to solve educational problems through reforms (Sarason, 2003). It is also true that people often have excessively high expectations of reforms, or the reforms have over-ambitious goals such as the elimination of social inequalities by according vocational education the same status as academic education. These excessively high expectations and ambitious objectives run the risk of creating considerable disappointment or generating undesirable effects if there is not sufficient consensus, particularly among the key players in the development and implementation of the reform (Planas, Tatjer, 1982; Tedesco, 1994).

With regard to future scenarios, regulated vocational training faces two big paradoxes: the first paradox consists in the fact that, if the intention is to increase its prestige, it has to become more selective, but then it will lose a large part of its potential target-group, which will be thrown back on welfare measures rather than training measures. The second is that integrated vocational training consisting of cycles after each stage of

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([13]) The words of the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Education, Alejandro Tiana, in the speech given in the Athenaeum in Madrid on 26 October 2004.

education becomes blurred and loses its identity. On the other hand, segregated vocational training may appear condemned to the second 'zone', but it can strengthen a feeling of identity that will socialise students and teachers within a professional ethos which, without descending into an anti-intellectual discourse, can contain a positive element of identification with 'manual' trades, even though they are increasingly less manual (this was Castro's backing for segregated schools in order to preserve 'the soul' of vocational training, Castro, 1988).

A personal conclusion to end: vocational training is not an instrument for making the social division of labour less unequal (is the education system as a whole less unequal?), but if we cannot improve the social status of manual labour, we can at least make an effort to 'dignify' vocational training. Dignifying it does not necessarily mean making it more selective. On the contrary, it means making it more attractive to a large percentage of the students who have successfully completed their compulsory primary and secondary education (as happened with the LGE); it means equipping it with reversible pathways which do not lead to dead-ends for students and their families; and it means giving students the possibility of a link to higher education, a link which will be feasible only for a few students, but which will highlight the possibility of reaching the apex of the education pyramid. Indeed, higher vocational training and the first cycles of university are converging. Some autonomous communities, such as Catalonia, have even started to recognise the credits from vocational training of students who enrol in university in careers in the same professional field.

Improving vocational training is a very laudable objective, which also generates consensus among the social actors, the educational community, politicians and society in general (who is against improvement?). But achieving that objective is an entirely different matter. We have already mentioned the paradox of selectivity, which in our opinion is not the way to improve the standing of vocational training. Nor is it worth naively copying the vocational training systems of other countries, such as the well-known German dual system, since changes have to be adapted to the characteristics and inertias specific to each country, although the spread of in-company training placements represents unquestionable and unquestioned progress. The eternal question of economic resources can – especially in a country like Spain where the education system suffers from a chronic lack of funding – become a pretext for obscuring other organisational or pedagogical shortcomings. Nor is it worth making the argument about vocational training's alleged superiority over university when it comes to finding a job and career advancement (in Spain it is common to hear that a construction worker earns more than a doctor), because it generates more mistrust than benefits for vocational training (especially if those who make such statements have been to university and are also sending their children to university). In the end, perhaps it is the teaching profession

which holds one of the keys, in so far as it shares and is capable of transmitting a professional ethos that links training to the working world where pupils will have better chances of professional, and hence social, integration.   ◼

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ANNEX 1

Basic structure of secondary education under the General Law on Education (LGE, 1970) following implementation of the Decree of 1974

years

14	EGB – Basic General Education	
	(School-leaving certificate)	(Certificate)
15	BUP (Polyvalent Standard Baccalaureate)	FP1 (Vocational training 1)
16		
17		FP2 (Vocational training 2)
18	COU (Pre-university Course)	
19	University	

ANNEX 2

Basic structure of secondary education under the Law on the General Regulation of the Education System (LOGSE, 1990)

years

13-16	ESO – Compulsory Secondary Education		
	(School-leaving certificate)		(No School-leaving certificate)
17	Baccalaureate	CFGM (intermediate-level training cycles)	PGS (Social Guarantee Programmes)
18			
19	University	CFGS (advanced-level training cycles)	

ANNEX 3

Basic structure of secondary education under the Organic Law on the Quality of Education (LOCE, 2002)

years

13	ESO – Compulsory Secondary Education		
14			
15	Science-Humanities pathway	Technical-vocational pathway	
16	Science pathway	Humanities pathway	Technical-vocational pathway	PIP (Vocational Initiation Programmes)
	(School-leaving certificate)		
17	Baccalaureate	CFGM (intermediate-level training cycles)	
18			
19	University	CFGS	

Participative learning through work

Apprenticeship and part-time higher education

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SUMMARY

Policy-makers in Europe and beyond are increasingly preoccupied with finding ways to foster lifelong learning. Recent work has drawn attention to the pedagogical benefits of apprenticeships which combine opportunities for learning in the workplace and in specialist educational institutions. This paper suggests that the combination of employment and attendance on part-time courses in higher education also has pedagogical and motivational strengths. Those looking for ways of widening participation have often been slow to recognise the strengths of the mixed approach. Furthermore there has been little analysis of its appeal to individuals who, for various reasons relating to social and economic change, are reluctant to participate in full-time courses. It follows from the arguments presented that more resources and effort should be invested in increasing the opportunities available to people across the socioeconomic spectrum to participate in both education and employment.

Introduction

Increasing lifelong learning is a key aspiration for international policy-makers (see *inter alia* European Commission, 1996; OECD, 1996; Unesco, 1996) and at national level in countries such as the UK (DfEE, 1998). This paper suggests that approaches which combine work and study can play an important role in encouraging more adults to participate. This view has been supported by a recent comprehensive review by researchers in Denmark of the relationship between work and education and the potential for facilitating further links (Illeris et al., 2004). Illeris and his associates describe a variety of ways in which engagement in formal learning opportunities and employment can take place. This paper focuses on only two: apprenticeship, where it affords opportunities

for learning in the workplace and in specialist educational institutions (e.g. Fuller and Unwin, 2003a; Guile and Young, 1999), and the option for people to participate in part-time higher education while working (e.g. Tight, 1991; Davies, 1999). The work and study principles underpinning apprenticeship can be seen as relevant to part-time higher education (HE) and as a positive reason for creating more opportunities for people to follow such courses while working. The ideas presented in this paper are mainly derived from the UK experience but are also likely to apply in other European countries which have developed systems of apprenticeship and HE.

The paper argues that the opportunity to combine participation in contrasting communities of practice (in the workplace and educational settings) appeals to many adults, and deserves to be taken more seriously by agencies (at national and European levels) which aim to increase people's involvement in formal educational opportunities. Hitherto, policy-makers looking for ways to raise participation have given relatively little attention to encouraging employers to make the work and study option available to more employees. For example, the policy discourse on expanding take up of HE, at least in the UK, has tended to focus on the need to increase individuals' attendance in full-time provision. Much less attention has been given to finding ways of helping people who, for various reasons, are reluctant or unable to take the full-time option.

The paper is organised in three sections. Section one refers to two types of provision (apprenticeship and part-time HE), which offer people the chance to combine employment with participation in formal study. Formal study is taken to mean attendance on courses provided by educational institutions leading to recognised qualifications. In the second section, the paper outlines some of the social and economic conditions under which more adults are pursuing part-time HE while working, and discusses how social change is fostering this trend. Section three highlights the value of the 'learning as participation' metaphor for understanding how people learn through engagement in social practices, and draws attention to the contribution situated learning theory has made to theorising workplace learning. It goes on to suggest that the challenge for situated theory is to address how people learn through, and make sense of, their participation in diverse educational and work settings. The paper concludes that, as a form of curricular organisation, approaches which combine work and study (as exemplified through apprenticeship and part-time HE) are appealing to many younger and older employees and deserve to be more strongly supported by policy-makers seeking to encourage lifelong learning. It also concludes that if learning is conceived as participation, then enabling people to engage in different forms of social practice (such as work and education) will (inevitably) increase their learning.

Two models of work and study

This section identifies two distinctive ways (apprenticeship and part-time HE) in which work can be combined with participation in formal study. By focusing on the potential of the combined approach, I do not want to underplay the workplace itself as a site for learning (see *inter alia* Eraut et al., 2000; Hutchings, 1999; Billett, 2001). However, in this paper the focus is deliberately on forms of participation which include the workplace and study in formal educational settings.

Apprenticeship programmes can be designed to include structured opportunities for learning on and off-the-job. In countries such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland, apprentices are work-based but spend specified periods of time in institutions which specialise in vocational education. The German 'dual system' is perhaps the best known exemplar of this approach (Deissenger 2004). In countries such as France and Sweden, apprenticeship is primarily school-based with young people participating in the workplace to gain authentic experience.

In the UK, apprentices are based in the workplace but do not all have the same opportunities to participate in off-the-job courses (Fuller and Unwin 2003b). Sectors which offer apprenticeships with both on-the-job training and off-the-job courses are most commonly those, such as engineering and construction, which have a long-standing history of apprenticeship provision. In such cases, apprentices are typically expected to attend college on a day or block release basis to pursue vocational qualifications. In a recent study of companies in the steel sector, Fuller and Unwin (2003a) found that the 'lived-reality' of apprenticeship varied widely between organisations. Factors contributing towards the apprentices having a highly positive perception of their learning experience included: the chance to pursue college courses covering the relevant technical theory; the chance to train in a range of departments in the workplace; the receipt of regular feedback on progress from both line managers and college tutors; and the chance to achieve recognised qualifications. This form of apprenticeship represented an integrated model of work, study and qualifications which fostered career and educational progression.

At its best then, apprenticeship provides young entrants to an occupation and the workplace with opportunities to participate in diverse forms of participation and in contrasting settings. A key component of the provision made available in such programmes is the existence of someone with training and supervisory experience who has responsibility for supporting the young person's 'learning journey' and for developing links between the on- and off-the-job components (Fuller and Unwin, 2003a). Providing apprentices with this level of support entails recognition of Eraut's (1997) insight that successful transfer between contexts involves a learning process. In the case of older employees pursuing HE

courses part-time, such support will not always be available, relevant or desired. Some adults will be pursuing courses related to their current work (some voluntarily, others because it is required by their employers) but others will be deliberately following courses which they hope will open up new and different career opportunities for them as well as facilitating personal growth (Lunneborg, 1997; Fuller, 1999). Nevertheless, all those participating in part-time HE while working are engaged in opportunities for learning in and across contrasting workplace and formal educational settings.

For the purposes of this paper I am most interested in patterns of participation in HE of employees aged 30 plus and who can broadly be conceived as in, or entering, the middle phase of their working lives. What they have in common with apprentices is that they are engaged concurrently in work and study activities, which include the pursuit of codified knowledge. A key difference is that the older adults (unlike apprentices) have had an extended opportunity to learn from experience and from the range of personal and work-related contexts in which they will have been involved. They will have gained greater 'personal knowledge' than their younger counterparts:

> 'Personal knowledge (P knowledge) is defined in terms of what people bring to practical situations that enables them to think and perform. Such personal knowledge is acquired not only through the use of public knowledge but is also constructed from personal experience and reflection'. (Eraut et al., 2000, p. 233)

Participation in part-time courses in higher education is, in the UK at least, largely the preserve of older mature students (25+) the vast majority of whom are in work. It is important to highlight the increasing participation of mature students over the past 30 years. The number of adults (21+) participating in courses leading to higher level qualifications rose from 255 000 in 1970 to around 1.5 million by the end of the millennium. Key characteristics of part-time participation are as follows (Higher education statistics agency (HESA), 2000):

- nearly 90 % of part-time undergraduate students are aged 25 or over and two thirds are 30+;
- most part-time students pay their own fees, which is an indicator of individual demand for this mode of participation (only a minority have their fees paid by an employer);
- 83 % of part-time students are in work 'before, during and after their studies' and 70 % are in full time employment (Brennan et al., 1999);
- older students are more likely to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, to have left school earlier, and to have fewer academic qualifications than their younger peers.

In the next section, the paper suggests that an understanding of wider social and economic change is required to make sense of adults'

increasing take up of part-time HE. Unlike the focus of much policy rhetoric which sees the individual in isolation, this discussion locates individuals in their socioeconomic context and recognises that there is a backdrop of social change which helps explain why this work and study option is appealing to increasing numbers of employees.

Labour markets, social change and reflexive modernisation

Over the past 20 to 30 years, patterns of employment have altered dramatically. Relevant factors include: the demise of primary industries, the decline of manufacturing, the emergence of new sectors based on information and communication technologies, the growth of the service sector, and the rise of female participation in the labour market and part-time employment. Research in the UK has shown the effects of labour market and sectoral changes on the demand for skills. The National Skills Task Force (NSTF) report states: 'there has been a broad shift in skill demand over the last 30 years away from skills related to manual work towards skills related to cognitive abilities' (NSTF, 2000, p. 12). Hutton (1995) has identified new divisions and inequalities which relate to people's labour market position. He shows that about 40 % of the workforce enjoy 'secure' full-time employment, while 30 % are engaged in temporary contracts or part-time work and 30 % are marginalised through unemployment, seasonal work and other highly marginal forms of employment. Given the strong increase in the proportion of young people proceeding to higher education in the UK, older adults, therefore, have to compete hard for the limited supply of 'good' jobs.

I have argued elsewhere that the decision to work and pursue part-time HE is an understandable response by some adults to their experience of the social and economic conditions (characterised by uncertainty and opportunity) under which they live (Fuller, 2002). In this regard, there are elements of the theory of social change, known as reflexive modernisation (RM), developed by Giddens (1990; 1991; 1994) and Beck (1992; 1994) that are relevant to explaining new patterns of adult participation. The RM thesis is helpful in two ways: first, it conceives individual and institutional change as mutually transformative; and, second, it identifies how social changes, such as the availability of new opportunities and uncertainties, have implications for the trajectory of individual biographies. Of central relevance to the RM perspective is the idea that new areas of activity are opening up to more people as an (unintended) effect of the changing relationship between individual and society. This paper suggests that the rise in older adults' participation in HE provides one illustration of this phenomenon.

Giddens' and Beck's analyses of the erosion of tradition as a guide for action and increasing individualisation, mean that people's life courses

may differ in significant respects (e.g. in terms of family relationships, working patterns and educational participation), from those of previous generations. They also help explain why increasing numbers of adults, from various backgrounds, are seeking new ways (such as combining work and higher level learning) to respond to the uncertainties and opportunities characteristic of contemporary life. In this regard, Field (2000) links what he calls the 'silent explosion' in lifelong learning to the aspects of social change identified by the RM thesis. It follows that participating in the work and study route can be seen as an understandable and rational response by the individual to the conditions and perceived risks under which people in advanced industrial countries live.

The following quotes, taken from a small-scale qualitative study of adults (aged 30+) in HE (Fuller, 1999; 2001), help illustrate the relevance of notions of risk and expanding choice to individuals' decisions to return to study. They indicate how these students saw the opportunity to go to university as a new area for personal decision-making and as a way of managing risk:

> 'The whole of life's about choice now … I'd say retail exactly mirrors the way our lives work because before we went to a grocer's or we went to a florist's but now you go to a supermarket and you can choose from an enormous range and no one tells you … you've got the choice. That's one reason why I went to university because I don't think universities had taken people in their forties that time ago.'

> 'It's [the degree] a bit of an insurance as well because where I actually live if our company decided to actually close [this site] I would feel that I wouldn't have to just move up to Scotland or wherever they wanted to put me. I would actually have a choice because if you've got a degree behind you, you're going to be a lot better off in the labour market as well.'

In summary, the changes highlighted by the RM thesis include:
- increasing individualisation, seen as a hallmark of reflexive modernisation;
- diminution of tradition as a guide to personal actions and decisions;
- expansion of areas in which individuals can act and make choices;
- individuals taking an increasingly calculative approach to their decision making;
- heightened sense of risk stemming from the new forms of uncertainty and opportunity associated with contemporary socioeconomic conditions;
- conception of identity formation which recognises the transformative possibilities for individuals that stem from reflexivity.

The discussion so far suggests that the combination of work and study has appeal for both apprentices and older workers, and could also play an important role in helping countries and organisations to 'upskill' their

workforces. The paper now considers how conceiving 'learning as participation' is relevant to understanding how people learn from their involvement in activities in both workplace and educational settings.

Learning through participation

Lave and Wenger's foregrounding of apprenticeship and learning in non-specialist educational settings has fostered interest and research into workplace learning (see *inter alia* Boud and Garrick (eds), 1999; Evans, Hodkinson and Unwin, 2002; Billett, 2001; Rainbird, Fuller and Munro, 2004). In reviewing research on learning at work, writers such as Michael Eraut and Stephen Billett have argued convincingly that workplace learning should not be seen as inferior to learning in formal educational settings. For example, Billett observes:

> 'Although not written down, the pathways of experience and guidance provided in workplaces are often structured or 'formalised'. Just as the goals and practices of educational institutions frame the activities in which students engage, so too the goals and practices of workplaces determine workplace activities. Further rather than being weak, the learning occurring outside teaching and institutional practice is often central to sustaining the practices – even the communities – in which the learning occurs.'
>
> <div align="right">(Billett, 2001, p. 15)</div>

Recognising and valuing the workplace as a site for learning means that the extent to which people learn knowledge and skills through (joint) participation in work activities is less likely to be underestimated. The situated learning perspective developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) has provided a highly influential version of the 'learning as participation' perspective, particularly as it is exemplified through apprenticeship. As Lave and Wenger observe: '… various forms of apprenticeship seemed to capture very well our interest in learning in situated ways …' (ibid, p. 32). Their analysis suggests that apprentices learn all they need to know to become 'knowledgeable practitioners' through their participation in the social relations of the workplace community of practice. Observation of craft apprenticeships in traditional societies (Yucatec midwives (see Jordan, 1989), and Vai and Gola tailors) provided the initial empirical inspiration for the formulation of Lave and Wenger's perspective on learning. Their other examples included the induction and subsequent learning engaged in by people attending Alcoholics Anonymous, and those training to become 'naval quartermasters' and 'meat cutters'.

The theoretical perspective developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) offers a useful starting point which highlights how 'newcomers' learn as members of the 'workplace community'. On the basis of ethnographic studies of 'newcomer' learning, Lave and Wenger developed the interrelated concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and

communities of practice. They explain that apprentices' status as legitimate peripheral participants enables them to participate increasingly in the activities and social relations of the workplace until they become full participants. Lave and Wenger identify learning as a context-dependent process and, therefore, perceive the idea that learning can be transferred from one setting to another is highly problematic. This part of the discussion has drawn attention to the contribution Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning perspective has made to theorising workplace learning. However, the rest of the section suggests that it needs to be further elaborated to recognise the value of learning that takes place as a consequence of participation in and across educational and work settings.

As discussed earlier in the paper, effective apprenticeships in advanced industrial countries include structured periods of off-the-job learning in formal educational settings as well as on-the-job training and experience. In these cases, apprentices are involved in contrasting communities of practice, and in a process in which they are helped to make connections between what is learned in diverse settings. Such programmes provide a model of work and study which goes beyond the opportunity to participate in a single community highlighted by Lave and Wenger's examples.

In their attempt to raise the profile of learning as a 'natural' part of collective social practice, Lave and Wenger's account (1991) tends to dismiss the role that formal educational institutions can play in employees' learning. As Guile and Young (1999, p. 114) have observed, approaches derived from cultural anthropology (such as Lave and Wenger's) do not discuss theories of instruction and present apprenticeship as 'not dependent upon any formal teaching'.

In addition, Lave and Wenger's emphasis on the situated nature of learning and knowledge may over-state the problem of learning transfer. If it is accepted that access to opportunities to participate is a precondition for learning, it follows that people who are enabled to engage at the workplace and via specialist educational institutions have their opportunities extended. Building on this point, Fuller and Unwin (2003a; 2004) have argued that the chance to operate in multiple learning contexts is a central feature of 'expansive apprenticeship' and workforce development. They argue (2003a) that an expansive approach to apprenticeship, consisting of a rich range of opportunities to participate on- and off-the- job, provides the most effective basis for learning and for progression. Their research evidence highlights the contribution formal teaching can make to the overall quality of apprentices' learning experience. In contrast a 'restrictive approach', which confines apprentices to a single community of practice in the workplace, by definition, limits their opportunities to participate and, consequently, their scope for learning.

In her more recent writing, Lave appears more sympathetic to the view that people can learn and make connections across contexts. In this regard, she associates herself with Dreier's view which, as the following quotation indicates, captures the sort of processes in which apprentices and those participating in part-time higher education are likely to find themselves engaged:

> 'We often participate in a particular context mainly for reasons that are aimed at realising goals and interests which primarily originate in and 'belong' to another context. In so doing we make use of particular connections that exist between these contexts, or that we and others create and extend, and that make it possible to pursue goals and interests in one context by taking part in another in a particular way … Human action has a potential and varying cross-contextual scope, ... or reach'
> (Dreier, 1994, p. 75 cited in Lave, 1997, p. 149)

The process of crossing and recrossing boundaries between the workplace and other sites for learning provides, in itself, a stimulus for learning (Engeström et al., 1995). In his more recent book, Wenger (1998) addresses the original (Lave and Wenger) theory's (over)reliance on 'situatedness' when he discusses the value for learners of 'time out' (of work) to 'disengage' from and reflect on practice. He suggests that engagement in boundary crossing activity between different communities of practice stimulates 'identity work' as people become legitimate peripheral participants in more than one community of practice. Moreover, the notion of community of practice as a relatively stable and static phenomenon has been challenged. Eraut and his colleagues found that respondents were more likely to experience the 'break up of working communities' rather than their enduring continuity (2000, p. 254). The lived reality of contemporary employment means that most employees are unlikely to enjoy a straightforward trajectory from newcomer to 'old-timer' in a single workplace community of practice.

Young (2004) argues that conceiving all knowledge as situated or context-specific fails to recognise that there are different types of knowledge, some of which are more context-free than others. In the combined work and study models discussed in this paper, participants have access to theories and concepts which go beyond the immediate 'know how' required to perform tasks in particular workplaces. In the case of 'good quality' apprenticeships, the integration of college and workplace learning is planned, structured and supported to facilitate the development of young people who have the twin tasks of learning the knowledge and skills required for successful practice and the customs, habits and attitudes expected of more experienced and mature employees. In the case of older people who pursue studies part-time while working, they are already likely to have a wealth of work and life experience as well as vocational knowledge on which connections can be built and new knowledge and insight constructed. The ability to make

sense of and apply learning gained in diverse contexts increases with experience. As individuals become more used to boundary crossing and participation in multiple communities of practice, the personal experience and resources on which they can draw will increase.

If workplace learning and learning in educational settings are recognised as producing learning outcomes which are not wholly context-dependent, then the issue of transfer between sites can be treated as less problematic than it is by strong versions of the situated learning perspective. As Billett points out: 'learning in any environment will be more or less transferable, depending on the quality of the learning processes experienced' (2001, p. 21). Seeing learners as having the capacity to make connections between learning gained in different contexts entails a conception of the individual as an 'active agent'. By this is meant someone who can elect to engage in learning opportunities, who can construct meaning from them and whose development will be shaped and will help shape the environment in which he or she is participating (Hodkinson et al., 2004).

Combined models of work and study offer the learner varied and, if well structured and supported, rich opportunities for participation (and therefore learning). The arguments of this section, therefore, are that although learning is always to some degree 'situated' in social practices such as work and education, learners are able (especially if given support) to 'recontextualise' their learning in other settings; and that conceiving 'learning as participation' provides a pedagogic rationale for finding ways to extend more employee's opportunities to participate beyond their immediate workplace situation by, for example, encouraging and supporting them to engage in formal educational opportunities.

Conclusions

This paper has argued that the principles underpinning apprenticeship are relevant to developing more opportunities for employees to participate in part-time courses in HE. Like apprenticeship, part-time HE combines work-based and institution-based learning, although usually in a less formalised way. The potential for positive outcomes to occur from combining work and study should be of interest to policy-makers. In this regard, Davies (citing Tight, 1991, p. 119) argues forcefully that part-time higher education should be encouraged and supported more strongly by policy-makers: 'for higher education to have most value for most people in most circumstances, [it] should be predominantly part-time; we might therefore expect it to be taken more seriously and its real-life perspective to be exploited in policy recommendations for lifelong learning' (Davies, 1999, p. 141). The same point holds for apprenticeship provision which uses the combined model to build a foundation that can foster participation throughout working life. Insights provided in this paper

suggest that, by increasing support for combination models of participation, public policy in the UK and elsewhere can be used to stimulate demand for learning and to help more people fulfil their potential.

The paper also suggested that the social and economic conditions under which people in advanced industrial economies live help explain the decisions of more adults to participate in formalised learning opportunities while working. In this regard, combining work and study provides an opportunity for young and older adults simultaneously to pursue personal and career development. An interleaved approach to work and study helps overcome the traditional academic – vocational and theory - practice divides by providing a rich set of formalised and less formalised learning experiences. A key issue for policy-makers and providers is the availability of sufficient provision, structured and resourced to enable people who have full-time jobs to participate.

Overall, the discussion suggests that personal experience, learning, work and socioeconomic change have become deeply entwined: adults' increasing participation in (part-time) formal courses while working is one illustration of this. Apprenticeships that offer young people a foundation of work experience, knowledge, skills and qualifications from which to progress can be seen as another. The paper concludes that there are strong pedagogical as well as policy grounds for fostering demand for combined approaches and for providing the sort of support which could enable more people across the age and socioeconomic spectrums to benefit from the diverse forms of participation (learning) that the workplace and educational courses can afford. ∎

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Labour market and training observatories in the Maghreb countries
as possible tools to monitor labour market and training trends

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SUMMARY

In applying structural adjustment policies and preparing their economies for entry into the Free Trade Area with the European Union, the three Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia) face major changes in how their labour markets function, coupled with an increase in graduate unemployment. In response, they have swiftly introduced a series of measures to promote employment and vocational integration.

The Maghreb countries have also introduced more structural reforms to their vocational training systems. To improve job market information and thus to match training provision with demand, they have attempted to set up labour market and training observatories. However these efforts have come up against numerous difficulties, the establishment of the observatories proving to be a long and painstaking task.

The labour markets of the Maghreb countries have been undergoing profound change since the mid-1990s, triggered by both internal trends (demographic, political and economic developments, structural adjustment programmes, etc.), and external factors such as the impact of globalisation, and changing relations between the Maghreb countries and the European Union with the perspective of entry into the Free Trade Area (FTA).

Entry into the FTA requires the EU's partner countries to improve the performance of their enterprises, upskill their workforce and generally upgrade their education and training systems, the aim being to narrow the gap between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. The pressures of migration into the European countries is another key issue

for vocational training. Human resource development must be redesigned on a 'demand-driven' basis.

Faced with these issues, and with rapid change, the Maghreb countries are seeking to set up instruments that will allow them to manage the transition and to meet the agreed deadlines. The Maghreb countries have signed agreements with funding agencies to develop employment and training programmes, including programmes to improve information on the labour market. One way of achieving this is by setting up labour market and training observatories.

The first part of this article highlights the main labour market trends and related policies in the three countries. The second part examines the approaches adopted by each country to set up labour market information systems, despite the fact that due to the difficulties encountered the establishment of these tools is still in the teething stage.

Labour market change in the 1990s

The introduction of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s and accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in the 1990s gradually opened up the economies of the Maghreb countries to international competition.

The establishment of a Free Trade Area (FTA) between the Maghreb countries and the European Union marked an important economic and social milestone. The EU now accounts for the main part of the Maghreb countries' trade and capital exchanges (direct investments). Moreover, the EU countries not only provide most of the clientele for the Maghreb countries' tourist industries, but constitute the principal host countries for their migrant workers.

While the SAPs helped to introduce a change of economic 'model', entering the FTA meant that the Maghreb economies had to be prepared for the impact of the new liberalisation policy. This resulted in a strategy of restructuring and modernisation of both the industrial fabric and the education and training systems in order to boost the competitiveness of the Maghreb economies and make them fit for international, especially European, competition.

The new macroeconomic policies introduced from the early 1980s had a profound and long-lasting impact on the labour markets of the developing countries (Vernières, 1995). This has become even stronger in recent years. The most fundamental change involved the transition from a steered economy, dominated by state-owned enterprises, to an open economy assigning a more important role to the private sector. At first, the impact of the SAPs on the labour markets of developing economies was broadly negative. They directly led to a decline in employment, in the wake of public spending cuts, rising unemployment (specifically, the emergence of long-term unemployment among higher

education graduates), a fall in real wages and a rise in poverty. These effects were accompanied by more structural phenomena, such as a rise in casual and informal employment (Charmes, 2004).

Moreover, the education and training systems that the Maghreb countries had developed since independence became largely irrelevant as major gaps emerged between existing training provision and the needs of an economy characterised by a changing labour market and an expanding private sector.

This set of circumstances broadly describes the situation in the Maghreb countries as a whole; but the specifics in each country are different, as are the approaches adopted to manage this process of fundamental change.

In **Algeria**, the impact of the SAPs on an economy geared towards heavy industry and state-owned enterprises triggered a surge in unemployment and an 'informalisation' of the economy ranging from traditional informal commercial activities to illegal and even criminal forms of activity.

According to Musette (1998), the year 1986 can be regarded as a turning point in the labour market ([1]). The unemployment rate, which had dipped below the 10 % mark, began to rise again – a phenomenon which was seen as an inevitable effect of the global economic crisis. The 1986 oil crisis precipitated a change in the economic and political direction of the country and the emergence of a new discourse on 'useful employment', 'bloated workforce', the 'costs of employment' and the need for downsizing. Following the revolt of October 1988, legislation on economic reform was adopted and measures on the promotion of youth employment introduced. The State established a 'social safety net', providing allowances designed to compensate for the loss of purchasing power after the abolition of subsidised prices.

This period also marks the end of permanent employment. The law of 1990 introduced new forms of remuneration, repealed the 'general status of the worker' and introduced fixed-term contracts. Employment was no longer guaranteed and the right to employment was revised.

As from 1994, structural adjustment measures were introduced under the aegis of the IMF and the World Bank. Three measures were to have a major impact on the Algerian labour market: the liquidation of state enterprises in deficit, a reorganisation of industry (adoption of internal restructuring plans) and vulnerability management. As a result of the SAPs, 815 enterprises folded, with the loss of 405 000 jobs between 1994 and 1997 (Musette, Isli, Hammouda, 2002). The upshot of these redundancies was a transfer of workers from the public sector – a

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[1] This is not as clear-cut as Musette suggests: no household survey was conducted in 1986 as the 1987 census was being prepared at the time; the unemployment rate indicated by the 1987 population and housing census is largely overestimated, while the 1989 labour force survey indicates a lower unemployment rate.

protected segment of the market – to independent and competitive segments (limited liability companies set up by laid-off workers, the return of retirees to the workplace as temporary employees, etc.).

The unemployment rate climbed from 24 % in 1994 to 29 % in 1997. In the view of the National Economic and Social Council (CNES), the rise in unemployment and its new features – the emergence of high female unemployment, the rapid increase in the proportion of housewives seeking employment, unemployment among first-time job-seekers, the typically low skill level of the unemployed – were essentially the fall-out of the structural adjustment measures. Unemployment above all appeared as an urban phenomenon, while many of the jobless gave up looking for work and casual employment spread.

Even more profound effects could be observed in employment behaviour: an increase in occupational activity among women, a return to child labour and a multiplication of small-scale activities. Risk groups faced with falling standards of living were forced to adopt survival strategies which implied behavioural changes not only towards employment, but also towards the family (fewer marriages, lower birth rate).

A further consequence of the SAPs was the loss of social values, the dashed dreams of an egalitarian society (Musette, 2000). Schools, in particular, went through a serious crisis, with very low output, both internal (high drop-out rates between primary and higher-level education) and external (considerable devaluation of diplomas: high rates of unemployment among both graduates and the socially marginalised). As all educational reforms failed, social success was no longer determined by education. Private schools, formally banned but effectively tolerated, flourished almost everywhere. Finally, Algerian society was hit by an explosion of illegal activities extending far beyond the growth of the informal sector.

In fact, a new trend within the informal economy emerged with the introduction of measures to liberalise the Algerian economy from 1989 onwards (Bounoua, 2002). To a much greater extent than before, fraud and tax evasion, corruption, embezzlement of funds and other illegal activities became the new dominant characteristics of the Algerian economy. By applying the definitions adopted by the Conferences of Statisticians (ILO, 1993), Hammouda (2002) puts forward a comparative table of the various types of informal employment which points to a general expansion of the informal sector in Algeria, e.g. an expansion in informal non-agricultural activity from 26.6 % in 1992 to 34.7 % in 2001, and an increase in the proportion of workers employed by individual enterprises from 38.9 % of non-agricultural employment in 1992 to 47.7 % in 2001 [2].

Faced with swelling dole queues, the government introduced programmes to combat unemployment. Four mechanisms 'for the

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[2] Source: household surveys conducted by the National Statistics Office.

promotion of employment' were set up, targeting various categories of the unemployed: youth (ESIL: paid jobs in local initiatives, TUPHIMO: manpower-intensive community work programmes, CPE: pre-employment contracts), retrenched workers and young first-time job-seekers (creation of micro-enterprises) and, finally, micro-credit. New structures were set up to make sure these mechanisms were implemented: ADS (social development agency), ANSEJ (national agency for the promotion of youth employment), CNAC (national unemployment insurance fund). But as the CNES noted, these mechanisms were not enough to stop youth exclusion as they only offered interim solutions, or at best initial working experience; they did not lead to permanent employment. In 2004, new mechanisms were introduced (micro-credit, business start-up programmes for the jobless aged 35 to 50), while previous ones were reinforced or modified.

In **Morocco**, economic growth has been erratic for many years because of the importance of non-irrigated agriculture, which is vulnerable to climatic fluctuations. The Moroccan economy also faces a structural imbalance in the urban labour market: though labour supply is growing steadily, the growth in employment is much slower and is dominated by unskilled jobs. Morocco is thus faced with structural unemployment, a predominance of long-term unemployment and unemployment among first-time job seekers.

The SAPs introduced from the 1980s led to a sharp increase in unemployment, particularly among graduates, by the early 1990s. Although the number of young people leaving the education system with no formal qualifications is estimated at 240 000 per year, unemployment is not as serious among non-graduates (representing over one half of the active population, but only 29.4 % of the jobless in 2001). The proportion of graduates among the unemployed climbed steadily from 15.2 % in 1992 to 24.7 % in 2001. Overall graduate unemployment rose from 16.8 % to 26.3 %, that is, significantly higher than non-graduate unemployment (more or less around 11 %) in the same period.

To remedy this, in the early 1990s Morocco adopted a series of measures targeted towards graduates. The creation of the National Centre for Youth and the Future (1992) and the consequent series of studies and activities on youth employment and labour market integration, provided the basis for the first state measures in the form of the National Programme for the Integration of Unemployed Graduates (PNIDC). But though this programme aimed to be a large-scale targeted linking operation, its results were very poor.

Starting in 1993, job information and orientation centres (CIOPE) targeted to the graduate market have been set up to improve the information flow. Initially, the task of these centres, which are under the jurisdiction of the Office for Vocational Training and the Promotion of Employment (OFPPT) rather than the employment services, was to

implement the national integration and training programme. In 1997 they took on the implementation of the new action programme for employment (PAE), designed to promote the integration of graduates into private-sector employment. Despite some positive outcomes of this programme, such as a more dynamic role of the public intermediary bodies and an improvement in youth employability and company management, detailed analyses conducted in Marrakech cast a different light on employability and management (Bougroum and Ibourk, 2002).

The social and economic landscape is very different in **Tunisia** where a restructuring and modernisation strategy to make the economy fit for international and especially European competition has been underway since 1986. The strategy was based on the 'Tunisian development model' which emerged in the course of the 1980s. This model chiefly involved striking a balance between achieving economic efficiency – a high and sustained level of economic performance – and maintaining social cohesion and social peace by reinforcing solidarity to fight exclusion. This model helped the country achieve a sound economic performance. Per capita income rose from USD 870 in 1987 to USD 2 170 in 1996, placing Tunisia in the league of medium-income countries. This was due to average annual GDP growth rates of 4.6 % in this period.

The SAPs had a positive effect, so much so that Tunisia was described as the IMF and World Bank's 'best student'. The social cost of the reforms was handled relatively well: the wave of privatisations did not lead to massive unemployment among redundant workers and the unemployment rate apparently stabilised at around 15 % for a number of years. This high level was attributed by some observers to problems encountered in measuring unemployment rather than to the ineffectiveness of the labour market ([3]). The creation of an 'updating programme' for Tunisian enterprises, with the financial assistance of the World Bank and the European Union (MANFORME project), was also targeted towards the vocational training system. According to the Ministry of Industry, Tunisian enterprises began to enjoy positive effects, in terms of external market penetration and managerial rates, at the beginning of the 2000s.

However, in terms of the vocational integration of Tunisian graduates the situation has deteriorated. This is reflected by long-term unemployment among certain graduates (the unemployment rate among the working population with a higher level of education rose from 3.6 % in 1994 to 7.8 % in 1997 and 8.7 % in 1999([4])), and a certain 'dequalification'

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[3] According to Rama (1998), the real rate of unemployment, excluding first-time job-seekers, is much lower: 'the unemployment rate excluding first-time seekers is low by any standards'.

[4] According to the data from the national employment surveys (INS); the figures for the following years had not yet been published.

at the beginning of graduates' careers ([5]). The demand for graduates, especially engineers, nevertheless remains high ([6]).

The informal economy also plays an important role in Tunisia. Thanks to the cushioning effects of 'the non-structured or informal sector of the economy which helped make up for the rest' (Sboui, 2002), the structural adjustment phase did not have serious social consequences. The destabilisation of the economy triggered a rising trend towards informal employment and self-employment, especially in urban areas. Informal employment expanded by 6.3 % between 1980 and 1994; though this may seem a modest increase, in non-agricultural jobs informal labour rose from 37 % to 49 % in the same period. A typological analysis of informal activities in the town of Sfax (Sboui, 2002) differentiates between micro-enterprises in the course of development (i.e. partially structured), craft micro-enterprises in stagnation, and marginal activities. This diversity of informal systems of production shows that the informal economy in Tunisia is far from being a last resort. On the contrary, the opportunities, dynamism and potential it offers give it an important role in economic development.

From the late 1980s onwards, rising unemployment prompted the Tunisian government to adopt measures promoting youth employment. 35 000 young people were contracted under the Employment-Training Contracts (CEF). The SIVP programmes, introducing university graduates to professional life, catered for 18 000 young people in its initial and 9 700 in its second phase. Six types of actions for workers were financed by the Vocational Integration and Adaptation Fund (FIAP), targeting a total of 2 800 enterprises and 33 000 workers.

With respect to all these new social issues (emergence of a new precariousness, increasing graduate unemployment, the growing informalisation of the economy and employment, management of the relations between training and employment, female employment), the limits and inadequacies of the traditional statistical information systems of the three Maghreb countries have become obvious. Although traditional statistical information systems identified ([7]) the underlying phenomena, they failed to offer an analysis of their components or contribute to the establishment of effective policies, especially in vocational training.

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[5] Ben Sédrine and Geisser, 1997.

[6] See especially Ghali, Mohnen, 2002.

[7] At the cost of some statistical juggling, e.g. by Charmes (1991), to measure informal employment in Algeria.

Setting up observatories in the Maghreb countries: strategies and difficulties

As we have seen, the Maghreb countries initially introduced rapid measures to promote employment and stem unemployment in order to deal with the upheavals affecting their economies and labour markets. More structural measures were also taken to adapt vocational training systems to the requirements of the new economic policies; although key labour market players, these systems had been delivering training programmes that were out of date.

The need to realign vocational training with market demand made it obvious that the quality of information on employment and training was problematic. The creation of observatories was intended to eliminate the most blatant inadequacies.

Although each of the countries adopted its own approach in designing and setting up the observatories, none of them can as yet be described as a fully operational system. In the following, we will seek to identify some of the reasons why this declared intention to upgrade information on employment and vocational training has so far produced such meagre results.

Observatories as a tool for the reorientation of vocational training systems

Algeria
Algeria initially set up a project 'to support the implementation of the policy of job retention and promotion' in conjunction with the UNDP in 1997. This project was designed to shore up a national strategy which was based on offering incentives to private-sector productive investment and on developing SMEs/SMI. It was intended to effectively open up the financial and banking sector to international competition, boost the competitiveness and productivity of Algerian public and private-sector enterprises and restructure the public sector. According to this strategy, public-sector measures were necessary to cushion the social impact of upgrading productive units to international standards, which was a consequence of Algeria's accession to the World Trade Organisation and its association with the European Union.

The aim of this project was to steer the transition by retraining and redeploying workers excluded from the system of production, while reinforcing national solidarity mechanisms to prevent the spread of poverty. The project included three main components which involved promoting better information on employment and training: (i) supporting the implementation of the national employment, training and apprenticeship strategy, (ii) conceptual and operational capacity-building of national institutions, and private partnering in the fields of assistance to

employment, the management of programmes and related measures for the establishment of the statistical system, (iii) building the capacity of the central services and agencies of the Ministry of Labour with a view to producing the information required to steer employment policy and to evaluate the impact of macroeconomic policies on the labour market.

Although the word as such was not yet used, this final component outlined a project for the establishment of an observatory which would deliver the 'information and models necessary for the guidance, follow-up and evaluation of employment and training' and produce an audit based on available sources and data and the identification of new information requirements. The project also entailed harmonising concepts and nomenclature, and designing and developing supplementary surveys, e.g. on the vocational integration of those coming out of training programmes. It included the production of operational information to match vocational training with market needs. The project also envisaged the involvement of the social partners, who were to be trained in handling the concepts and applying international standards to reinforce the conditions of economic and social development. The project finally provided for information dissemination and policy evaluation. Although formulated in very general terms, the project comprised all the basic elements of the training and labour market observatory projects of all three Maghreb countries.

This project folded up in 2001 without achieving the expected results. Although the observatory component at least generated an in-depth evaluation of the information system and the needs of the various stakeholders [8], it failed to lead to the introduction of a new information system.

The work was picked up again in 2001: with the assistance of the European Training Foundation (ETF), a task force was set up, bringing together the representatives of the principal stakeholders of the training and employment system (notably the ministries of labour and social security and vocational training, Cerpeq, Indefoc, CREAD, the ministry of finance, UGTA and the NSO [9]). This group gave impetus to the efforts of the management staff of the Ministry of Vocational Training to establish close links between information on employment and vocational training.

The work of the task force culminated in the design of a Vocational Training and Employment Observatory (OFPE) as an instrument for the early recognition of job and skills requirements. The observatory was not intended as a new structure but as a new task within an intersectoral network. The task force's final report sketched out the OFPE's

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[8] Report drawn up by the Centre for Applied Research and Study on Development (CREAD), 1999.

[9] CERPEQ (Centre for research and studies on trades and qualifications), INDEFOC (National institute for the development and promotion of continuing training), NSO (national statistics office), UGTA (General union of Algerian workers).

operational and organisational work, areas and fields of observation, indicators, etc. This brainstorming process can be seen as resulting from various research projects and debates which produced a series of reports as a basis for the task force's work: the work of CREAD (referenced above), the CNES report on vocational training (1999), the UNDP experts' study on vocational training (2000) and the ETF report on vocational training (2001). The Ministry of Finance also prepared an audit of the vocational training system (2001).

As a result of the work of this task force, a protocol of agreement for a partnership on the creation of an observatory-type training and employment mechanism was signed by the Algerian ministries of vocational training and employment (November 2001). Although this augured well for the establishment of a network of partners to get the 'observatory function' off the ground, there was no follow-up to the agreement.

Towards dual observatories in Algeria?
The recent emergence of two projects changed the situation concerning the planned network of partners for the establishment of the observatory function in Algeria. The first of these projects is 'a project to support the upgrading of vocational training in Algeria', co-financed by the Algerian government and the European Community, in the framework of the Ministry of Vocational Training. This project includes a significant component to 'support the linkage between the labour market and training', one aim of which is 'to set up a training and labour market observatory'.

The observatory's tasks will be to 'draw up, on the request of the public authorities, employers, trade associations and the social partners, any type of survey: i) to identify, for each branch or sector of activity, labour market data at local and regional level, and at all levels of skilling, as well as the medium and long-term perspectives of the trends related to development projects and programmes already implemented or envisaged; ii) to add value to these data, especially concerning the management of the training system; iii) to ensure dissemination of the outcomes of these surveys among stakeholders and the public; iv) to establish the training and employment observatory network at the resource centre of the strategic mechanism designed to guide the vocational training and education systems'. However, the project management unit has not yet launched the operations to implement this component.

In July 2004, the Ministry of Employment set up a new structure, officially established as the 'Observatory for the Protection and the Promotion of Employment' (OPPE). It is intended as a framework for consultation and coordination, bringing together all the sectors and agencies directly involved in employment issues. The initiative is part and parcel of the presidential programme aiming at the creation of two million

jobs within the five-year period 2004 to 2009. The OPPE comprises representatives of eleven job-creating ministries, six specialised institutes, six economic and social partners and four specialised employment agencies. Its tasks are to carry out a quarterly evaluation of sectoral employment programmes, effect a national audit, issue an employment report and create a job database. Four commissions are responsible for processing information, collecting employment-related data, setting up an employment management strategy across all sectors of activity and compiling information on youth. On the strategic side, the principal sectors offering job-creation opportunities have already been identified (housing, agriculture, SMEs/SMI, tourism and public works). According to the minister for employment, this initiative is expected to create 2.5 million jobs and reduce the unemployment rate from 23.6 % to 11 % over a period of five years.

It is too early to judge whether this dual initiative will generate the appropriate synergies and promote the production of the information necessary to guide employment and vocational training policies or whether, on the contrary, it will be a source of new difficulties, giving rise e.g. to conflicts in approaches, as for the measurement of unemployment (Edjekouane, 1998).

Morocco
A series of laws and regulations was enacted starting in the mid-1990s. Their aim was to better organise the vocational training sector, recognised by the National Charter for Education and Training (enacted in December 1999) as an indispensable link in the employment policy chain. Although the Moroccan vocational training system has undergone a substantial process of development and restructuring since the 1980s, these measures have failed to fully meet expectations. Among other things, the system has failed to provide training for the swelling ranks of school dropouts (some 200 000 leave the education system every year with no other option than the informal sector or emigration) and to deliver training that matches the needs of Moroccan industry.

Thus, in the past ten years or so the vocational training system has been subject to a process of upgrading designed to gradually make it fit to deliver the skills required for national development. Clearly oriented towards employer needs, the reforms cater very little for social demand. They seek to develop partnerships with trade associations and to diversify initial training programmes by creating new training streams, restructuring training programmes and developing new forms of training (alternance, apprenticeship, etc.), as well as promoting in-company continuing training.

These reforms are implemented with the technical and financial support of various funding agencies (the World Bank, the European Union, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Spain).

Following the MEDA I project on the upgrading of vocational training,

MEDA II (supported by the European Union and implemented by the Ministry of Vocational Training), chose the sectoral approach as the most relevant. Three sectors (tourism, textiles/clothing industry, new information and communication technologies) were identified as key development drivers in Morocco. The project targets three objectives in each of these sectors: (i) supporting the early recognition of firms' skills needs; (ii) developing knowledge on the job market and compiling the information necessary to pinpoint sectoral requirements; and (iii) developing capacity in public-sector training provision. The production of data to guide the vocational training system is therefore at the heart of the project.

Belated observatory projects in Morocco
Morocco began to address the issue of the information necessary for the transformation of the vocational training system later than the other Maghreb countries. Although the late 1990s saw various studies on the advisability and feasibility of observatories – notably a project to set up a research centre on the relations between training and employment (CELFE) and a study on the creation of a regional employment/training observatory in Casablanca – these projects were not followed up.

It was only recently (2003) that the office of the Secretary of State for Vocational Training (SEFP) revisited the issue. The years 2002 to 2003 saw the transition from the MEDA I vocational training support project, implemented with the assistance of the European Community, to MEDA II, in which (as indicated above) the question of the information necessary for a demand-driven management of the training system was linked to the issue of upgrading training.

Moreover, the SEFP sought the assistance of the ETF to relaunch the observatory projects devised several years earlier. Initially hesitant as to the most appropriate approach – the original preference was for the creation of a regional observatory (in Greater Casablanca) – the SEFP soon opted for a sectoral approach which was to be dovetailed with the activities of MEDA II.

It should be noted that in Morocco, unlike the other two Maghreb countries, the trade associations of these three priority sectors had expressed a strong demand for an improvement in the tools necessary for a better management of trades and skills in their fields. Although not directly involved in the project, in 2003 the dynamic Federation of Mechanical, Electrical and Electronic industries (FIMME) launched a pioneering project to draw up occupational profiles modelled on the 'ROME' directory of trades and occupations used by the French national employment agency, ANPE. Intended as the basis for a sectoral trade observatory, this pilot project could be of interest to other trade associations.

On the basis of the work of an intersectoral working party and various sectoral working parties, the ETF proposed setting up sector-level trade

observatories as a first step towards the creation of a network of partners capable of producing the relevant data for the strategic management of employment and training policies. Although the development of sectoral-level observatories is clearly imperative, this perspective must nevertheless be broadened to a national 'observatory function', with the collaboration of partner agencies (first and foremost the Directorate for Statistics, the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills and the social partners). However, by the end of 2004 the working parties had barely started their initial meetings.

Tunisia

The Tunisian government accords considerable importance to training within its strategy to boost the country's competitiveness and develop its human resources (MANFORME programme on upgrading enterprises and vocational training). The main institutions involved in these efforts were the vocational training services (in particular the Tunisian vocational training agency, ATFP) and the employment services, the Tunisian employment agency (ATE), recently re-named the Tunisian agency for employment and independent work).

As far as vocational training is concerned**,** an evaluation of the problems encountered highlights the essential role that must be played by information on employment and the labour market in the future. For a long time, the *manpower approach* was the prevalent instrument for the early recognition of skills requirements and the design of vocational training programmes. 'With the development of a market economy, and the state's reduced role as a supplier of jobs, what is now required is an approach to the planning and deployment of resources in which labour market analysis and the signals relating to skills supply and demand are at disposal of the various economic agents. The focus currently placed on state planning of the future development of training needs must be replaced by an analysis of the labour market, for which there is no viable and specific information' ([10]).

The employment services are faced with three major problems: a proliferation of services for first-time job seekers, a lack of precise data on costs and advantages as a basis for an evaluation of the effectiveness of the various programmes managed by the ATE, and, finally, a dearth of employment services for redundant workers.

The principal objective of the second Employment and Training project (financed through a World Bank loan) in support of the governmental strategy to boost the competitiveness of the Tunisian economy was to create a better match between training provision/employment services and the needs of both individuals and Tunisian enterprises by upgrading available information on the labour market. The project had three

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[10] Extract from a vocational training evaluation report drawn up by the ministry of vocational training, dated 14 March 1996 (unpublished).

components: A. the creation of a labour market information system, B. development of the employment services, C. development of the training services (accounting for 81 % of the funding).

The project identified the three elements that were necessary for setting up a labour market information system: (i) the development of a labour market information system and reinforcement of the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP) to monitor labour market trends, accompanied by more effective use of existing labour market information sources; (ii) development of the capacity of the MEFP to monitor and upgrade the profitability and effectiveness of training and employment programmes and services, and the implementation of impact assessments; (iii) the introduction of an information dissemination system, socio-occupational monitoring, small-scale surveys and the production of a bulletin which would help individual enterprises take training decisions based on market signals. Detailed technical specifications were also established.

Several actions were necessary to achieve the objectives of the labour market information. Firstly, in order to 'develop a strategic planning approach in order to improve the effectiveness of the labour market' an employment bulletin, a labour market behaviour model and periodical surveys needed to be introduced. Secondly, 'ensuring the effectiveness of the system of active vocational training and job market management' called for the identification of indicators for the analysis of the vocational training system and the periodical evaluation of employment programmes (on the basis of specific surveys). Finally, 'developing information to assist providers and public- and private-sector promoters to rationalise their recruitment and training methods' implied setting up a system to monitor wages, labour and vocational training costs as a means of developing signals for the labour market.

Results from Tunisian observatory not yet visible
The 'information system' component of the project effectively got off the ground in 1997 when a series of studies was commissioned from private research consultancies. A number of projects were initiated, mainly [11] evaluation studies on the impact of initial training, studies on job market and vocational training indicators, the harmonisation of statistical sources and nomenclatures and the macroeconomic model of job market behaviour, as well as a project on a dictionary of occupations and a national vocational training map. At institutional level, an observatory of employment and qualifications (ONEQ) was set up in 2000 as one of the directorates-general of the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment (MFPE).

But this flurry of activity between 1997 to 2003 must be assessed on

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[11] Cf. Tunisian Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment document: Presentation of the national employment and qualifications observatory (undated).

the basis of its results. A computerised database maintained at the ONEQ was only intended for internal use and its indicators did not lead to an operational system. The harmonisation project was not completed. The macroeconomic model did not become official (in fact no document presenting the model exists). The dictionary was not introduced as an operational manual for the departments of the relevant ministries. The evaluation/impact studies remained unpublished, as the method used was not regarded as relevant, the World Bank itself issuing a critical evaluation.

In view of the split within the MFPE (the vocational training portfolio was transferred to the Ministry of Education at the end of 2002 after a cabinet reshuffle), the ONEQ is no longer closely linked to the development of vocational training and is much more involved in the new ministry of employment policy guidelines, focusing on questions such as the employment of managerial staff, the cyclical monitoring of employment or the creation of micro-enterprises. The bottom line is that the Tunisian observatory has not yet managed to play the role it should be playing within the Tunisian employment information system.

A comparison of national approaches

The above is a simplified but uncaricatured account of the three Maghreb countries' painstaking efforts to set up observatories in order to improve employment and make vocational training more effective. What emerges from this account is that these endeavours have not yet (at the end of 2004) produced the data and information expected.

In all three countries, seven years was evidently not long enough to bring together the various employment and training stakeholders and their counterparts in the field of statistical production and have them set up effective structures or networks capable of handling the issues addressed in the vocational training reform projects and in relation to the job market and company needs. Although the projects cite lengthy lists of actions to be carried out, these have not been convincingly implemented and frequently have not got off the ground at all. Admittedly, initial signs of project implementation can be observed in Tunisia – i.e. the creation of an observatory within the Ministry of Employment – but its results are still not visible. In Algeria, the creation of an observatory by the Ministry of Employment is too recent to judge its relevance and effective impact. As for Morocco, the observatory project has not yet even reached the drawing-board stage.

However, this is not to say that there has been no improvement in the production of employment-related data in the Maghreb countries. For instance, employment surveys conducted by the national statistics agencies have improved. Quarterly surveys are now conducted in Morocco, while annual surveys are carried out in Tunisia, with quarterly surveys in the pipeline. A further sign of progress are the new surveys conducted at the level of industry (notably among micro-enterprises).

However, the approaches developed by the public statistics agencies do not always match the needs of the training providers and the institutional structures that are responsible for measures to promote employment. In the first place results tend to be too general, providing no answers to questions raised at a regional or a local scale – this is due largely to the small size of the samples. Secondly, since there is no nomenclature of trades/jobs adapted to vocational training needs, specialised services are not provided with a breakdown of data according to job type.

Another key issue is to clarify not just the objectives, but also the modus operandi to be adopted for setting up observatories. The two possibilities are either a ministerial structure or a partnering (network) approach. Although the latter appears much better suited to training and employment realities, it is manifestly more difficult to put into practice. The question of partnering has been more or less evaded in Tunisia and Morocco; in Algeria, by contrast, it has been directly addressed, but with no concrete result. Above all, employment services, the cornerstone of such mechanisms, are in themselves inadequate (except in Tunisia). Moreover, the exact nature of the information to be produced, the methods to be applied and the responsibilities of the various players (distribution of tasks) have yet to be addressed.

As we shall see, the efforts already undertaken with a view to develop observatories have come up against numerous obstacles.

Strategies face a series of difficulties
It is not the intention of this article to conduct a full-scale evaluation of the attempts of the Maghreb countries to set up labour market and training observatories but, less ambitiously, to point out the extent to which obstacles to these projects were underestimated.

Even when financial resources were available, the design and establishment of the observatories turned out to be full of pitfalls in all three countries. For one thing, the gestation process was very slow. And even if we accept that significant progress has been made in recent years compared to the previous situation of standstill (Fourcade, 2000), the question remains why the observatories are still not operational in the Maghreb countries.

Three major factors have hindered the process: the lack of an adequate information culture, institutional hurdles, and technical considerations.

The lack of a communication culture is especially noticeable in the functioning of the public administrations of the three countries. Ministries and administrations – important and powerful players within steered economies – developed highly compartmentalised practices in producing and processing information within a jealously guarded scope of competences. The information at their disposal was ordinarily reserved for internal use; it was not published or disseminated or intended for

circulation, other than within very restricted circles. A whole raft of examples could be quoted to show the serious dearth of information flows between departments of the same specialised ministry, or between services of the same ministerial department. The new structures which took on job market action programmes, and were responsible to the ministries, tended to adopt the same approach. As a result, they failed to develop an effective information system at their own level ([12]).

Retaining information long remained the (tacit) rule governing administrative operations, especially concerning data classified as strategic or sensitive (such as on unemployment). It will be difficult to switch to a culture of exchange, openness and debate on data and data production in the short term, especially as the design and implementation of an information, publication and dissemination policy remains a delicate issue. Although the creation of websites is an important step forward, it nevertheless offers no guarantee that information made available on line will be useful or even relevant. The transition from a steered economy to an open market implies a change of 'governance' and the introduction of new ways of disseminating the social data required by stakeholders.

Institutionally, there is potential for conflict between the ministries of employment and of vocational training concerning responsibility for the observatory projects. Of the three countries, only Tunisia succeeded in combining the two sectors in the same ministry (Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment); for a period of some ten years, it attempted to set up an observatory that would produce information concerning both areas. However, the separation of the vocational training and employment portfolios in 2002, without the established observatory managing to impose itself as an effective and innovative institution, underlines the obstacles to satisfactory institutional relations between training and employment – which nevertheless remain imperative.

Attempts to set up the observatories within support projects to the ministries of labour – which generally have meagre resources and are permeated by an authoritarian culture of control, as symbolised by the labour inspectorate – have come up against a reluctance to provide indicators which might reveal the meagre impact of policies.

Furthermore, the technical ministries responsible for training and/or employment have experienced real difficulty in recruiting or training competent technical personnel with genuine expertise in handling social data and familiarity with the job market and with links between training and employment. Although the research departments of these ministries are generally staffed by graduates, these are rarely specialists in the relevant disciplines and are almost never professional statisticians trained at specialised schools at home or abroad ([13]). When they do

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([12]) Apart from a few exceptions, e.g. the Algerian national unemployment insurance fund (CNAC), the Tunisian national agency for employment and independent work (ANETI).

([13]) Tunisia is currently conducting an interesting experiment involving collaboration with students of the national school of statistics.

succeed in recruiting or training suitable staff representing the 'technical capital of the institution', ministries almost always lose them to more effective, and certainly more lucrative, organisations – and seem unable to replace them.

In the production of data there is a manifest lack of contact and cooperation between ministries of employment and vocational training and national statistics institutes. All three countries lack serious links between these structures, particularly with regard to implementing industry-wide employment surveys. The dearth of professional statisticians inside the ministries is a further obstacle to collaboration.

In technical terms, the implications of building capacity to produce new job market data were evidently not clearly researched and established. No determining innovation can be observed in the concepts applied, the methods deployed or the survey mechanisms established. No genuine reflection informed the areas to be prioritised, the most relevant sets of indicators to be used or the most economical methods to be applied. For example, preliminary research conducted in Algeria was more concerned with the organisational architecture of the future observatory than its technical and design requirements.

The most serious deficits concern data on how the job market functions – specifically, the follow-up and study of mismatches between supply and demand at the level of the public intermediation services. The difficulties Algeria and Morocco have encountered in organising their employment agencies in a way that would allow them to produce viable and relevant data deprive the observatories of a precious source of information.

If technical progress is to be achieved and data and information on employment and training effectively produced, there is a very strong argument in favour of a networking approach, as propagated by the ETF. This however appears to be a maximalist approach which comes up against deeply-rooted reflexes of self-withdrawal. To get things moving, initiatives on the labour market/training observatories must come from the highest political level, as was the case for the programmes for the upgrading of enterprises. Being intrinsically multi-sectoral, the employment and training field calls not so much for the establishment of multi-sectoral bodies as for a process which brings together, on an ad hoc basis and in varied configurations, the partners directly involved in the production of the priority categories of data. By way of example, this process would link the Ministry of Employment and the National Statistics Institute for the implementation of surveys within industry, the Ministry of Employment and of Vocational Training for the implementation of surveys on the vocational integration of skilled youth, etc.

The observatories will not be able to limit their scope to the relations between vocational training and employment for long. They will soon have to cover all types and levels of education and its relations with employment. This means taking lifelong learning into account and

integrating all education, including higher education, into their work.

Furthermore, as recommended by the ILO, among others, the observatories should function as instruments of social dialogue, with partners who seek or even produce information. But the independence of these partners from political authorities is not always guaranteed, and dialogue is still hesitant. Moreover, there is frequently no guarantee that the organisations involved will be representative. Social partners also lack the technical capacity regarding new aspects of labour market functioning (What is the necessary relevant information? What are the training needs? How can they be defined? etc.).

Finally, it has to be said that countries entering the Free Trade Area with Europe and seeking to boost the competitiveness of their economies are not capable of setting up observatories on their own. External experts can provide supplementary training, especially on methodology, and transfer their experience to the national managers responsible for this new social function. Networking with European partners should also aim to improve the analytical capacities of national managers. The recent launch of the ETF's Education and Training for Employment programme (ETE) shows that an area of technical exchange is now opening up, designed to get the observatories up and running in the MEDA region. An area in which some countries have managed to set up effective systems or mechanisms more rapidly than others may help hasten the setting up of these observatories.

Conclusion

Labour market and training observatories were essentially designed by the Maghreb countries in the 1990s as one of the tools intended to give a new impetus to vocational training, promote industry competitiveness and pave the way to the Free Trade Area with the EU. The initial projects in support of these mechanisms saw the light of day in 1997. There is no escaping the conclusion that the Maghreb observatories were still not operational in 2004 and at best lead no more than an administrative existence. In any case, the observatories are barely 'visible' in the social environment. Designed as tools for monitoring changing employment and training systems, they have not yet succeeded in imposing themselves as such.

As a result today it is difficult to identify, much less analyse, any positive results contributed by the observatories to the production of social information that is adapted to open economies and to the management of vocational training systems.

The establishment of labour market observatories, with the support of various funding agencies within projects targeted towards vocational training, has come up against both the old reflex of hoarding information

and the inexperience of the stakeholders. It has also revealed shortcomings in design and methodology.

Nevertheless, we can expect that this function of market watch and early recognition of skills requirements will be effectively launched in the three countries in the few years to come. The fundamental difficulty is that there is no quick-fix solution to the establishment of these observatories. Specific national approaches are inevitable, which does not rule out an exchange of good practice and convergence between partner countries of the European Union.

Although a genuine policy of partnership is imperative for the production of social data, this elementary idea – which is only common sense – has had difficulty in gaining acceptance. Setting up an observatory, which should be perceived more as a function than as an institution or a structure, requires rethinking all the conditions for the production of social data: Who produces these data? What are the objectives? What concepts and methods are to be applied? The magnitude of this task has so far been largely underestimated. The Maghreb countries must therefore quickly get down to work, both individually and collectively, to reinforce their investment in this undertaking, if – as required by their entry into the FTA – they are to acquire an instrument guiding their human resources development policies. ∎

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Learning and citizenship in organisations

Outcomes and perspectives from research studies under the EC's 4th and 5th framework programmes

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SUMMARY

The EC *Towards the Learning Economy* project aimed both at valorising the overall outcomes of several socio-economic research studies supported by the Fifth and Fourth Framework Programmes, and suggesting strategic lines for research and development in the Education & Training field, especially lifelong learning.

The majority of the considered research studies show that organisational learning is fostered through management practices aimed at developing employees' competencies related both to autonomous understanding of work processes ('work process knowledge') and to participation within new forms of 'organisational citizenship'.

'Work process knowledge' is fundamentally practical knowledge, including a dimension of theoretical understanding integrated with experiential know-how gained in specific workplace cultures, while organisational citizenship is based on active positioning of individuals in a plurality of organisations and communities of practice.

E&T systems should increasingly take into account these issues and be involved in lifelong development strategies including enterprises, social partners and local communities.

Introduction

Some results of a recent research activity carried out within the *Towards the Learning Economy* (TLE) cluster project (2001-03) are presented in this article. This cluster project aimed both to valorise the overall outcomes of several socioeconomic research projects supported by the fourth and fifth framework programmes and to suggest strategic lines for research development in education and training ([1]). In particular, the TLE aim was not to scrutinise systematically the outcomes of all relevant projects but to identify important ideas arising from the projects themselves and generating innovative hypotheses for future European policies in education and training.

The results illustrated are from a TLE domain entitled *Knowledge, Learning and Competences in Organisations.* This involved 10 research projects carried out by different European teams between 1997 and 2002, covering a large number of sectors and largely based on case-study methodologies (see Tables 1, 2 and 3 in annex).

The projects have been analysed to identify and valorise factors relevant to lifelong learning policies linked to organisational dynamics emerging within industrial and service firms across Europe. In other words, lifelong learning has been assumed less as a matter of increased levels of formal education – as it is considered in several current approaches, especially in education and training – and more as a structural component of continuous individual and organisational development, according to relevant traits of the so-called 'European globalising learning economy' (Lundvall and Borras, 1999).

Within the learning economy perspective, the traditional boundaries between economic and social dimensions, as well as those between working, learning, knowing and organising, are becoming increasingly blurred. The economic performance of firms, regions and countries, and in many ways also those of individuals, is linked to their capacity to learn and adapt to new conditions. At the same time, learning depends on the accumulation and competent use of tacit knowledge, produced within specific organisational contexts, and on a dynamic arrangement for continuously integrating such contextual knowledge with codified knowledge (data and information of different kinds).

([1]) The project *Towards the Learning Economy*. Conclusions from the 4th and 5th EU framework programme projects (contract HPHA-CT-2000-00051, EU FFRP) were supported by the 5th FRP. It was developed by a partnership composed by Michael Kuhn, project coordinator (European forum for regional policies, University of Bremen) who developed the project domain *Learning in the Learning Society,* Robert-Jan Simons (Ivlos, University of Utrecht) who developed ICTs in education and society, and Massimo Tomassini (Isfol e Università di Roma) who developed *Knowledge, Learning and Competences in Organisations.*
A book is forthcoming (Kuhn, M.; Simons, R.J.; Tomassini, M. (eds), *Towards a learning economy? Contributions from European educational research*, New York: Peter Lang) in which several articles are collected, provided by European experts who attended the conferences and workshops organised for the project.

The organisational dimension is crucial in the learning economy, its dynamics strictly intertwined with collective forms of knowledge creation, use and diffusion. Knowledge and organisation are in a mutual relationship of continuous joint creation. Important interpretations have been made of the relationship: the need to foster continuous interaction between explicit and tacit knowledge in innovative companies (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995); the nature of organisational learning as generated in a continuum between practice, learning and organising (Gherardi and Nicolini, 2000); and the important function of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002) for assuring learning and cooperation in informal organisational and interorganisational settings.

Therefore, the concept of learning organisation (Senge, 1990) which, over the last decade has been frequently evoked in debate, must be integrated with more extended conceptual references to the nature of learning processes taking place in organisations.

Moreover, in a world in which information and knowledge exchanges are continuously multiplied, the organisational dimension must also be understood between organisations. The decline of traditional ways of working in large organisations and the multiplication of new socioeconomic forms of production and organisation, all more or less structured as network patterns, have created new forms of knowledge and learning. Interorganisational systems – notably those related to networking of SMEs (clusters, industrial districts, etc.) – are crucial sources of knowledge creation and development. Factors such as proximity, trust and collective interpretation allow for the creation of social and cognitive resources for continuous acquisition of local competitive advantage (Lazaric and Lorenz, 1998; Lawson and Lorenz, 1999).

The changing role of knowledge and the increasing importance of the organisational dimension in the learning economy/society generate new competence needs and new ways of understanding their social meaning; in some ways these diverge from more traditional approaches. While the latter assign higher priority to negotiation and certified recognition of competences, even through new technological devices, new exigencies require continuous competence development often along fuzzy or ill-defined paths. 'Competence as knowledge-in-action' (Schön, 1983) is highly dynamic and context-related. Competences of a significant majority of employees hinge upon disciplinary bodies of knowledge and problem-solving patterns that are continuously evolving. Moreover, the 'situatedness' of competences in specific organisational patterns of learning and practice, the strict link between working and socialising, the collective/communitarian nature of many competences, and the correlation between individual/group abilities and organisational strategic capabilities all contribute to the ineffectiveness of predefined patterns and require new forms of competence identification, assessment and development (Consoli and Benadusi, 1999).

Education and training systems all over Europe are generally late in

catching up with the above trends, while a European culture of learning ought to be created as a background for the development of personal/social competences and the growth of informal knowledge and social capital (Gavigan et al., 1999). The need for something that can be defined as enlarged lifelong learning seems to emerge in relation to several policy hypotheses in this field. New coherent lifelong learning policies cannot be identified only at the level of formal education resources; even the generic recognition of channels of non-formal education and informal learning for individuals (OECD-Ceri, 2001) seems inadequate in relation to the emerging complex forms of knowledge and competences. New types of relationships are needed between the worlds of education and organisations and higher levels of reflexivity ought to be developed within education and training systems as well as in other institutions and forms of social life (Giddens, 1991). Emerging exigencies in this field seem to require investments in new ideas and practical approaches concerning the real links between work, learning and education.

The analysis of the European research projects presented here considers different aspects which appear as coherent with the above assumptions and sheds light on factors that require reinterpretation of the meaning of the 'learning organisation' and new hypotheses for research development. In the following section some aspects concerning the theoretical underpinnings of the projects are dealt with. In Section 3, practices for the development of knowledge, learning and competences in the organisations examined are reported. In Section 4, some clues are provided for updating the learning organisation concept in line with the emerging forms of working and organising. In particular, the concept of organisational citizenship is suggested as appropriate for describing the need for active social practices of participation and identity affirmation brought about, although contradictorily, by present evolutions. In Section 5 some concluding remarks are suggested mainly in terms of new perspectives for Education and training systems.

Theoretical approaches

The project analysis, carried out with consideration of the 'valorisation' goals assigned to TLE, has focused on several concepts that can be considered as typical of recent European socioeconomic research.

An interesting example is the concept of work process knowledge (as in the Whole and OrgLearn projects), through which the well known metaphor of the learning organisation is substantially updated. The term 'work process knowledge' enlarges the meaning of *Arbeitsprozesswissen* (Kruse, 1986), which designates the kind of knowledge that employees should possess for understanding interdependencies among different roles and activities within complex labour processes. In Whole the

emphasis is not on labour but on work, involving at the same time labour and production processes. In flexible computerised workplaces, work process knowledge is assumed to be useful for different kinds of activities and needs, like the ones of coping with the demands of functional flexibility, supervising complex computer-controlled engineering systems, operating as nodes within distributed decision systems (Boreham, 2002).

Work process knowledge is fundamentally practical knowledge but cannot be confused with mere know-how or procedural knowledge; it includes a dimension of theoretical understanding integrated with experiential know-how gained through collective and individual experience in specific workplace cultures. Members of organisations in this perspective, are also members of communities of practice; they 'create and share knowledge in the practice of their work, and record their individual perceptions in the structures that constitute their culture' (Boreham, 2002, p. 5). Practical, theoretical and social dimensions of knowledge are kept together: work process knowledge is 'tacit but not elusive' and is embedded in people's ways of doing things, but it must be made explicit and exchangeable within organisational policies and devices.

Individual experience is highly valorised within this kind of approach. Individual experience is at the basis of work process knowledge: it 'contains ideas, concepts, thoughts and emotions' and 'supports work process knowledge by integrating aesthetic, practical and rational action' (Fischer, 2002). The main focus is on individual processes of learning and on the complex paths of integration between the individual and the organisational dimensions, assuming the former as the origin of the latter. 'Organisational knowledge is more complex than individual knowledge and 'distributed' information, but has its origin in the movement of representations of individual knowledge' (Sauquet, 1999).

However, social and institutional views of learning processes in organisations are present among the concepts of the analysed projects. For instance, within the Whole project Pauwels and Van Ruysseveldt (2002) adapt to organisational learning the scheme of the institutionalisation process, articulated into three stages: externalising, objectifying, internalising. 'In organisations externalisation occurs when personal knowledge is transferred to others. This can happen through formal and informal channels, by personal contacts or by use of communication technology' (Pauwels and Van Ruysseveldt, 2002, p. 42). This knowledge can be objectified by the organisation in the form of rules, procedures, structures, etc. and can thus function as a kind of organisational memory.

An attempt to integrate the individual and the situated (cultural and institutional) dimensions of learning has been made by the Latio project in which learning phenomena are seen in terms not of learning organisation but of learning environment, conditioned in specific cases by different kinds of contexts: national institutional contexts, organisational contexts, working contexts and distance communication contexts.

Moreover, learning environments are seen as multiple realities put in place from different perspectives, in particular the management and the educational perspective. In both perspectives learning can be considered as a relational issue "in that knowledge, skills, competences - all that is learned - are seen as qualities of human relationships to the world surrounding the learner (Svennson et al., 2002).

Competence development is one of the major issues in all projects examined. Following the Whole project, competences are considered as resources for work activity, created within constructive activities, mostly based on experience (Rambardel and Duvenci-Langa, 2002). Here competences are assumed as being determined by external knowledge and collective or social competences which the subject at work can access through the mediation of other workers or artefacts, by the kind of situations encountered and by intrinsic subjective attitudes towards learning.

Within the same project, interesting links are identified between competence and both work process knowledge and the experiential sources of learning. Vocational competence is seen, through a quite similar although not identical meaning, as operational knowledge including 'conceptual knowledge about the world to be acted on' and 'the ability to operate in systems of actors'. (Rogalski et al., 2002). From this viewpoint, competences are knowledge resources incorporating potentials for action: operational knowledge which is actually available or may be mobilised; schemes of action for different classes of situations; and individual and collective properties enabling operators to adapt to situational pressures.

Competences can be either individual or collective. The latter can have a double meaning: they can simply refer to the activities of individuals engaged in a collective inquiry but they can also mean that a team – a set of operators engaged in a common task – may be considered as an entity, i.e. as a virtual operator in charge of the task itself. In individual terms, competences are seen as resources at the subject's disposal which s/he develops within her/his productive activity in line with the tasks and nature of the situations faced, particularly regarding relations to others and oneself (Rogalski et al., 2002).

Development practices

There were important project results on practices in organisations for developing knowledge, learning and competences. Empirical research within different projects showed that numerous relevant development activities are implemented in different organisations and several types of organisational devices and arrangements are used to allow simultaneous gains in terms of both learning and effectiveness of productive processes.

The OrgLearn project reported on operators' direct interventions in standard operating procedures. Operators in different plants are engaged in writing plant-specific operations manuals containing knowledge that is needed for running the plant, complying with safety regulations and for troubleshooting. While these manuals used to be prepared by engineers and technicians with specific plant responsibilities, the new regulations allow normal shift-workers to produce such complex documents based on their own day-to-day experience of the production process. Such manual writing takes place in small groups, composed of one or more experienced worker, one newcomer and a moderator. From time to time, specific process stages are interactively analysed over a period of three to four weeks. The analysis is then converted into a chapter of the plant handbook, which also includes answers to possible questions about trouble-shooting and safety. Important learning effects arise from discussions within the manual writing team, based more on experiential knowledge than on technical knowledge (Fischer and Roben, 2002), and from the opportunities to include suggestions for improvement, management ideas and incident reports in standard operational procedures.

Links are established in some cases between such manual writing methodologies and internal competence development systems. In these cases the manual teams are considered as 'learning cells' and their results are incorporated into the organisational memory also at training level, as new courses are planned in relation to learning needs emerging from experience sharing and collective problem-solving (Boreham and Morgan, 2002).

A specific relevant position within organisational development practices is played by competence management systems, which tend to constitute frameworks for competence recognition; career path handling, recruitment and mobility policies, training needs assessment and several other important purposes. Some of the reasons for the diffusion of such systems have been clearly described within one of the case studies of the Latio project. A competence management system allows the firm's management to:

(a) be kept informed about accessibility of knowledge embedded in skills across the firm;
(b) handle skills requirements in relation to changes in external environments;
(c) find useful information in order to check the alignment between new processes and existing competences within restructuring or re-engineering processes;
(d) design HR strategies (including training strategies) fitting for access to new market segments;
(e) channel the efforts to enhance flexibility in relation not only to technical skill needs, but also to broader development goals, e.g. interpersonal skills, leadership abilities, innovation, etc.
(Svensson et al., 2002).

Findings from the projects suggest that competence development is largely diffused in European firms, but that aims and methods vary considerably in different contexts. In many cases, competence policies are developed in terms of a common language that everybody can understand within the organisation and adapt to specific exigencies. Competence policies and instruments can contribute to the organisation of governance, providing both parameters for measuring the (economic) value of performances and shared (cultural) meanings generated by the different communities of practice that inhabit the organisation.

A relevant negative exception in the landscape of competence development seems to be constituted by the systematic quality downgrading of lower status service jobs discovered by the *Servemploi* project in industries, namely retail and financial services, mostly employing women. The project drew a rather pessimistic picture of the opportunities for knowledge and skills development available to junior female employees. It also underlined the point that current visions of the knowledge society and the knowledge-based economy do not acknowledge the existence of such problems and do not recognise the crucial role of inequalities related to social class and gender.

Organisational learning and organisational citizenship

The qualitative nature of the projects quoted so far makes it impossible to assess the scope of the phenomena encountered by the projects. Considering their background and methodologies (case studies and expert meetings) they tended to validate the most progressive hypotheses to the detriment of situations in which work, far from being knowledge-based, is deskilled at both the cognitive and relational levels. Only one project in the set – already mentioned – has been dedicated to the lower skilled levels and reported a situation at odds with learning development.

However in a significant number of situations, where the organisation is more dynamic and the valorisation of human resource is at least a perceived objective, the learning-based model is much more than plausible; it appears as a real need.

It is still worthwhile speaking about the learning organisation, though this neither takes the form of an ideological construct (as it typically did in the 1990s within a certain managerial literature) nor is it a simple synonym for the 'flexible organisation', where learning means fast – and perhaps unreflective – adaptation to new operational conditions and sudden changes in the use of labour resources. On the contrary, the research studies indicate that the 'learning organisation' is a very practice-oriented construct, emphasising aspects such as valorisation of experience, systematic implementation of reflective practices, fostering of self-organising procedures and cultural attitudes, active drives of

management towards 'animating' and help in learning/unlearning opportunities. Such an orientation seems to be confirmed through a brief review of development practices presented within analysed projects.

In a logic more appropriate to this century's dynamics, the whole set of research studies so far analysed provides important clues less for the validation of a general learning organisation model – that currently many projects are referring to – and more for a better understanding of the organisational dimension of knowledge, which has a strategic value within the learning economy.

Very often the organisational dimension is neglected or poorly understood not only in education and training but also, for instance, in the economics of education. When educationalists, and education experts in general, speak about the knowledge-based economy, or about the learning economy and lifelong learning needs, they tend to forget the simple but crucial fact that knowledge and learning (and competences) are largely generated within specific organisational dynamics. The learning or knowing subject is first of all a subject of organisational relations, or ultimately of the organisation itself as a plural subject. It is the organisation that continuously creates knowledge and requires individuals to match the pace and meet the burdens of such creation.

Knowledge and learning are not only high-valued resources, but also the pillars of a new organisational citizenship whose main actors are workers, professionals, managers and entrepreneurs, continuously creating, using and exchanging knowledge in their own specific work contexts.

This idea of organisational citizenship is borrowed from different sources within organisational thought. In a consolidated notion of organisational citizenship, this is expressed through constructive and cooperative behaviours and performances which are neither prescribed nor contractually compensated by formal reward systems, but freely occur in terms of mutual help and task achievement within organisations. Thus organisational citizenship appears linked to characteristics such as altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, civic virtue and courtesy (Organ, 1988).

In a more critical approach, organisational citizenship represents first of all a social practice, i.e. 'a way of life pursued by people – inside and outside organisations – who share a historical context in which they contest the meaning of social or legal norms and struggle to define collective and individual identity' (Gherardi, 2000, p. 115; Gherardi, 2003). From this viewpoint, organisational citizenship appears as a metaphor through which it is possible to understand different aspects within organisational cultures and to shed light on different paradoxes and ambiguities, including – in particular within Gherardi's approach – those related to women's participation in organisational life, i.e., to gender citizenship. This way citizenship is assumed less in the current 'liberal-individualistic' sense (whereby being a citizen in a democratic country is a right of status, acquired through birth or legal acquisition) and more in

its 'classic civic-republican' sense, which implies active participation in civic life. 'In the former case, individuals need do nothing to become citizens because they are so by right, while in the latter case individuals prove themselves to be citizens by what they do. Action sustained by a mental attitude constitutes, in this latter case, citizenship, and it maintains a community whose members assume joint responsibility for its continuity and identity' (Gherardi, 2000, p. 116; Gherardi, 2003). Different models of organisational citizenship can be identified within the latter dynamic perspective, all having in common the idea that citizenship is a matter of interpretation and discourse-based construction of meanings inside specific communities of practice.

Within management studies, the theme of the organisational citizenship has recently been developed in terms of corporate citizenship, understood as an evolution of the current meaning of citizenship – 'an essentially passive legal status involving only minimal civic obligations and relying on a distant and entrenched governing elite' – in many ways applicable both to modern societies and to organisations (Manville and Ober, 2003, p. 48). The new meaning of citizenship, related to emerging needs within companies, is connected by Manville and Ober to the classical Greek concept of *politeia*: a 'system which is not imposed but rather grows organically from needs, beliefs and actions of people'. *Politeia* in this sense is 'as much a spirit of governance as a set of rules or laws'. According to this model – very much in line with the same theoretical foundations of 'organisational learning' ([2]) – the functioning of an organisational *politeia* is characterised by the existence of 'participatory structures', 'communal values', and 'practices of engagement'.

Considering the above approaches, the emerging hypothesis – to be validated through further research initiatives – is that the 'organisational/learning citizen' in our globalising learning economy is the subject of a multiple *politeia* composed of different organisations and communities of practice in relation to which a very complex set of competences must be acquired and continuously developed. Such a set includes technical, social, discursive and ethical competences that cannot be completely formalised and that are not easily understood if extrapolated from their specific contexts. This way the organisational citizenship perspective can support choices beyond linear and functionalistic views in education (and in management), requiring the search for more complex interpretative models, in line with the need to understand new tendencies in work settings and new paths for lifelong learning development (European Commission, 2002).

Besides lifelong learning, such a perspective can conceptually support relevant transformations, even in education and training systems in which

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([2]) '… organisations are political systems. They are political both in the ancient sense of *polis* (that is they are governments) and in the more contemporary sense of an interplay of contending interests and associated powers' (Argyris and Schön, 1978, p. 328).

the connections between educative experiences and work experiences should be increasingly fostered. Such connections are originally developed in one of the projects analysed in the research activity, entitled Work experience as an innovative education and training strategy.

The work experience project allows us to understand the complexities of the objectives that should be designed not only for VET policies but also for general education policies addressed to young people who are still outside working situations and therefore require updated frameworks facilitating their transitions (Guile and Griffith, 2001). Five different models of education and training are depicted by the project, from the traditional adaptive model (based on the idea of 'launching' young people into work situations) to the more recent connectivity model aimed at fostering cognitive and social abilities that are relevant to work experience. The connectivity model includes not only the 'vertical' development of intellectual capabilities but also 'horizontal' development linked to the mastery of processes of change and the capacity to develop new mediating concepts to cope with the demands of working effectively in different organisational settings (Engestroem, 1995; Guile and Griffith, 2002). New curriculum frameworks are needed which could develop, at the same time, knowledge, skills and identity.

Concluding remarks

The majority of the analysed research studies show the vitality of organisational learning issues and, at the same time, its multifaceted nature, impossible to frame within homogeneous categories. Different practices in companies (concerning the integration of explicit and tacit knowledge, the improvement of participative processes and competence management) are aimed at developing forms of organisational learning at different levels.

Although the metaphor of the learning organisation lost the heralding effect that it had in previous times, it can still cover important phenomena, for organisations and for individuals alike, in terms of experience valorisation, systematic implementation of reflective practices, self-organising procedures and attitudes. However, new and richer interpretative keys should be provided to decision-makers; they should increasingly consider the complex organisational dimension where lifelong learning takes place in an individual and in a trans-individual logic (the latter being so far insufficiently developed in current approaches to lifelong learning).

One of these interpretative keys can be identified in a renewed concept of organisational citizenship, to be assumed as an active social practice of participation and affirmation of identity within action. This concept can characterise behaviours which are typical of our 'late

modernity' (Giddens, 1991) and underline the situated and emergent characteristics of working, knowing and learning in organisations.

Organisational citizenship, in this perspective, is not related to static forms of belonging to this or that organisation. It represents the need for continuous (lifelong) learning development based on active positioning of individuals in a plurality of organisations and communities of practice, including those, for instance, that underlie the creation and running of micro-enterprises and of self-employed work activities.

Education and training should increasingly take into account these exigencies and be involved in lifelong development forms characterised not from a central role of the educational institution but from the interaction with other relevant institutional subjects, including enterprises, social partners and local communities. ■

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ANNEX

Table 1. **4th and 5th FRP projects dealing with knowledge, learning and competences**

Title	Acronym (*)	Coordinator	Type	Partners
Work process knowledge in technological and organisational development	Whole	UK	Thematic network	BE, DK, DE, ES, FR, IT, PT, FI, SE, UK
Ways of organisational learning in the chemical industry and their impact on vocational education and training	OrgLearn*	DE	Research project	BE, DE, IT, UK
The role of HRD within organisations in creating opportunities for lifelong learning: concepts and practices in seven European countries	HRD and LLL*	NL	Research project	BE, FR, EL, IT, NL, FI, UK
Innovations in information society sectors-implications for women's work, expertise and opportunities in European workplaces	Servemploi	IE	Research project	DK, DE, ES, IT, SE
In-company training and learning. Learning environments of knowledge-intensive company units in five European countries	Latio	SE	Research project	DK, IE, NL, SE, UK
Coordinating competences and knowledge in the European automobile system	CoKeas	FR	Research project	DE, ES, FR, IT, NL, UK
Developing learning organisation model in SME clusters	Delos	IT	Research project	ES, IT, NL, AT, UK
Small business training and competitiveness: building case studies in different European cultural contexts	Smes-training	ES	Research project	ES, IT, NO, AT
Work experience as an innovative education and training strategy for the 21st century	Work experience*	UK	Thematic network	DK, ES, IE, HU, SE, UK
Forum for European research on vocational education and training ('the learning organisation' sub-group)	Fervet/Lo*	DE	Thematic network	DE, EL, ES, IT, NL PT, FI, UK

(*) Acronyms attributed here for easing quotations. The other acronyms are the original ones.

Table 2. **Industries involved**

Whole	Financial services, health services, electric utilities, chemical, car industry, machine tool, clothing
OrgLearn	Chemical production
Hrd & LlI	Insurance, meteorology, financial services, retail (hypermarket), hotel and tourism, consultancy, postal services, cleaning, road transportation, domestic appliance manufacturing, chemical, sales electronic devices, food, cosmetics, aero-engines, paper machinery, construction, metal, brewery, ICT products and services, telecommunication, bar-code manufacturing, mineral extraction and production
Servemploi	Financial services, retail
Latio	Telecommunications, ICT products and services, building, air transportation, electric utilities, chemical, pharmaceutical, metal, brewery, ornamental (flowers and plant)
CoKeas	Automotive
Delos	Machine tool, automobile auxiliary industry, toys, materials and metals, bio-medical, newsagent
Smes-training	Consultancy, cleaning service, health service, domestic appliance manufacturing, chemical production, machine tool, food industry, materials and metals, paper machinery manufacturing, bio-medical, brewery, ICT products and services, telecommunication, mineral extraction and production, wine production

Table 3. **Case studies of research projects**

OrgLearn	Learning practices in 15 plants in 4 large companies
HRD and LLL	HRD policies in 28 large companies
Servemploi	Employment and competences policies in 30 large companies
Latio	Learning environments within 22 large companies
Delos	Learning processes within12 SME clusters
SME Training	Training policies in 22 SMEs

Ivan Svetlik / Branko Ilič (eds)

HRM's Contribution to Hard Work

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Contents: Ivan Svetlik/Branko Ilič: Foreword – Ivan Svetlik: Introduction: Cracks in the Success Story – Miroljub Ignjatović/Ivan Svetlik: HRM of Low Intensity – Dana Mesner Andolšek/Janez Štebe: The HRM Function and Line Management in European Organisations; How Far has Devolution Gone? – Anton Kramberger/Branko Ilič/Andrej Kohont: Strategically-Oriented Management, Organisational Growth and Effectiveness: A Cross-Country Comparison – Miroslav Stanojević: Mobilising Human Resources to Improve Work Intensity – Matej Makarovič: Social Capital in Slovenian Organisations: The Missing Resource – Jana Nadoh/Klement Podnar: Unsuccessful Superior-Subordinate Communication - A Slovenian Problem – Branko Ilič: Stimulating Innovation with Monetary and Non-Monetary Rewards – Anja Kopač/Martina Trbanc: Extensive but less Development-Oriented Training – Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela/Miroljub Ignjatović: Unfriendly Flexibilisation of Work and Employment - The Need for Flexicurity – Nevenka Černigoj Sadar: Work-Family Arrangements in Organisations – Andrej Kohont: Shallow Policy without an HRM Strategy in the Government Administration.

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Paris: OECD, 2004 – 467 pp.
(Education and skills)

This study features a collection of eight case studies of exemplary cases from secondary schools as well as international literature reviews and policy analysis related to formative assessment – the frequent assessments of student progress to identify learning needs and shape teaching. It examines such issues as benefits and barriers for using formative assessment, policy frameworks and implications, and formative assessment in practice. Achievement gains attributed to formative assessment are reported as being quite high, but it is not yet practised systematically. This book makes the case for use of formative assessment and shows how it can be put into practice.

**Problem solving for tomorrow's world: first measures
of cross-curricular competencies from PISA 2003**
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD
Paris: OECD, 2005 – 159 pp.
ISBN 92-64-00642-7

This book examines the results of the portion of the 2003 PISA survey of student achievement that relates to problem-solving skills. Covering 40 countries, it provides, for the first time, a direct assessment of life skills that apply across different areas of the school curriculum. The assessment looked at students' abilities to identify problems in various settings, to choose relevant information or constraints, to represent possible alternatives or solution paths, to develop solution strategies, to solve the problem, and to communicate the solution. This report examines how countries can raise their performance in this competency area and what countries with lower performance levels can learn from those whose students do well. It also provides insights into some of the factors that are associated with the development of problem-solving skills and into how these factors interact and what the implications are for policy development. Finally, the report sheds light on countries that succeed in achieving high performance levels while providing an equitable distribution of learning opportunities.

**Research and innovation in vocational education and training:
a European discussion** / **Elly de Bruijn, Westerhuis, Anneke**
's-Hertogenbosch: CINOP, 2005 – 54 pp.
ISBN 90-5003-446-2

There is a long tradition of links between innovation in educational practices and educational research. Despite recent doubts about the impact of educational research on innovation in educational practice, the idea that they should be interrelated is still unquestioned. But traditional links, which allow experts and researchers to develop new concepts and schools and teachers to implement them, are coming under increased pressure and need to be rethought. This publication presents the contributions to a round table on this topic at the annual European Conference on Educational Research, held in September 2004 at the University of Crete, within the VETNET stream (Network on Vocational Education and Training research).

European Union:
policies, programmes, participants

Classification for learning activities - CLA: draft manual
Statistical Office of the European Union – EUROSTAT
Brussels: Eurostat, 2005 – 38 pp.

The need of policy-makers for statistical information on how individuals participate in lifelong learning had generated a need for the appropriate statistical tools. The Classification of Learning Activities (CLA) is one of the tools required for the statistical measurement of key lifelong learning issues. The CLA is intended to cover all types of learning opportunities and education/learning pathways. It is intended to be universally applicable, regardless of a country's level of development or system of education and learning.

http://forum.europa.eu.int/

**E-learning in continuing vocational training, particularly
at the workplace, with emphasis on small and medium enterprises**
European Commission. Directorate General for Education and Culture
Brussels: European Commission, 2005 – 112 pp. + Appendix

In September 2003, Unisys and its partner EuroPACE were awarded the study of lot Nr. 3, e-learning in continuing vocational training, particularly at the workplace, with emphasis on SMEs – one of the three studies in the Open Invitation to tender (DG EAC 21/02) launched in late 2002. In line with the e-learning Action Plan, adopted by the EC on 28 March 2001, these studies aim to fulfil the potential offered by e-learning methods and resources in lifelong and lifewide learning by providing current and reliable information about the situation in Europe on these key issues: The last developments of the e-learning industry and e-learning market in Europe; The use of ICT for learning and teaching in initial Vocational Education and Training; The use of e-learning in continuing vocational training, particularly e-learning at the workplace, with focus on small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Appendix A – Questionnaires; Appendix B - Documents; Appendix C – Contacts; Appendix D – Internet survey for SMEs; Appendix E – Case studies; Appendix F – Study framework; Appendix G – Workshop remarks

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/elearning/doc/studies/
vocational_educ_en.pdf

**Focus on the structure of higher education in Europe:
2004/05: national trends in the Bologna Process**
Brussels: Eurydice, 2005 – 234 pp.

This publication, which was prepared for the meeting of the ministers of higher education held in Bergen in May 2005, reports on how the organisation of higher education is evolving in the 40 countries signatory to the Bologna Declaration. It assesses progress towards each of the following aims of the Bologna Process: adoption of a two-cycle structure (Bachelor/Master), incorporation of doctoral programmes as the third cycle, introduction of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the provision of the Diploma Supplement and the establishment of a system for higher education quality evaluation. A comparative overview precedes the descriptions relating to each country in turn. Each description is accompanied by a diagram illustrating the structure of higher education in the country concerned in 2004/05, including the main pathways, the conditions governing entry to ISCED levels 5 and 6, and the lengths of the various courses.

http://www.eurydice.org/Documents/FocHE2005/en/Frame
http://www.eurydice.org/Doc_intermediaires/analysis/fr/frameset_analysis.html

**From polarisation to partnership: time for change:
conference summary**
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions – EFILWC
European Economic and Social Committee - EESC
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2004 – 44 pp.
ISBN 92-897-0254-0

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and the European Economic and Social Committee jointly organised a major conference on the subject of 'Industrial change in Europe: current situation, prospects and responsibilities'. The conference explored the prospects for managing the current rapid pace of change and examined the debate surrounding the development of closer cooperation between social partners.

http://www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/files/EF0444EN.pdf

Quality assurance in VET: building sustainable cooperation:
discussion paper for the DGVT meeting of 18-19 April 2005
European Commission. Directorate General for Education and Culture
Brussels: European Commission, 2005 – 7 pp.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the need to develop a coherent, structured and sustainable basis for embedding quality assurance (QA) in VET in and across Member States, building on what has been achieved so far by European cooperation. This is of critical importance if Member States' QA initiatives are to achieve continuity, transparency and consistency within and across the EU.

http://libserver.cedefop.eu.int/vetelib/eu/pub/commission/dgeac/2005_0048_en.pdf

Transparency of qualifications: a European process:
a challenge for citizenship and social cohesion /
Simone Barthel [et al.]
European Network of Education Councils Brussels: European Network of
Education Councils, 2005 – 205 pp.

This publication is the result of the EUNEC conferences in Riga and Brussels, which were organised with the support of the Leonardo da Vinci programme. It gives an overview of recent European developments on transparency of qualifications and reflects on their impact on European citizenship and social cohesion. It is intended to help policymakers, teachers, trainers, social partners and citizens to understand how European educational policy is evolving.

http://www.vlor.be/bestanden/eunec/L%C3%A9onardo%20book%20EN.pdf

From the Member States

BE **Evaluation interne et évaluation externe:
concurrence ou complémentarité ? / Bonami, M.**
[Internal and external evaluation: competitive or complementary?]
Université Catholique de Louvain – UCL
Groupe Interfacultaire de Recherche sur les Systèmes d'éducation – GIRSEF
Louvain-la-Neuve: GIRSEF, 2005 – 20 pp.

The author describes the internal and external evaluations in the French-speaking Community of Belgium and comments on this issue.

http://www.girsef.ucl.ac.be/Cahiers_CREF/038cahier.pdf

DE **Die Reform der beruflichen Bildung:
Berufsbildungsreformgesetz 2005**
[Reform of vocational education: Vocational Education Reform Act 2005]
Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)
Bonn: BMBF, 2005 – 56 pp.

The new, comprehensively updated Vocational Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz, BBiG) went into effect on 1 April 2005. The report includes the 1969 Vocational Training Act and the Vocational Training Promotion Act of 1981.

http://www.bmbf.de/pub/die_reform_beruflichen_bildung.pdf

DE **Internationalization of higher education: foreign students in Germany, German students abroad. Results of the 17th social survey of the Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW) conducted by HIS (Hochschul-Informationssystem)**
17th ed.
Bonn: BMBF, 2005 – 90 pp.

Survey providing data on student mobility: Germans studying abroad and foreign students studying in Germany.

DE **Berufliche Bildung - Europas Zukunft: Europäische Bildungs-politik im Kontext nationaler Interessen** / **Gerhard Lange**
[Vocational education – Europe's future: European educational po-licy in the context of national interests]
In: Die berufsbildende Schule Vol 57, No 3/4, pp. 76-79 (2005)
Wolfenbüttel: Heckners Verlag, 2005
ISSN 0005-951X

The author describes the development of European education and training policy since the early 1990s and explains education and training policy objectives and initiatives on the part of the EU (often referred to as the Bruges initiative, Copenhagen Declaration and Lisbon Resolution).The author concludes by discussing important instruments such as the European Training Framework, Europass and the European Credit Transfer System.

EL **Βιομηχανική κληρονομιά της Θεσσαλονίκης: από τον 19ο αιώνα μέχρι τα μέσα του 20ού** / **Παναγιώτης Ι. Γεωργούλης**
[The industrial heritage of Thessaloniki from the 19th to the mid-20th century / Panagiotis I. Georgoulis]
Thessaloniki: SBBE, 2005 – 150 pp.
ISBN 960-88720-0-6

This book is published to mark the 90th anniversary of the Northern Greece Industrial Association. It is dedicated to the memory of those who had the daring and courage to initiate entrepreneurial activity in this Greek region of deep historical significance and a multicultural character.

ES **Cuaderno informativo de orientación académica y profesional: 2005** / **Francisco Sánchez García, Andrés Negro Moncayo, Julia Sánchez Núñez**
[Information Booklet on Academic and Career Guidance: 2005]
Madrid: Consejeria de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid, 2005 – 272 pp.
ISBN 84-451-2728-4

This is an expanded and updated version of the Information Booklet on Academic and Career Guidance. It provides information about education alternatives available at completion of compulsory secondary education (ESO), and about different training routes leading to academic qualifications after completing compulsory secondary education, non-compulsory education (higher secondary education, specific vocational training), social guarantee programmes, special education programmes, work experience and adult education. The second part focuses on the network of learning

centres that belong to, or receive assistance from, the Autonomous Community of Madrid. It contains appendices with lists of upper-level training cycles, university programmes, employment and development centres, and learning centres that belong to the Social Affairs Council.

ES **Identidades y formación para el trabajo en los márgenes del sistema educativo: escenarios contradictorios en la garantía social** / **Mariangeles Molpeceres Pastor**
[Labour identities and training within the framework of the education system: contradictory scenarios in the social guarantee context]
Montevideo: CINTERFOR, 2004 – 299 pp.
(Herramientas para la transformación ; 24)
ISBN 92-9088-167-4

This publication presents an initial collection of works derived from a three-year project entitled 'The construction of labour identities in the Social Guarantee Programmes. The incidence of changes in the educational sector through the processes of vocational education'. The aim of the project was to understand how reforms to the Spanish educational system affect the margins of that system.

FR **De l'éducation permanente à la formation tout au long de la vie: dossier** / **Jean-Claude Forquin et al.**
From continuing education to lifelong learning: dossier]
In: Savoirs - Revue internationale de recherches en éducation et formation des adultes No 6 (Janvier 2005), pp. 11-77
Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005
ISBN 2-7475-7752-X

This issue deals with the concept of continuing education and the way in which it broadened the concept of adult education both internationally and in France. The Act of 1971, along with socio-economic constraints, led to more emphasis being placed on the functional and professional dimension of continuing education. Why did the concept of lifelong learning supplant the concept of continuing education? Adult education apparently focused on safeguarding people's careers, so how could training be used to remove inequalities? This dossier comprises the following contributions: The concept of continuing education and its international manifestation since the 1960s, by Jean-Claude Forquin. Continuing education and its quest for knowledge, by Paul Santelmann. Continuing education or universal learning, by Hubert Bouchet. The reason(s) for failure, by Marc Dennery. An optical illusion continues to distort the meaning of the training concept, by Pierre Dominicé. Leaving the highway to take the steep roads, by Paul Santelmann.

FR **L'apprenance: vers un nouveau rapport au savoir** /
Philippe Carré
['Apprenance': towards a new relationship to knowledge]
Paris: Dunod, 2005 – 224 pp.
(Psycho Sup)
ISBN 2-10-048905-4

The term *apprenance* is starting to replace the term *apprentissage*
in French to denote learning. It designates the dynamic act of
learning, with its different components. This work presents a
detailed inventory of this 'umbrella concept' to reply to the
questions: why, how and where to learn.

FR **Lorsque le processus d'insertion professionnelle**
paraît grippé / **Virginie Mora**
[When entry into work seems blocked]
In: Bref CEREQ No 206 (Mars 2004), pp. 1-4
Marseille: CEREQ, 2004
ISSN 0758-1858

Although the problem of the unemployment of persons below 25
seems to have become endemic, we still lack a clear picture of the
young people who remain on the margins of the labour market after
leaving school. In fact, there are as many at university entrance
level as those leaving school without qualifications. A marked
feature of their very difficult beginnings in working life is that they
spend several years with almost no work experience at all; yet this
does not necessarily preclude their subsequent integration into
professional life.

http://www.cereq.fr/pdf/b206.pdf

LT **Education in Lithuania**
Svietimo ir mokslo ministerija [Ministry of Education and Science]
Vilnius: Svietimo aprupinimo centras, 2004 – 24 pp.
ISBN 9986-03-559-7

The publication presents the system of education in Lithuania,
including major regulatory documents, administration structure,
financing system, programmes for modernisation of education,
current Lithuanian situation in respect to established goals for the
European education system by 2010. The publication also includes
facts about Lithuania and major statistical indicators on education.

http://www.smm.lt/en/docs/Education_LT2004.pdf

NL **How much does education matter and why?**
The effects of education on socio-economic outcomes /
Rolf van der Velden, Maarten Wolbers
Maastricht: ROA, 2004 – 30 pp.
ISBN 90-5321-390-2

This article explores the total (measured and unmeasured) effect of education on different socio-economic outcomes. The analysis shows that the usual regression models typically underestimate the effects of education. The effects of education are subdivided into three sources of variation: courses of study, schools and student composition. Schools do not seem to have a major impact. A significant part of the effect of education stems from differential selection of students into courses of study. However, there is a notable difference between social and economic rewards. Apart from the level of education, selectivity and specificity of the course of study also have an effect on labour market outcomes.

http://edata.ub.unimaas.nl/www-edocs/loader/file.asp?id=896

NL **Presidency conclusions on the quality of mobility:**
presidency conclusions on citizenship education as part
of the Lisbon agenda
Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen – OCW
Den Haag: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen, 2004 – 5 pp.

Conclusions of the EU meeting on mobility and citizenship in European education held on 12 and 13 July 2004, during the Netherlands presidency.

http://eu2004.minocw.nl/docs/nl/presidency_conclusions_rotterdam.pdf

NL **Werkprogramma Onderwijsraad 2005**
[Work Programme of the Education Advisory Council 2005]
Den Haag: Onderwijsraad, 2004 – 27 pp.
ISBN 90-77293-26-4

The annual report describes the activities of the Education Advisory Council in 2004. Every year the Council makes recommendations for its own programme. This publication includes an evaluation of the 2001-2004 term of office and classifies the recommendations made by the Council in 2004 according to four themes: (1) Market, state and society, (2) Knowledge-based society, (3) Development of schools and teachers, and (4) Special groups.

http://www.onderwijsraad.nl/pdfdocs/website_werkprogramma_2005.pdf

AT **Gewinnbringende Lehrlingsausbildung** / **Florian Kräftner**
[Profit-earning apprenticeship training]
In: Arbeit & Wirtschaft No 1 (2005) – pp. 34-35
Vienna: Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte, 2005

The author begins this article by presenting the book *Kosten und Nutzen der Lehrlingsausbildung aus der Sicht Schweizer Betriebe* ('Costs and benefits of apprenticeship training from the viewpoint of Swiss enterprises'), which reveals that despite the high costs involved apprenticeship training already pays off during the apprenticeship period for nearly two thirds of all Swiss enterprises. The author then discusses whether these results are also applicable to Austria.

SK **Education in the Slovak Republic: a brief overview**
Ministerstvo skolstva Slovenskej republiky
[Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic] - MS SR [MoE SR]
Bratislava: MS SR, 2005 – 26 pp.

The booklet provides a brief overview of the education system in Slovakia in the light of recent educational reforms affecting primary, secondary and tertiary education. The first step in the reform of the 'regional schools' (generally schools up to secondary level) has been a change in their administration, brought about by a redistribution of responsibilities between the State and local government, and the accompanying reform of the financing system governing the schools. For tertiary education, a new act was adopted in 2002, changing the status of higher education institutions from state budget-based to public, non-profit organisations. The next steps in the transformation of the education system include the reform of the content of regional schooling, better social support for students, and the introduction of tuition fees in tertiary education. The booklet's first part presents the organisation and structure of education in Slovakia, the second deals with changes in educational administration, as stipulated by recent legislation, and the third presents recent changes in financing education.

FI **The Implications of using skills tests as basis for a national evaluation system in Finland: outcomes of a pilot evaluation in 2002-2003 in Finland** /
Mari Räkköläinen and Kathryn Ecclestone

In the future, initial vocational qualifications will incorporate a skills test-based assessment as proof of the student's attainment of the goals set in occupational studies. In parallel, a national system of evaluating learning results is being developed, along with a set of student assessment practices to be used by the education providers. The pilot evaluation presented here tested a model integrating the national evaluation of learning results skills test-based student assessment. Evaluation data was gathered directly from skills tests arranged by institutions. The present report is an account of the underlying work, the concepts governing evaluation, the challenges revealed by the pilot evaluation, and the ultimate outcome. Based on the evaluation pilot, the model for evaluating learning results will be developed further and a plan drawn up for extracting national evaluation data from the data provided by the skills tests. This report is meant for Finnish professionals and for anyone interested in Finnish VET and evaluation.

UK **Key skills and the role of the tutor**

Learning and Skills Development Agency – LSDA
London: LSDA, 2004 – 37 pp.
(Good Practice Guide)

This publication offers advice and guidance on how key skills can be supported and reinforced through tutorial systems in schools and colleges, focusing on the role of the personal tutor in the support and delivery of key skills and on how an effective tutorial programme can support the management of key skills.

UK **The returns to apprenticeship training / Steven McIntosh**

London School of Economics and Political Science – LSE
Centre for Economic Performance – CEP
London: LSE, 2004 – 30 pp.
(CEP Discussion Paper; 622)
ISBN 0-7530-1724-5

This paper uses recent data from the UK Labour Force Survey to estimate the wage gains that individuals make on average if they complete an apprenticeship programme. The results suggest gains of around 5-7 % for men, but no benefit for women. Further analysis extends the results by considering the returns by age group, by qualification obtained, by highest prior qualification and by industrial sector. A key finding emerging from this further analysis is the importance of acquiring qualifications, at level 3 or above, along with the apprenticeship.

http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp0622.pdf

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EFVET

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