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**european  
journal  
of vocational  
training**

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Section prepared by the Documentation Service with the help of the members of the European network of reference and expertise (ReferNet).

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# Frequently asked questions about vocational training in Europe

Éric Fries Guggenheim

Editor-in-chief

In January 1999, the *European Journal of Vocational Training* decided to publish regular 'general' issues, i.e. issues presenting articles without pre-determined links to a given topic. The reason behind this decision was that every year the Journal receives around 50 unsolicited proposals for articles on the widest possible range of topics. Since we publish only three issues of the Journal each year, each containing seven articles, we needed to find a way of publishing, within a reasonable time limit, interesting articles rather than to wait a very long time until an appropriate topic was addressed.

The publication of general issues has had two distinct effects.

The first effect has been an increase in the number of unsolicited articles received by the Journal's Editorial Secretariat, the authors finding in the general issues of the EJVT a new possible medium to publish the results of their research. Without a doubt, this has complicated the situation by increasing the time needed to select, edit and publish articles, but on the other hand, this has permitted a leap in quality. With an increasing number of unsolicited articles being received, the Editorial Committee is able to apply high quality standards, without risking a shortage of articles ready for publication. On the contrary, the Editorial Committee of the *European Journal*, which as we have already explained earlier (see Editorial in issue 37), rejects few articles at first reading (between 30 % and 40 % of articles received), is able to make detailed proposals on the form and content of the articles it decides to publish.

The second effect has been to create a tool for keeping a spontaneous watch on the issues that preoccupy and motivate those who are our natural partners in the field of initial and continuing vocational education and training (VET) and the relationship between training and employment. The Editorial Committee continues to plan thematic issues on the basis of its own knowledge of the field of VET, on the main topics at stake in European countries and at Community level, on the missions of the European agencies involved in the development of vocational training (Cedefop; European Training Foundation – ETF ) and the improvement of living and working conditions (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions; European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

– OSHA). However, the recurring themes addressed in unsolicited articles sent to the *European Journal* have also become a valuable information base on issues which our partners working in vocational training in Europe consider to be important or of concern.

This issue of the Journal, which is a **general issue**, is nevertheless also **a very special one**. It is general in the sense that it brings together a collection of articles each addressing a different aspect of VET. And it is special in that each article addresses a different and debated current issue for initial and continuing vocational training. Thus we present in this issue a whole range of VET related key points of interest and concern to researchers, policy-makers and the wider public. It is a kind of ‘*frequently asked questions*’ about vocational training in Europe (similar to the FAQ section very often found in webpages). We will develop seven particular points:

### 1. Trends in VET needs

In a knowledge and service society with a rapidly declining production sector, **Arthur Schneeberger** sees a tendency for vocational training to develop at post-secondary level. Increasing importance is attached to general training, which is becoming an essential starting point and basis for job-specific vocational training and boosts chances of finding a job.

### 2. *E-learning* and the need to give priority to pedagogy rather than technology

**Gabi Reinmann** reveals the limitations and risks inherent in e-learning when a *technological* approach is adopted. When the issue of e-learning is addressed, we are inevitably and almost fatally driven to discuss and expound on the *technological* potential of the new media. Yet before we talk about *e-training*, it is essential to consider the pedagogic and didactic aspects, since consideration of e-training has to come at the end of a chain of decisions and not at the beginning, as is still too often the case.

### 3. In-company acquisition of vocational skills

On the basis of quantitative and qualitative data, **Josep Francesc Mària Serrano** shows that in-company practical traineeships for young people are only a necessary, but inadequate, precondition for the acquisition of vocational skills. In-company traineeships for young people constitute without doubt an opportunity for acquiring skills. However, the actual acquisition of skills is dependent on a set of antagonistic forces that all have a part to play – legislation, the behaviour of the three key players (trainees, schools and companies) and labour market pressure. Nothing is settled in advance and an actual acquisition of skill is never certain beforehand. It is largely dependent on the joint action of government, ensuring proper application of legislation, schools and trainees, jointly bringing pressure to bear on company tutors during traineeships, this being in everyone’s interests, including companies, which in this way can bring out the full potential of their production processes.

#### 4. Socio-occupational integration of young people of low educational level

**Francesca Salvà Mut, Miquel F. Oliver Trobat and Ana María Calvo Sastre** have analysed the socio-occupational integration of young people of low educational level in the Balearic Islands. In this region, which is relatively disadvantaged in relation to the national average, they argue that it is essential to establish integrated policies and to develop networking in order to surmount the traditional government divisions (employment, training, social services, youth services). In this context, local players have an essential part to play in designing, implementing and evaluating policies for socio-occupational integration.

#### 5. The international mobility of vocational trainees

In the opinion of **Manfred Lukas, Peter-Jörg Alexander, Michael Hahne and Detlef Pohl**, the establishment of a genuine European labour market requires ensuring mobility as from initial vocational training. In the context of a project developed by the Franco-German Youth Office, the Leonardo pilot project *Practicert*, they are working on the recognition of skills acquired via the mobility of vocational trainees in Europe, on the basis of a European instrument that is new but has already proved itself, namely *Europass* (*Europass training* prior to 2005, *Europass Mobility* since then). They regard cross-border in-company traineeships as an appropriate tool enabling trainees to learn to incorporate intercultural elements into their working situation and to acquire certain specific international competences. Certification of this intercultural learning is not only desirable, but also possible, from the perspective of the modular vocational training on the agenda in many European Union countries. However, it requires specific coordination with the foreign partners and detailed consideration of the curriculum.

#### 6. Occupational integration of persons with a disability

**Begoña de la Iglesia Mayol** complains about the prevailing view in our society of the vocational capabilities of persons with a disability, particularly persons with a mental disability. These competences are quite simply ignored or denied. We may sometimes advocate their occupational integration, but it is always for social and humanitarian reasons and it is fast always considered that this implies an economic and industrial cost. Yet everybody can usefully and indeed even profitably be included within a framework of specifically adapted working methods. When we refer to the employment of persons with a disability, we should therefore completely rethink our point of view on their vocational skills and capabilities. This means radically changing the mentality of enterprises, employers and the managers involved. The attitude of enterprises needs to change. A pilot experiment aimed at using group training to encourage employers to look favourably at employing disabled people was conducted by the University of the Balearic Islands with a degree of success.

## 7. Disseminating good vocational training practice

Disseminating good vocational training practice is still a very sensitive subject, also among EU Member States, and it is even more sensitive outside the European Union, especially in developing countries. And yet it is precisely such a country in which the experiment has taken place. **Rebecca Warden** presents the very interesting initiative by a team from the ETF to develop alternance training in Syria. She tells us about the problems encountered and the limited success achieved in a centralised economic framework, without any real point of reference to the European economies where this vocational training method is practised.

Obviously we cannot cover the entire range of possible problems in the field of vocational training with these seven topics, which are also addressed very individually and personally by each of the authors or teams of authors. Nevertheless, we find here several subjects that merit further development in future in one of the special issues of the journal – dissemination of good practice, occupational integration of persons of low educational level, the employability of particular target groups, mobility, etc.

This being the case, the programme for forthcoming issues has already largely been determined:

No	Date	Theme
39	September-December 2006	General
40	January-April 2007	Competence and vocational training
41	May-August 2007	General, plus feature on the accession of Bulgaria and Romania
42	September-December 2007	The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
43	January-April 2008	General
44	May-August 2008	Evaluation, recognition/validation and certification of learning, knowledge, informal skills
45	September-December 2008	General
46	January-April 2008	Initial vocational training and inequity

Your contributions are welcome. Please send them to the Journal's Editor-in-chief:

[eric.friesguggenheim@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:eric.friesguggenheim@cedefop.europa.eu)

Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy this very special general issue.

# Skills for the knowledge and service society

## Trends determining future pre-service and in-service VET needs

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Educational and occupational research

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### Key words

Knowledge society,  
Austria,  
basic skills,  
lifelong learning,  
occupational structure,  
comparability of qualifications,  
highly skilled worker,  
services

### SUMMARY

The change-over to a knowledge and service society means greater opportunities for the highly skilled. Participation in tertiary education is increasing in all countries, and it can be seen that graduates are being absorbed into knowledge-intensive services in the labour market. The international trend towards making vocational education and training part of tertiary education is a response to changes in the demand for skills and to educational ambitions: post-training training is becoming more widespread. The vast majority of jobs will nonetheless continue to be for 'trained operatives' with mid-level and lower-level skills. The decline in the production sector is reducing the scale of simple jobs and is hence a major factor in the increase in specialist training. Many service jobs may not demand lengthy job-specific training, but they do require generic basic academic and behavioural skills. The smaller the job-specific element of the job profile, the greater the element of generic skills required (such as team-working and customer and service focus). Such basic education and training for all young people is therefore becoming increasingly necessary for employability and as a platform for lifelong learning: general adult education ('personality stabilisation') and the importance of job-specific in-service updating training are growing at all levels of the employment system.

With the move towards the knowledge and service-based society, far-reaching changes have taken place in the structure of employment, in skill requirements and in life styles by comparison with earlier phases of the industrialised society. Education and training systems, and the educational behaviour of the public, have also changed greatly in recent decades. By examining international trends, and looking more specifically at the changes in the structure of employment and skills in Austria, this paper aims to help clarify the direction in which changes in skill requirements are moving, and what kind of appropriate responses can be made.

## Structural economic change and computerisation

The proportion of the working population employed in the services sector has risen steadily in Austria in recent decades, as in all industrialised countries, from 60 to 68 % between 1991 and 2001 (the observation interval of the last two national censuses). The proportion of the working population employed in the manufacturing sector fell in the same period from 24 to 19 % (Bauer, 2004, p. 386). At the same time, however, output was 30 % higher than in 1991. These developments took place against a background of technological change and a high degree of international division of labour.

The impact of technological innovation on the employment system can be captured approximately by means of the indicator 'use of computers at work' (Ottens, 2003, p. 5). In 2002, a little over half the working population used a computer for occupational purposes in the EU (15 countries), the values ranging from 30 % to over 70 % (in Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden). Austria, with a figure of 62 %, was towards the top of the range for computer penetration into the world of work. This percentage had almost tripled by comparison with 1994 (21 % computer usage among the working population; Statistik Austria, 2001, p. 132).

Globalisation – the other trend seen to lie behind changes in the labour market – means that the domestic economy must increasingly react to world market stimuli. Nearly 52 % of the Austrian Gross Domestic Product (GDP), for example, is created by the export of goods and services, and this proportion amounts to 34 % among the countries of the EU-15 as a whole (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, 2004, p. 14). Technology and industry have been made increasingly productive by technological innovation and global networking, division of labour and competition. In consequence, the preconditions have been created on the one hand for growing employment in the services sector, while on the other hand, increased productivity builds on previous knowledge-intensive input, particularly from the education, science and research sectors, and on infrastructure development. In Austria, for example, the proportion of the working population in the 'data processing and database' sector who are not self-employed has risen by 162 %

since 1995, the proportion in 'research and development' by 102 %, and that in 'delivery of enterprise-related services' by 67 %. The figures are taken from the Association of Social Insurance Agencies (Hauptverband der Sozialversicherungsträger; Schneeberger/Petanovitsch, 2004, p. 36).

## Far-reaching changes to the structure of employment and skill requirements

In the 2001 census, the job structure of the working population in Austria was captured for the first time in accordance with the international ISCO-88 system of occupational categories, using the EU version, ISCO 88 (COM) (Bauer, 2004, p. 388). By far the greatest change in the job structure between 1991 and 2001 was the growth in *physical, mathematical and engineering science professionals, teaching professionals, life science and health professionals* (+88 %). The number of *legislators, senior officials and managers* in the public and private sectors also rose considerably (+34 %). Growing classes of managers, researchers, engineers and creative workers act as the driving force behind economic development, using their scientific and analytical thinking, their commitment to innovation, high flexibility, social communications skills and international outlook (Florida, 2002, p. 235ff.). The two occupations together account for around 17 % of the working population. Further growth in the public sector will generally slow because of budgetary limitations.

The vast majority of the working population with some kind of training will in future still be found in mid-level occupational categories, although there will be a shift in the pattern. Trained executives in interme-

Table 1. Structural change by occupational category 1991-2001: Numbers employed

ISCO-88: Main occupational categories	1991	2001	Change	
			Absolute	Relative
Physical, mathematical and engineering science professionals, teaching professionals, life science and health professionals	159 294	298 744	139 450	88 %
Legislators, senior officials and managers	230 426	309 561	79 135	34 %
Technicians and associate professionals	596 039	684 193	88 154	15 %
Office clerks and customer service clerks	446 387	476 203	29 816	7 %
Elementary occupations 9	394 153	408 166	14 013	4 %
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	460 897	466 591	5 694	1 %
Armed forces	43 654	40 945	-2 709	-6 %
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	294 181	261 930	-32 251	-11 %
Craft and related trade workers	646 763	517 097	-129 666	-20 %
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	196 710	135 870	-60 840	-31 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 468 504</b>	<b>3 599 300</b>	<b>130 796</b>	<b>4 %</b>

Source: Statistik Austria, censuses; author's own calculations

Table 2a. The five occupations in the United States showing the fastest growth: Projection 2000 – 2010 by average income and typical education

Occupational category	Persons employed		Income quartile 2000*	Typical education
	Number 2000	Growth by bis 2010		
Computer software engineers, applications	380 000	100 %	1	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>
Computer support specialists	506 000	97 %	2	<i>Associate degree</i>
Computer software engineers, system software	317 000	90 %	1	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>
Network and computer systems administrators	229 000	82 %	1	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>
Network systems and data communications analysts	119 000	77 %	1	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>

\* Median annual income 2000

Source: Bureau of Labour Statistics: Occupational Outlook Quarterly, Winter 2001-02

diated technical, commercial and media jobs with broad across-the-range skills act as the core of the knowledge-based economy. This is reflected in particular in the growth in the occupational categories *technicians and associate professionals* and *office clerks and customer service clerks*. *Plant and machine operators and assemblers* have clearly declined (-11 %), and *craft and related trade workers* even more acutely (-20 %). The greatest drop has been among skilled workers in the primary sector of the economy (-31 %). The change is seen most clearly in the relationship between *craft workers* and *technicians*. In crude terms, it can be said that there were more *craft workers* than *technicians* in 1991 (109 to 100), but that this relationship has now been reversed (76 to 100). The proportion of support staff remained practically unaltered over the observation period. The figures for general services such as retailing and catering rose slightly.

A look at the job structure and the outlook for employment in a highly developed service economy such as the United States<sup>(1)</sup>, clearly demonstrates that the shift towards tertiary employment brings with it the need for a *wide range of skills* which open the way to a broad spectrum of jobs. It is true that computer and health services, some of which require post-secondary training, are growing *fastest*. However, the services with the most rapid expansion are headed by catering and retailing (Data from: Hecker, 2001, p. 79f.)

The employment projection for the United States shows the heterogeneity of skills requirements and hence the far-reaching diversity of pre-serv-

(1) According to OECD calculations, the proportion of the working population in the services sector in 2003 was 77.5 % in the United States and 74.7 % in Canada; European countries with high figures were, for example, Sweden 75.1 %, the UK (2001) 73.6 %, and France 73.1 %; Germany 65.9 %, and Austria 64.8 %, showed appreciably lower tertiary percentages (Statistik Austria, 2004b, p. 531). According to the Eurostat Labour Force Survey of 2002, 67.8 % of the working population were employed in services in the EU 15 countries (Eurostat, 2003, p. 4).

Table 2b. The five occupations in the United States showing the greatest growth: Projection 2000 – 2010 by average income and typical education

Occupational category	Persons employed		Income quartile 2000*	Typical education
	Number 2000	Growth by bis 2010		
Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food	2206 000	673 000	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Customer service representatives	1946 000	631 000	3	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Registered nurses	2194 000	561 000	1	Associate degree
Retail salesperson	4109 000	510 000	4	Short-term on-the-job training
Computer support specialists	506 000	490 000	2	Associate degree

\* Median annual income 2000

Source: Bureau of Labour Statistics: Occupational Outlook Quarterly, Winter 2001-02

ice and in-service training needs in highly tertiary economies. In addition to the rapid growth in the need for graduates of relatively short initial training courses in computer-based occupations, the projection up to 2010 (see Table 2b) indicates that the proportion of jobs for which short in-house skills training is sufficient will remain steady, always assuming that basic competences are adequate. *Associate degrees*<sup>(2)</sup> are a level to which not enough attention is paid in many countries in Europe. Trends analyses of educational behaviour consistently show, however, a tendency towards *tertiary* education.

## Depth and spread of knowledge in the employment system

What impact does the *knowledge-based economy* have on the employment system and its vertical structure of occupations and skills? A 2002 survey in Austria (Lifestyle Study by Fessel-GfK, see Schneeberger, 2003) shows both the multiplicity of knowledge and interactive abilities required in more senior jobs, and the broad spread of demands in mid-level and simpler jobs. The correlation between depth of knowledge and awareness of the need for continual in-service education and training in higher levels of employment is empirically apparent, but it is also clear that almost two-thirds of the working population in so-called unskilled and semi-skilled jobs regard continual in-service education and training as important<sup>(3)</sup> (Table 3).

<sup>(2)</sup> Generally a two-year course at a community college, which can often be used under a credit transfer scheme towards a four-year Bachelor's degree course at a college or university.

<sup>(3)</sup> The reply categories were: very important – quite important – not very – not at all important; important = very + quite important.

Table 3. Information technology and knowledge-based employment by occupations, 2002

Occupation	Features of respondents' occupational activities, in %				
	Knowledge of DP/computing is important (very important)	Knowledge of science and technology is important (very important)	Knowledge of economics/commerce is important (very important)	Continual in-service education/training is important (very important)	Interactive performance is important (very important)*
Senior civil servants (n=249)	85 (48)	44 (23)	78 (47)	96 (73)	86 (63)
Self-employed / professionals (n=191)	73 (42)	50 (26)	76 (44)	95 (68)	85 (62)
Junior civil servants (n=951)	79 (48)	37 (17)	59 (32)	90 (61)	79 (54)
Skilled workers (n=518)	49 (22)	59 (21)	40 (12)	84 (53)	54 (24)
Farmers (n=110)	46 (17)	67 (24)	73 (31)	87 (48)	54 (29)
Unskilled and semi-skilled workers (n=297)	39 (16)	35 (17)	36 (9)	64 (37)	69 (42)
Non-self-employed in private sector (n=1.124)	63 (38)	43 (16)	59 (33)	83 (51)	66(39)
Non-self-employed in public sector (n=546)	71 (36)	46 (23)	41 (14)	90 (68)	83(61)
<b>Total (n=2160)</b>	<b>67 (37)</b>	<b>46 (20)</b>	<b>57 (28)</b>	<b>86 (57)</b>	<b>54 (29)</b>

\* Statement: 'I have more to do with people (clients, patients, colleagues, pupils, etc.) than with machinery /technology.'  
 Source: Fessel-GfK, Lifestyle-Studie 2002; Schneeberger, 2003

Highly specialised knowledge on its own is generally completely inadequate in highly skilled and management jobs; communication skills or interactive performance competence, a high ICT user level, a knowledge of foreign languages and international mobility are often important or essential. Skilled occupations are characterised not only by extensive specialist knowledge requirements, but also by the *wide variety* of simultaneous demands.

The knowledge-based economy and the growing number of jobs in the services sector call not only for *top-level skills* (in order to be competitive internationally) but also for a broad class of *trained executives* in intermediate occupational positions. Whether these skills are taught in upper secondary or post-secondary education, under the dual system or in full-time training, varies widely internationally, depending on the national traditions of education and employment in the state in question (see Table A-1).

Simple repetitive jobs without the need for significant communication skills or the ability to interact with colleagues, clients, etc., are becoming increasingly rare. The ability to work as part of a team, and a customer or service focus, are required of around 70 % of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in their jobs. It is therefore clear that the job opportunities for the low-skilled have changed considerably. The number of 'low-skilled' workers has not fallen over the last ten years or so (at least according to the Austrian example), but the demands placed on them differ markedly from those of simple jobs in the past: broad basic competences (that can be used across sectors), the ability to work as part of a team, and a customer and service focus are increasingly required.

Countries with apprenticeship systems are affected by the structural change in a particular way: with the fall in the number of skilled trades people and plant and machine operators (especially in industry), there has been a sharp decline in the intake and output of one of the most widespread traditional methods of training apprentices – dual training at the place of work and part-time vocational college. In 2001, 60 to 70 % of people working in these kinds of jobs in Austria had trained as apprentices. However, the proportion of the two occupational categories (craft trades, machine operators, etc.) has fallen from 27 to below 22 % of the working population, and if this trend continues, it will only account for 16 % by 2011. With the growth in the services sector, the opportunities for training and employment in simple jobs in the agricultural and production sectors have withered internationally, so that new challenges are faced in the integration of young people into training and employment.

## Current general education focusing on broad basic competences

There is wide empirical evidence that as a result of the changes in the world of work, traditional compulsory school education no longer automatically provides a broad basis for earning a living and active citizenship. As a result, the relatively new concept of 'basic education' or 'basic competences', which was first introduced into the discourse by educational researchers (e.g. Murnane, Levy, 1996) and has increasingly been taken up by supranational organisations such as the OECD (1997, 2001) <sup>(4)</sup> and the EU <sup>(5)</sup> as an attempt to respond to the new general demands of the workplace, refers principally to basic active skills such as language, mathematics, group communication and achievement, basic knowledge

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<sup>(4)</sup> In its PISA project, for example, the OECD is propagating the testing of life skills, which need to be fostered among school pupils and adults; see: OECD: Learning for Life (OECD, 2001, p. 18ff.).

<sup>(5)</sup> The wording of the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning is as follows: 'This Memorandum defines new basic skills as those required for active participation in the knowledge society and economy' (EU Commission 2000, p. 10).

of computing, entrepreneurial spirit and an understanding of the culture of technology, as well as cognitive principles and the willingness to continue learning both on and off the job. One of the huge challenges facing education is to teach and foster the basic competences needed for participation in the information and services society both at work and in private life.

Given the revolutionary changes in the world of work brought about by information and communications technologies, by the growing importance of technology and knowledge in the economy, and by the expansion in services jobs, the principle of jobs tied to particular trades has lost its relevance as a training paradigm. As traditional occupations decline in the world of work, increasing importance attaches to transversal skills such as computing and languages, to generic skills such as the ability to communicate and work as part of a team, to a services orientation (a customer and services focus) and to entrepreneurship.

Specialist education and training in job-specific skills, and general education and training in generic skills, are *not* functionally of equal rank. While job-specific training provides theoretical and practical knowledge and skills in a specialised form, *generic training primarily expands the horizon in which they can be used (and restricts it at the same time!)*. Generic education and training opens up potential areas of action which cannot be explored or exploited solely on the basis of specialist knowledge. Without social skills (team work, communication), for example, or entrepreneurship, high-level specialist knowledge may lie fallow if it remains tied to prescriptive instruction. This horizon-widening function of generic education and training, broadening areas of potential application, may differ depending on the *vertical* level of activity, but nonetheless generally holds true.

It can be assumed not only that the depth of the *generic skills* required will vary according to the vertical level of the job, but also that they will have a differing relationship to *job-specific skills*. Specific forms of generic skills will occupy a larger share in the case of simple jobs than in highly skilled jobs that call for a high degree of specialist skills. It remains to be seen whether new low-level vocational competences for low-skilled jobs will evolve out of what might be called specific bundles of generic skills. Induction into the workplace plays a particularly important part in the case of simple jobs. Behaviour and appearance may well be the crucial variable for acceptance as a trainee, and the basic skills learnt at school will then come into play in order to achieve learning objectives (Schneeberger / Kastenhuber / Petanovitsch, 2004).

Surveys of employers in Austria have shown that the overall impression of one's personality is the primary factor in the selection of young people for enterprise-based training, and that school marks are of secondary importance. There are complaints that about half of those taken on have poor basic educational skills (Schneeberger/Kastenhuber/Petanovitsch, 2004), but the vast majority nonetheless eventually qualify at the end of their training. These experiences demonstrate that it is social learning at work that

offers young people a real chance of catching up on their basic education, or major parts of it.

Experience of working and communicating with people of varying age and, frequently, culture, is particularly valuable for initial vocational training. While there is sufficient basis for this in many rural regions, young people growing up in an urban environment will often lack experience of working and communicating with heterogeneous groups. As argued above, the possession of generic skills as a means of exploiting specific knowledge, skills and competences is important not only in the upper reaches of employment, but also more generally, in suitable form. The term 'basic skills' implies

Figure 1:  
**Elements of integrated development of vocational skills**



Source: Author's own design

the basic competences needed to act in a world of work and leisure marked by information and communication technologies, and hence also the minimum requirements for pursuing initial training and finding a job.

In fact, the rise in the minimum skills threshold is a problem in all developed societies. The change in the structure of employment and the demand for higher minimum skills result from the continuing decline in simple repetitive jobs in the primary and secondary sectors of the economy. As a consequence of the growth of tertiary sector employment, it is not only highly skilled knowledge-based services for which there is a demand, but also simple service jobs in areas such as catering and retailing, which may not require profound job-specific training, but do require minimum generic skills (ranging from reading and mathematics to a basic knowledge of data processing, e.g. Word) and social communication skills (customer and service focus).

## Initial training as a 'platform' for lifelong learning – 'second rounds' to exploit the potential of skilled workers

The long-term rise in participation in continuing education and training as a result of structural change is empirically apparent. *Statistik Austria* found an annual rate of participation in 'vocational in-service training courses' of 12 % for the year 1989. By 2002/03, almost a quarter of the

working population were taking part in work-related courses or training (non-formal continuing education and training), and if so-called formal pre-service and in-service training (leading to publicly recognised qualifications) are included, that figure rises to 32 % (Statistik Austria, 2004, p. 325ff.).

As Table 4 shows, the prospect of *promotion* is the principal motivation for taking part in continuing training among 35-year-olds, while those over 35 years of age are primarily seeking to update out-of-date knowledge, taking *functional adaptive training* to maintain their employability (Statistik Austria, 2004a, p. 284ff.) Among the unemployed, *change of occupation* is the most frequent motivation. We thus see that people use continuing education and training in different ways to adapt to the change in the employment system. The only form of adaptation that takes place primarily in the context of periods of unemployment during a working career is retraining and change of occupation, or at least, this is what the above finding suggests.

Job-specific training cannot be provided via initial training or 'stored training' to the same extent as in recent decades. This has to do with a number of factors: the widely acknowledged decline in the size of younger age cohorts, migration by people beyond the age of initial education and training, and the pace of structural change and the spread of information technology, which cannot be dealt with through one-off computer training and requires continual ICT in-service training. It is therefore not surprising that just under 60 % of the working population regard continual in-service training as 'very important' for their work (see Table 3). However, there are few countries in which this is already matched by anything like as high an annual rate of continuing education and training. 'Second rounds' of pre-service training or 'post-training training' (e.g. supplementary examinations, intensive training for skilled workers, adult vocational colleges, higher education courses, etc.) are ways of better exploiting potential or of taking initial specialist training further to meet needs. These extensions of initial education and training well beyond the age of 20 years are cost-intensive and cannot be paid for exclusively by employers and employees. Given the external impact on the national economy of adequate investment in continuing education and training, it is vital for public spending to be involved.

Since barely a quarter of the Austrian working population is employed by large enterprises with their own training facilities, there is a need for non-company specific, sectoral and regional schemes and activities (e.g. training collectives). These should be built around assessment of continuing training needs and learning methods suitable for adults, so that funds are not wrongly invested. The requisite information and advice, and public support, are essential if resources are to be made available to the working population and SMUs where they are needed. Narrowly-vocational adult education is becoming increasingly inadequate, however. It cannot be assumed that adults will have acquired and will maintain generic basic

skills and stress-resistant, robust personalities throughout their working lives; growing social and communication requirements at work call for educational activities.

In the case of basic skills, there is no clear distinction between vocational and general education. While there are relatively high expectations that IT and data processing will be relevant to work (according to the June 2003 microcensus, three quarters of course participants in Austria in 2003/03 gave largely work-related reasons for their attendance), this is far less frequently the case with foreign language courses: the proportion then does not even reach 50 % (Statistik Austria, 2004, p. 115). The great importance of basic skills is also reflected in the interest in particular subjects in continuing education and training. Personal development and general subjects have priority throughout, particularly as the level of previous formal education rises. The changes in the structure of formal education can therefore be regarded in the long term as levers by which to increase the demand for adult education and train-

**Table 4 Selected reasons for taking part in work-related courses among the working population of main working age, in %**

Working population by age group	Reasons for taking part in continuing education/training*				
	In 1000	Knowledge out of date	To improve chances of promotion	To change job	To change occupation
25 – 29	102.8	15.8	35.1	1.6	3.0
30 – 34	136.9	22.4	26.7	2.3	2.8
35 – 39	153.2	24.0	21.5	1.2	2.5
40 – 44	147.2	27.8	17.3	1.7	2.3
45 – 49	105.9	37.0	13.8	1.5	1.2
50 – 54	75.2	37.8	8.8	0.5	0.6
55 – 59	34.7	32.9	5.0	0.4	0.5
60 – 64	5.8	24.6	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>867.6</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2.3</b>
Unemployed	36.2	14.5	14.6	9.1	24.8
Managing households	13.1	30.0	15.3	2.7	22.8
<b>Non-working total</b>	<b>95.4</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>15.2</b>

\* Selection, multiple reasons possible

Source: Statistik Austria, June monthly report 2003

ing. On the other hand, the ageing of the population calls for stronger incentives and provision that is appropriate to adults, if the educational impact is to be maintained.

While poor reading and writing ability among those leaving compulsory school education has led to expressions of concern, not least following receipt and discussion of the PISA 2000 results, the question of adults' basic skills can scarcely be answered adequately empirically. If, according to

the country average of PISA 2000, around 18 % of the 15 and 16-year-olds captured in the tests have poor reading skills when they enter training or employment (OECD, 2002, p. 195), the proportion will certainly be no smaller among older people, especially if, as is often argued in the research literature, it is less the weakness of age than the loss of skills through disuse <sup>(6)</sup> which results in an appreciably higher number of middle-aged and older adults with poor basic skills. However, this only becomes a problem when new demands are faced at work which require generic skills that are assumed but are in fact not available in sufficient measure.

## The goal of extended working lives: the key variable of motivation

Adult education, whether vocational or general, is gaining in importance and potential in all fields. Citizens need a greater degree of job-specific continuing training and personal development than ten or twenty years ago. Given the rapid pace of change and the huge variety of contradictory experiences that need to be processed, personal development is needed in a global economy in order to promote and preserve the *stability of the personality*. Large private-sector organisations are aware of this fact and are doing something about it. But not all citizens have comparable access to adult education. Current surveys of participation and interest in adult education show considerable proportions of unfulfilled interest in general education, with computing, languages and health at the top of the list (Schneeberger/Schlögl, 2004, p. 54).

The need for and participation in adult education are changing both quantitatively and qualitatively, since motivation alters with age. Initial vocational training and the occupational principle are losing their crucial role in creating identity in the wake of change and breaks in people's working careers. The traditional close relationship between occupation and life style has become weaker and given way to variety and flexibility in living. As a consequence of modernisation and its problems – technological revolutions, economic growth, democratisation, internationalisation and secularisation – the conditions under which people live have changed and call for appropriate adaptation. It can be said that there has been a fragmentation of the context in which we live, going far beyond the labour market and employment and associated with a reduction in the number of areas of life governed by tradition, classic authority figures and fixed conventions. The social sciences point to the 'sectoralisation of social life into many different groups and individuals with contradictory ways of thinking and behaving' (Christof/Gruber/Pichler/Thien, 2004) as a key feature of post-modernism.

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<sup>(6)</sup> A broadly based discussion of the deficit hypothesis of ageing and of alternative explanations in relation to performance and learning ability (the disuse effect) are to be found in Koller / Plath, 2000, p. 118ff.

This creates a need for guidance, not least in adult education. Changed expectations of life also have an impact. In sustainable approaches to life-long learning, great priority is given to 'managing life around the core of life' and self-directed forms of learning (Knopf, 2000). It is not enough to limit personal development to youth. The take-up of continuing education for personal development and communication courses demonstrates the need, which extends across broad classes of occupation, although it has to date not been sufficiently accessible to those who might need it most.

Last but not least, the issue of longer working lives needs to be explored. In essence, this is scarcely an isolated matter of education and training, but a broad social goal. On average, only 40 % of 55 to 64-year-olds living in the 25 countries of the EU were still working in 2003 (Eurostat, 2004, p. 5). In Northern European countries, the proportion of this age group in work is considerably higher, however (e.g. Denmark 60 %, Norway 67 %, Sweden 69 %). In these countries, participation in general and vocational adult education is also above the average (Eurostat Yearbook. 2004, p. 83). The motivation to take part in continuing education and training does not exist in isolation but is usually tied to the anticipated opportunity to make use of it. Many people can work longer and would like to work longer (job satisfaction is very high in this sub-group), while others have to work longer. A glance at the employment rate differentiated by education shows that in extending working lives, we are at the start of a long process of change, in which education and training will play a key role alongside other factors (health, flexible working hours and ways of working, occupation, type of specialist knowledge, opportunities to take early retirement, salary increments based on seniority, etc.). From the point of view of education and training, attention needs to be given not so much to solid basic education for all, but above all to in-service training to update vocational knowledge and skills as required, and, if necessary, to retraining, so that current skills demands can still be met by 50-year-olds.

## International consensus that vocational training should become tertiary education despite continuing diversity of systems

The move to make vocational pre-service training a form of tertiary education is perhaps the most striking international example of *convergence* between education and training systems. Despite differences in initial institutions and levels, there was a growth in the proportion of young people with tertiary qualifications living in all countries in the period 1991 to 2002 (see Table 5), although the content of 'tertiary education' varied widely.

This trend is also clearly reflected in current numbers of graduates and entrants. There are countries with tertiary enrolment rates of 70 to 80 % of young people of comparable ages (see Table 5). That means that

the overwhelming majority of young people aim to take initial vocational training or continuing training after upper secondary education. If it is assumed that the published tertiary enrolment rates are at least approximately realistic, and that the success rate is around 70 %, this means that the rise in tertiary qualifications (to 42 % in 2002; OECD, 2004, p. 77) is heading for 50 % of an age cohort.

Countries with classic *enterprise-based* apprenticeship systems (Switzerland, Germany and Austria) showed rates of tertiary education among the 25 to 34-year-old resident population in 2002 of between 15 and 26 %. However, the increase between 1991 and 2002, and the enrolment rates for 2002, reveal a clear trend towards tertiary-level vocational training here too.

Post-training training or supplementary initial training are also a convergent trend in vocational training in the broader sense in the different systems. Despite these differences in systems, it can be said that initial vocational training is being postponed and expanded so that attempts to secure

Table 5. International comparative indicators of tertiary transition from school to employment

OECD countries (Selected)	25 to 34-year-old resident population with tertiary qualifications			Proportion of new graduates 2002	Proportion of new entrants 2002
	Proportions in %		Relative increase**		
	1991	2001			
Canada	32	51	59	-	-
Korea	21	41	95	-	55
New Zealand	23	40	74	-	105
Australia	23	36	57	45	77
United States	30	39	30	-	64
Sweden	27	39	44	37	81
Finland	33	39	18	49	71
Belgium	27	38	41	-	66
Spain	16	37	131	47	69
Ireland	20	36	80	48	58
France	20	36	80	43	59
United Kingdom	19	31	63	47	74
Denmark	19	31	63	-	62
Netherlands	22	28	27	-	54
Switzerland	21	26	24	37	49
Germany	21	22	5	29	50
Austria	8	15	88	21*	37*
Portugal	9	15	67	-	-
Italy	7	12	71	24	51
<b>Country average</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>67</b>

\* Author's own estimate, since no data are published by the OECD for tertiary area B

\*\* Figures for 1991

Source: OECD 2004

the best possible employment profile extend well beyond the age of 19 years (the trend being up to the age of around 35 years, see Table 5).

Although there is a common trend towards tertiary education, there are still considerable differences in systems, as the comparisons in Tables 5 and A-1 show. While alternating systems (workplace + vocational college or training centre) and vocational schools can be accessed from the age of 15 or 16 years in some European countries, this occurs later in other countries or is part of adult education (see Table A-1). A glance at the tertiary education enrolment rate, which varies from 40 % in Austria to 80 % in Sweden, gives an approximate idea of the extent of the differences in institutions, patterns of training and expectations. In some countries 'vocational training' already contains elements of 'higher education', while in others (with high academic tertiary take-up), higher education curricula also contain distinct elements of instruction, so that they can be classed as vocational.

It will become increasingly difficult to keep vocational education and training at upper secondary level. Countries with high tertiary enrolment rates include in this level of formal education qualifications which are regarded as being at upper secondary level in countries with relatively low enrolment rates in the higher education sector, and traditionally relatively long first degree courses (e.g. ophthalmology, nursing, technical and commercial subjects, etc.). This growing lack of clear boundaries, which goes with the expansion of the tertiary sector, is also affected by the diversity of education and training traditions and manifests itself for example in the Maastricht joint Communiqué issued by the Ministers responsible for vocational education, the social partners and the European Commission on 14 December 2004, which grew out of the Copenhagen Declaration of 30 November 2002: 'VET is increasingly taking place at all educational levels and, therefore, the parity of esteem and links between VET and general education, in particular with higher education, need to be fostered by innovative strategies and instruments at the national and European level.' (Maastricht Communiqué, p. 2).

'Translating' country-specific qualifications into European 'labour market currency' therefore calls for complicated 'conversion mechanisms' guided primarily by the framework of reference, competences, level of use and sectors of the employment system, and rather less by formal levels of education, in order to build up trust and acceptance across national borders. This is an indispensable requirement for greater mobility between regions in the vocational education and employment system in Europe, so that skills flow in future to where they will be used and can create income (Tessaring/Wannan, 2004, p. 5).

This is one of the reasons why the task of creating a basis for the transparency of vocational skills and the recognition of vocational qualifications in the various system-specific versions of training for middle-level jobs is so lengthy and difficult. VET (vocational education and training) is interpreted in widely differing ways in Europe and internationally, as are the as-

sociated institutions of the employment system. To restrict mobility to higher education would be counter-productive, however, if European growth and standard of living targets are to be met. ■

Table appendix

Table A-1:

**Comparison of the upper age-limit of compulsory education and the upper secondary course structure in European countries, 2002**

Country	Age to which education is compulsory	Type of course (proportions in %)			
		General	Pre-vocational	Vocational	Of which: combined school and enterprise-based training
Switzerland	15	35	-	65	59
Denmark	16	47	-	53	53
Germany	18	37	-	63	51
Slovakia	16	24	-	76	41
Czech Republic	15	20	-	80	38
Austria	15	21	7	72	36
Netherlands	18	31	-	69	24
Hungary	16	50	37	13	13
France	16	44	-	56	12
Finland	16	43	-	57	11
Belgium	18	30	-	70	3
United Kingdom	16	28	-	72	-
Norway	16	42	-	58	-
Sweden	16	50	-	50	-
Greece	15	60	-	40	-
Italy	15	35	38	27	-
Ireland	15	73	27	-	-

Source: OECD

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# Understanding e-learning: an opportunity for Europe?

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## SUMMARY

The article begins with the new media themselves and with the question of what technical potential the new information and communication technologies have and why they exert so much influence on the debate about learning and teaching. It goes on to show why a technological approach to e-learning not only has limitations but also involves risks. Consequently, it appears necessary to adopt a learning-oriented approach to e-learning. The hypothesis is that one must first understand learning per se in order to be able to promote e-learning. A heuristic framework model has been designed to show that technical decisions come at the end of a chain of decisions that relate, or should relate, primarily to education and teaching. It was only possible to discuss briefly the opportunities that e-learning offers for learning in Europe, if we assume a pedagogic approach. E-learning in Europe opens up new possibilities for various forms and methods of learning, but there are major obstacles if the emphasis remains on the technological approach.

## Key words

New learning technologies,  
learning potential of new  
technologies,  
learner-oriented approach,  
education,  
design of virtual learning  
environments,  
quality of learning

## Introduction

E-learning is a collective umbrella term describing the broad field of education with and by means of new technologies. In this sense, e-learning has developed in a meteoric and conflicting fashion; while some people extol the benefits of the new information and communication technologies and see a digital world of education evolving, others complain about mistakes, or promises ranging from illusionary to false. It may be easier to understand this changeable and conflicting story by way of an *analogy*.

People want to be mobile, to get from A to B and back cheaply, quickly and safely; this desire was and is the motivating force behind the history of *mobility* in general and *auto mobility* in particular.

The dream of driving became a reality for a few people only – and to a limited extent – with the first motorised carriages at the end of the nine-

teenth century. Today, more than a century later, we sit in cars with powerful engines and intelligent microelectronics. When Henry Ford came up with his idea of cars for all, everybody laughed at him. Soon, however, a programme of road-building came along that amazed the doubters. As cars became faster and more numerous, roads became wider and acquired more lanes, the road network became denser and the provision of petrol stations more comprehensive. Today's car driver needs multifaceted training, not only in accelerating, braking and steering, but also in order to be able to operate electronic equipment in the car, cope with heavy traffic, and overcome complex risk situations. In contrast to the early days of the car, today driving schools are an essential component of the 'auto mobility' system. So it can be concluded that technical developments in car manufacturing, the expansion of infrastructures and individual skills acquisition were and are largely attuned to one another in the area of auto mobility. The motivating force was the dream of driving – and this is still true today.

The motivating force behind the story of learning with new media in general and e-learning in particular is the new information and communication technologies (ICTs), with a view to bringing the benefits of technology into educational institutions and making learning and teaching more up to date in them. However, there were no clear ideas (and this is often still the case) about exactly what 'more up to date' means and what the precise purpose of the new technologies might be. It is not so much a dream of 'learning and education' and appropriate teaching/learning concepts, but more the availability of the Internet and of efficient storage and carrier media that influences the development of e-learning, especially in practice.

But is that not equivalent to building roads with no cars or would-be drivers? Even now, in many cases e-learning provision has to be aligned with selected learning management systems (Baumgartner *et al.*, 2002); the editing of the content for use with the media concerned has to be geared to storage capacities and bandwidths. It is as if the development of the car had been made dependent on arbitrary road widths, surfaces and parking-space sizes. As a rule, teachers and learners are put onto the information highway without preparation and with inadequate support, to find motorised carriages travelling on it as well as general-purpose vehicles and cabriolets.

*To sum up*, you do not need to be either a car enthusiast or a frequent car user to concede that in the context of e-learning, the history of auto mobility could have provided some useful lessons on *systematic* development and *motivating force*. This is apparent because the development of didactic concepts and appropriate provision for e-learning, technical progress in the information and communication sector, and the skills acquisition of individual learners and teachers are not always (well) attuned to one another; development tends instead to be *fragmented*. The new technologies were, and still are, the motivating force, and I shall go on to investigate the question of whether this dominance of technology in education really gets us any further.

## New technologies and their potential for learning

Without a doubt, the new ICTs have, as the name suggests, opened up more possibilities for us in the area of information and communication. Information and communication are two fundamental pillars of learning that play a key role in *all* learning settings (school, university, continuing training, vocational training) (see also Back *et al.*, 1998).

### Distribution, representation and exploration

Today, with the aid of the Internet and Intranets, it is possible for us to make information accessible and to distribute it easily and quickly, irrespective of time and place – I call this *the new technologies' distribution function*.

Multimedia tools of all kinds open up many ways of presenting information in various systems of symbols, combining text, illustrations and animation, and incorporating audio and video into hypermedia systems – I call this *the new technologies' representation function*.

Planning games, simulations and microworlds are examples of technical tools that make information not only clearer, but also even manipulable – I call this *the new technologies' exploration function*.

Distribution, representation and exploration of information – there are many *examples* confirming that the new technologies fulfil these functions well:

- The student seeking essays and research results on the Internet for a piece of homework is learning via information distributed thanks to electronic networking. The university lecturer who makes his publications available online is also using the new media's *distribution function*, *inter alia* to support the learning of others.
- The employee who finds out how a new piece of equipment functions via computer-based training is profiting from multimedia information and using it to increase his knowledge. And the teacher who makes use of a video-based learning programme in class is using the *representation function* of the new media to make his lesson more vivid.
- When managers practise managing an enterprise in a planning game, using a time-lapse program, this involves active, virtually hands-on learning, which is made possible by manipulating processes and providing immediate feedback. Virtual laboratories at universities avoid high-risk experiments in reality; this too is feasible thanks only to the *exploration function* of the new media.

## Communication and collaboration

In the above examples, learning via interaction is added to learning via information. However, interaction with the subject (for this, see Schulmeister, 2004) is only *one* aspect of the possibilities for interaction – the field of digital education opens up interaction with other learners, teachers and experts.

- The Internet and other networks not only serve to distribute information, but are also the basis for various forms of synchronous and asynchronous interaction between people via email, forums, chatrooms and video conferences; so here we are seeing *the new technologies' communication function*.
- Tools from the area of *computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW)* go even further; not only do they make it possible for people in different places to communicate, but they also support cooperation in order to solve a task or an actual problem jointly. I call this *the new technologies' collaboration function*.

Communication and collaboration – here too there are examples showing that the new technologies can take on both these tasks in many ways:

- For example, email projects in school language classes use the *communication function* of the new media in the same way that newsgroups on the Internet do. The first example refers to learning opportunities in educational institutions and the second to new learning paths in an informal context.
- Cooperative casework in separate groups is found in continuing training, at least at higher management levels, and also in university teaching; thanks to the new technologies' *collaboration function*, such complex learning scenarios are becoming possible and more common, at least when cost/benefit-oriented thinking does not predominate, since although collaboration using new media is effective, it is also costly for both learners and teachers.

## The range of learning and teaching with new media

While in practice various combinations of all these functions of the new media are encountered in learning and teaching, separation of them can only ever be analytical in nature. For example, complex computer- or *web-based training* combines multimedia and interactivity and hence uses the representation *and* exploration functions simultaneously. Learning scenarios relying on communication and collaboration usually also offer information on the same learning platform that can be used to process tasks. Here, the communication, collaboration *and* distribution functions become interlinked. Simulations can also be handled cooperatively in separate groups; here, the collaboration *and* exploration functions are deliberately combined.

These are only a few examples, and there is also the increasing combination of virtual and face-to-face learning to create *blended learning scenarios* (Reinmann-Rothmeier, 2003).

*To sum up*, the fact that there are many definitions of e-learning means that ultimately it remains unclear precisely which of the functions of new technology noted above are involved. Thus it can easily be imagined how imprecise most of the designations are and how wide the field of possible forms of learning that may be subsumed under e-learning in the broadest sense. It follows that, on the one hand, people should state exactly what they are talking about in this field; a small point, but nonetheless not something that can be taken for granted. On the other hand, it also follows that there is an extensive range of learning and teaching with new media, insofar as teachers and designers bring with them didactic ability *and* didactic imagination (Schulmeister, 2001), in order to be able to take advantage of this range. At the same time, this is the keyword for the next point, the argument in favour of a pedagogic approach to e-learning, which is more than necessary, given the many traps inherent in the technological approach.

## Limitations and risks of the technological approach

In the 1990s, it was widely believed that learning with new technologies saved time and money, improved effectiveness and was also much more fun than conventional learning. Almost all these expectations have proved to be at least exaggerated.

- For example, not a few learners have fallen into the *speed trap* – the hope that with computer-based training, one will learn a foreign language, a great deal faster, for instance, cannot usually be fulfilled, since learning cannot be speeded up at will. Learning takes time, with or without the new media (see Siebert, 2001).
- Trade and industry were particularly badly affected by the *cost trap* – the expectation that learning with new media would save not only time but also money on continuing training was largely disappointed. Many enterprises have cut back their initially euphoric e-learning plans for electronic mass training in simple know-how and skills. The boom in learning platforms has died down and people at many fairs and conferences have become more critical (e.g. Riekhof and Schüle, 2002).
- Even many an academic has fallen into the *effectiveness trap* in learning with new media; although admittedly more and more studies not mentioning any *fundamental* benefits of learning with multimedia and the Internet have been appearing since the mid-1990s (e.g. Astleitner, 2003). Despite this, even now media projects are often given financial backing in accordance with criteria that are less than transparent, usu-

ally also without any exact knowledge of where, when and how the new media can really make learning better and more lasting (Multimedia Kontor Hamburg and MMB Institut für Medien- und Kompetenzforschung, 2004).

- There remains the *fun trap*: with the triumphant progress of the computer, for a long time people gave themselves up to the hope that at last there would be an end to the trials and tribulations of learning. However, even the assumption that learning could always be fun proved to be a fallacy. In many ways learning is work, associated with concentration and effort. The fact that effort can, of course, provide satisfaction, and that it is essential for virtual learning to connect to the learner's emotions, is another story (e.g. Reinmann/Rothmeier, 2004). However, it is a fact that learning in virtual environments is not like either a visit to the cinema or the hustle and bustle of a theme park.

Many of these traps, and others, result from a technological – one might almost say *technocratic* – approach to e-learning. What is missing here is a forward-looking dream of education and learning. Although there are many good didactic concepts for utilising technological potential (see, for example, Niegemann *et al.*, 2004), these are far too rarely found in practice or in the minds of decision-makers. Instead, it appears to be above all technical possibilities that provide the framework within which learning too is now to become faster, more effective, cheaper and more fun. Or, to return to our earlier analogy, wide roads, routes to every part of the earth and a petrol station on every corner invite people to drive, although only a few of them are imbued with a desire to drive and hardly any decent cars are available – not to mention the ability to drive.

Naturally the 'learning with new media' sector is not made up entirely of *technocrats*, who focus on the technology and believe that pedagogy must be brought into line with it. However, recent studies (e.g. Aviram and Talmi, 2004) show that technocrats in this sense still constitute a powerful group, especially in the context of decision-makers in the world of politics, in trade and industry and in big organisations. This should be making us feel apprehensive. Even if big media projects also have pedagogues or psychologists on board, the starting point is still often the technology, for which a pedagogic application is then – at least – sought.

However, from the point of view of education and learning, would it not be much more fruitful to focus primarily on *pedagogic* aims and then to seek technologies, or to promote technologies that can serve pedagogic purposes? In my view, here too the right motivating force is lacking, there is a lack of specific conceptions of learning and educational goals in our society today, conceptions to which the development of e-learning plans and technological infrastructures could be geared. Against this background, an argument must be put forward in support of a *learning-oriented* approach to e-learning, and this argument will be made in more detail in the next section.

## A learning-oriented approach to learning

### Different qualities of learning

Thinking and acting in a learning-oriented way means first looking more closely at the different qualities and the wealth of facets of learning. As everyone knows from their own experience, learning is not always the same: the kind of learning and the quality of learning experienced depend on *where* one learns (e.g. at school, on the job or in one's free time), *with whom* one learns (e.g. on one's own, with others or from a teacher), *what feelings* are associated with the learning (e.g. enthusiasm, reluctance, irritation or curiosity), *how freely* the learning can be structured (e.g. guided or self-determined), and much more besides. What is to be learned is also extremely important, where 'what' does not necessarily mean content such as English, German or mathematics, but the *quality* of the *knowledge* aimed at as the result of learning (see Baumgartner and Payr, 1999). This question of 'what' also always involves 'to what end'. For example, learning may mean the acquisition of simple know-how or skills, the incorporation of new information into existing knowledge, and the expansion of one's horizons or the effort on one's own part to generate knowledge, collect experience and participate in a community's activities.

These are all different levels of quality or intensity of learning, namely *knowledge acquisition*, *understanding* and *learning by doing* (Siebert, 2001), although this does not mean that one level is fundamentally of higher quality than another. The three levels of learning cited are quite simply different, functioning differently in different situations, they are described and explained more or less adequately by different theoretical approaches to teaching and learning, *and* they can be more or less adequately supported by different methods and media. Our own experience again shows us how important it is to differentiate learning in this way; learning the art of typing and mastering the vocabulary of a foreign language represent the *acquisition of know-how or skills*. The mere acquisition of know-how is vastly different from self-study at a university or participation in a management seminar: here, *understanding* is involved. This in turn is not really comparable with the lengthy processes of acclimatisation to a trade or with the development of the ability to act in new roles, which can be described as *learning by doing*.

All this is called learning, but it would be a meaningless undertaking to try to describe the processes involved by means of a *single* theory; nor can the support measures required really be depicted in a *single* model of teaching and learning; and it would be pointless to offer the same media repertoire in all cases. Learning is not always the same; and this also applies to learning with new technologies. So great scepticism should be the response to showy promises professing that many learning and educational prob-

lems can be resolved at once with the aid of a *single* model, a *single* platform or even a *single* magic tool.

## Mental dimensions of learning

The fact that a distinction can and must be made between different quality levels of learning is one thing. Naturally, different forms of learning also have things in common, and these lie in the *mental dimensions* of learning, making it a phenomenon whose wealth of facets is often criminally disregarded (e.g. Wild *et al.*, 2001).

First, learning is always an active process; even mere listening is not a passive process. When we are learning, this also always means that we are perceiving, taking in, processing, retaining something, remembering and evaluating something: learning is a *cognitive* act.

If the impetus and willingness to learn are lacking, we develop neither know-how nor understanding, and absolutely no ability to act; people who actually learn are also *motivated* to do so.

Enthusiasm and reluctance, anger and joy, curiosity and irritation, all these are desired or undesired companions of learning: learning is also always accompanied by *feelings*.

And finally, in many ways learning is bound up with *social* and sociocultural aspects: even when learning takes place not in groups, but individually.

Cognition, motivation, emotion and social interaction are the most important dimensions of learning and are equally involved in knowledge acquisition, understanding and learning by doing, even if to differing extents. To reduce learning one-sidedly above all to its *cognitive aspect* would probably in many cases play a part in the non-fulfilment of high expectations of new models of teaching and learning or new media in education.

*To sum up* at this point, those who intend to design e-learning environments and promote virtual education must *understand learning* and have an interest in learning and learners. In current educational practice, however, little of this is to be felt. It is very obvious that the technocratic paradigm has been the force behind many virtual learning environments. I intend to use a *heuristic framework model* for designing e-learning environments to show that this is neither meaningful nor necessary.

## Heuristic framework model for designing virtual learning environments

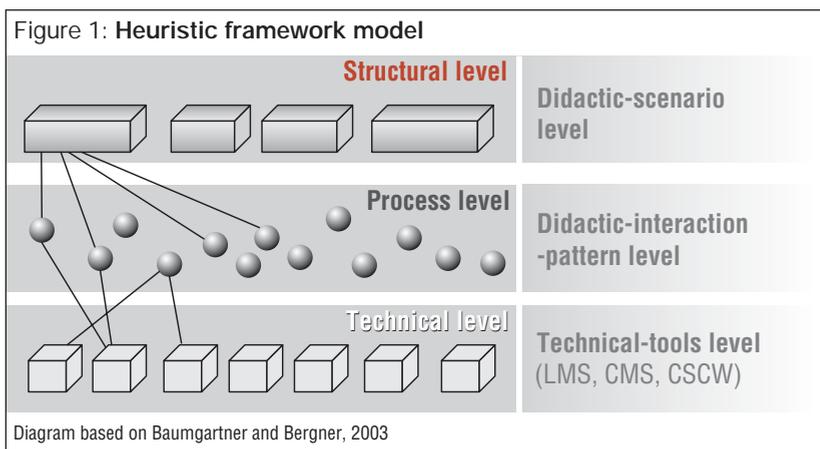
This model distinguishes between three levels of abstraction of e-learning environments (Baumgartner and Bergner, 2003), didactic scenarios, patterns of didactic interaction, and technical tools (see Fig. 1):

- The *didactic scenarios* are at the top. This means whole arrangements of methods which, between them, form a coherent learning en-

vironment or a structure for learning. For that reason, I also call it the *structural level*. It is not laid down in advance how a didactic scenario will be implemented. At this level, it is also still largely irrelevant whether the didactic scenario will be implemented in face-to-face learning or in virtual environments.

- The middle level involves various activities on the part of those involved in the learning events. Here, Baumgartner and Bergner speak of *patterns of didactic interaction*. These are concrete processes of learning and exchange, such as question and answer sequences, tasks and instructions and the ensuing actions, the creation of groups and so on. This level can also be described as the *process level*. Here it does already make a difference whether the learning is to be face-to-face or virtual; however, here too technical details are still largely of no interest.
- Only at the bottom level of technical tools is it a matter of *specific software products*, such as learning platforms, content management systems and CSCW tools <sup>(1)</sup>. Here we are for the first time dealing with the *technical level*. In this model one cannot judge whether it is sensible, productive or absurd to employ particular technical tools until one knows what processes are to be executed or aimed at with them, and in what didactic scenario they are embedded.

Competences at all three levels are required in order to design and apply e-learning environments. First one has to be capable of creating didactic scenarios. There are no mechanically applicable rules for this, at most only heuristics (e.g. Niegemann *et al.*, 2004); here, in addition to subject knowledge, it is above all experience that is called for. Those who not only design learning environments but also act as teachers within them must also be competent at the process level and capable of providing flexible support for individual and social learning processes in the virtual space (in the sense of tele-tutoring, tele-moderating, etc.). In addition to a basic



(1) CSCW stands for computer-supported cooperative work.

knowledge of psychology and pedagogy, this also involves practice and *learning by doing*.

At the technical level of *software products*, one is entitled to hope to be able to rely on practicable taxonomies in the long term, which help one to decide which software products or which of their functions are suitable for which teaching and learning processes and which are not. Something is already known about this (e.g. Schulmeister, 2003; Baumgartner; Häfele; Maier-Häfele, 2004). Here we can indeed expect to see, at least in the long term, a technology of the kind postulated by the advocates of *educational or instructional technology*.

*To sum up*, the goals of learning and education should set the tone when it comes to designing e-learning environments. In the same way that the 'dream of driving' has made the development of auto mobility into a success story, it is probably only a genuinely *pedagogic impetus* that can help to ensure that e-learning can provide true added value in teaching and learning situations. In addition to these goals – or even visions – *and* a fundamental understanding of the phenomenon of learning, we need *teachers* who create didactic scenarios with knowledge and a necessary measure of experience and imagination, who select (or even demand) the appropriate technical tools, and provide professional support for the ensuing processes in e-learning. However, this necessitates *competences* that cannot be acquired any more arbitrarily or quickly than is the case with driving in high-tech cars on our busy roads. This finding on the consequences for teachers in initial and continuing training leads to the last point, namely the question of what opportunities and challenges e-learning, with all its diversity, may hold for the new Europe.

## E-learning in Europe: opportunities for lifelong learning?

As was shown at the beginning of the article, e-learning is merely a collective term for a confused and diverse group of learning forms with new ICTs. Thus e-learning can mean a lot of things: obtaining information on the Internet, learning via multimedia, actively testing new content, and/or learning through communication and collaboration in the virtual space.

### Lifelong learning via informal and institutionalised learning

An in-depth look at the subject shows that this colourful bouquet of learning forms also contains new possibilities for *informal learning* (e.g. Dohmen, 2001). The distribution and communication functions of the new media in particular open up new paths for us to acquire knowledge, expand our horizons and get to know different viewpoints even without educational insti-

tutions. On the other hand, other functions of the new technologies, like the representation, exploration and collaboration functions, usually need to be employed by professional media designers, in order to be able to incorporate them meaningfully into learning environments or create individual learning environments from them. Thus these functions are potentially of value to *institutionalised learning* in particular.

On the subject of e-learning in Europe, there is, exceptionally, widespread agreement that there is a need to utilise the opportunities offered by the new media for both informal and institutionalised learning. There is also agreement on the *grounds* for these promotional aims – it is not only for humanistic reasons that education, learning and skills acquisition are worthwhile. They are also of increasing economic and political importance. In this context, there is also talk of abolishing the boundaries of pedagogy (e.g. Arnold, 1996), which simply means that alongside institutionalised learning in schools, universities, continuing training or vocational training, informal learning too should no longer be hidden, overlooked or disregarded. The new media have given new impetus to this debate.

*Informal learning* – this can take place at regional level, but also within organisations; it can be promoted by suitable framework conditions, but it can also effectively be prevented by false signals. Informal learning can be very successfully combined with institutionalised learning, and it is precisely here that the new media could assume a valuable bridging function – I say ‘could’, because this would necessitate a genuinely *learning-oriented* approach, as described earlier.

The EU intends to spend EUR 44 million between 2004 and 2006 within the framework of a new e-learning programme on e-twinning of schools in Europe, the development of virtual campuses and the promotion of digital literacy. As the EU itself puts it, with the *elearningeuropa* portal it has offered interested parties a tool that will help to modernise and improve education in Europe. These are all important signs – signs that point towards lifelong learning and lifelong skills acquisition going beyond traditional educational institutions. However, all this will bear little fruit unless trade and industry and educational institutions apply an *in-depth* understanding of the complex phenomenon of learning, unless there is a *genuine* interest in promoting learning, and as long as a genuinely *learning-oriented* approach remains the exception rather than the rule.

- There are *enterprises* that do indeed extol knowledge and hence also learning as being the most promising resource for the future. At the same time, however, they refuse to provide time and free space for learning processes on the job, or denigrate phases of reflection as being inefficient. Contradictions like this make *no* contribution to lifelong skills acquisition; even technically mature Intranets and web-based training programmes can do nothing to change this. Here, not only is the idea of education and learning in economic contexts lacking, but so too is the necessary respect for learning and human potential.

- There are *universities* that, in addition to technological infrastructures, now also support many model projects that are expensively developed into e-learning measures capable of being high-performing, but which are one-offs and isolated. Yet they too are doing the idea of learning without boundaries no favours when, as is so often the case, learning provision is discontinued following injections of capital, when content and supports are no longer available to learners when they complete their studies, when e-learning expertise remains in the hands of a few pioneers. Here too, there is no seriously intended idea of education and learning that holds promise for the future, and the courage to embrace the new is lacking, the courage to break up ossified university structures and processes – ultimately, this too bears witness to a lack of respect for the possibilities of human learning.
- The picture is no different in many *schools* – the financial commitment to improving technical equipment in schools not infrequently degenerates into individual measures effective for advertising purposes; even today, teacher training and advanced training do not get to grips with the requirements of media didacticism and media technology. New technologies are not resulting in any new teaching methods. And as long as schools fail to think seriously about what kind of education they do and do not want, as long as there are no definitive changes in structures and processes in classrooms, teacher training colleges and head teachers' offices, the idea that e-learning will bring about a lasting change in learning is and remains a pious hope.

## Conclusions

There is no doubt that the new *technologies* have potential for learning. I have listed as the most important functions the fact that the new media make access to information easier, that they use many systems of symbols to present information and they even make it manipulable, that they open up new communication routes, and facilitate cooperation irrespective of time and place. The various functions of the new technologies can be combined to form interesting e-learning scenarios. The e-learning concept is accordingly a broad one, and anything but clear.

However, from the pedagogic point of view, concentrating exclusively on what is technically feasible leads to a number of traps, whose existence should no longer surprise anyone today. E-learning per se resolves no educational problems and does not make time and effort in learning (and also in teaching) redundant. Despite these insights and this experience, despite positive developments and scientific findings on learning with new media, alongside a few reformists many technocrats still control important decisions, and are either completely unaware of pedagogic and didactic concepts or are unwilling or unable to implement them. In practice at least, we probably still lack anything like a shared dream of education and learn-

ing as the motivating force behind development and, in particular, behind implementation of good concepts and technologies that serve the *learner* – and not vice versa.

Against this background, I have argued in favour of a *learning-oriented* approach and of making an effort to understand and respect the phenomenon of learning in all its complexity. In the context of designing e-learning environments, as the heuristic framework model was designed to show, the place of technical decisions is not at the beginning, but at the end. Technical decisions are not redundant in e-learning, but nor are they of primary importance; they are not trivial, but nor are they any more complex than the quest for suitable didactic scenarios. It follows that the designing of e-learning environments should *not* be in the hands of computer scientists, but in the hands of pedagogues, who are in a position to communicate and cooperate with experts with technical experience.

Europe can profit from the new technologies above all if it succeeds in interlinking and promoting institutionalised *and* informal learning. This does not apply only to vocational training, but is of particular relevance to it (e.g. Euler *et al.*, 2004). The EU has recognised this challenge, and is launching e-learning initiatives and providing financial support, but money alone cannot make e-learning successful. The triumphant progress of the car was based on human desire and systematic development of technology, infrastructure and skills. However, we shall go on waiting for the frequently conjured up, but very little seen, triumphant progress of e-learning if the *pedagogic* motivating forces, ideas and wishes continue to be lacking, or if they are not vigorously pursued. E-learning will continue along its contradictory course if investment in educational *practice* continues to flow *primarily* into the technology, while other components of human learning tend to be left out, if technological development is pursued in a way that leaves people *out of account* and not *on behalf of* learning. ■

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# Traineeship as vocational training in Catalonia: between the law, the actors and the market

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## SUMMARY

In-company training undertaken by vocational students can be a very good opportunity to acquire skills; but it is also a very delicate process. The author, who examined the traineeships of students in formal vocational training in Catalonia as part of his doctoral thesis in economics, understands skills acquisition as an interactive process between the law, the behaviour of the different actors (trainees, schools and companies) and the pressure exerted by the labour market. This article describes skills acquisition in Catalonia and backs its description with quantitative and qualitative data allowing a better understanding of the interaction between the various factors and actors.

## Key words

Economics of education, work based training, quality of training, school enterprise relationship, trainee's attitude, internal and external labour market

## Chapter 1: Introduction

For students, the particular interest of in-company traineeships lies in their position between the education system and the production system.

In a doctoral economics thesis presented in September 2003 (cf. Mària, 2003), we examined the situation students face in the course of traineeships undertaken within formal vocational training in Catalonia with a dual objective in mind: one, to *analyse* the process of acquiring skills by examining the interaction between the law, the behaviour of the actors and the pressure exerted by the market; and two, to *evaluate* how efficiently Catalanian traineeships help students acquire skills.

Vocational training in Spain and in Catalonia has been changing steadily since 1990, when the Organic Law on the General Regulation of the Education System (LOGSE) was passed. This law changed the content of courses and established compulsory traineeship periods for students in companies and other workplaces. Mandatory training now also included a module called 'Training in the workplace', introduced in vocational training

programmes, which consisted of the preparation, execution and evaluation of practical training in workplaces.

When *analysing* the functioning of workplace training in Catalonia *in terms of learning skills* <sup>(1)</sup>, we found that a new *law* (LOGSE) triggered a process which introduced traineeships or modified the way they were implemented. This led to various training outcomes, including repercussions on the *behaviour of the actors* involved in training (mainly trainees, vocational training centres and workplaces), and on the *labour market situation* for vocational training certificate holders.

The *evaluation* of the efficiency of this mechanism was carried out using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data primarily came from a *pioneering analysis of the official census of individual traineeship contracts signed by trainees, schools and companies*. However, this accumulated qualitative data did not permit us to completely understand or adequately evaluate the process of skills learning. That is why we generated more qualitative data, mainly through three *case studies* in which we interviewed groups of students and teachers in three Catalan vocational training centres.

In this article, we will focus on *describing the interaction between the law, the behaviour of the actors and the pressure of the market in relation to the process through which the students acquire skills* during their traineeships. Through this description, we obtained quantitative and qualitative data which we used to evaluate the efficiency of workplace-based training in Catalonia.

As a part of our objective, in the next section (Part 2) we will describe the Catalan traineeship model in its *legal and institutional form*. Part 3 presents *the behaviour of the leading actors* involved in traineeships on the basis of the data we obtained from the census of individual contracts and the three case studies. In Part 4 we outline *the role of the market* as one of the main elements influencing the training outcomes of traineeships in Catalan vocational training. In Part 5 we present some conclusions on the interaction between the law, the actors and the market, and the mechanisms used to enhance the training content of traineeships.

## Chapter 2: Law and institutions

The first piece of the puzzle, which enables us to understand the process of acquiring skills during traineeships in Catalonia, consists of the legisla-

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<sup>(1)</sup> There are several objectives for traineeships during in-school vocational training: getting integrated in the work process, trying out the subject, extending the work curriculum, and learning skills. We have especially stressed the last objective because labour markets in developed countries view workers' skills as essential predictors of their long-term employability.

tion and institutions regulating this educational activity. Its main aspects are the following.

- a) The student signs a traineeship *contract* with the company and with his educational establishment; he is not given a work contract and, in principle, does not receive any remuneration from the company.
- b) There is a minimum period for the *duration of the traineeship* which is set for each vocational training certificate. It is possible to get the total or partial validation of these periods, and there is also the possibility of extending traineeships beyond the mandatory minimum requirement through voluntary extensions. Thus, the duration of the work experience can vary considerably and this can have repercussions on how skills are transferred and acquired. In principle, the less time the trainee spends in the company, the less time he or she has for learning; but an over-extension of the traineeship period can mean that the trainee ends up doing routine work.
- c) The procedures for *standard* traineeship periods (the most common type) include daily alternance between classroom learning and practical training in the company. This alternance improves learning by linking the theory taught in school with company practice. It is also possible to undertake this practical training during an *intensive* period at the end of the school-based modules.
- d) The traineeship is guided by two tutors, one from the school and one from the company. These tutors are key actors in the learning process. The law does not oblige the company tutor to be qualified as a trainer, but the Education Administration of Catalonia does offer various *voluntary* types of training courses for tutors.
- e) The school tutor and the company tutor agree, before the traineeship starts, on a *plan of activities* based on the official plan of training activities for this subject in the vocational training programme. The official plan of activities for a given certificate includes a section devoted to work socialisation skills (common to all vocational training certificates) and another section dealing with technical skills (specific for each certificate). Despite this, the official plan of training activities is not mandatory: rather, it is intended to provide *orientation* as the content of the traineeship is partly the outcome of mutual agreement between the trainee and the two tutors.

The Catalanian Administration has set up a number of institutions which reinforce the influence of the law. These institutions are grouped under the heading 'Programa E+E - Escuela –Empresa (Programme S + C – School – Company)'. This 'Programa E+E', introduced in 1995, consists of a group of units and arrangements to support schools, trainees and companies in implementing a traineeship. The programme is the result of an agreement between the Education Administration and the Catalanian Chambers of Commerce, in which both parties agree to share information (through an integrated database which also enables the virtual signing of contracts) and to establish various types of training for school and company tutors.

## Chapter 3: The behaviour of the actors

Now that we have given a brief description of the laws and the institutions, we will move on to a description of the behaviour of the main actors in workplace-based training in Catalonia: the vocational training centres, the trainees themselves and the workplaces. Let us recall that we are examining patterns of behaviour in terms of their contribution to one of the main objectives of workplace training, namely, *skills acquisition*.

In the academic years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 workplace training in Catalonia covered some 25 000 vocational training students in over 350 educational establishments, who undertook traineeships in some 13 000 workplaces (most of them enterprises) (cf. Mària, 2003, p. 119, 143, 147).

Within each group of actors (schools, trainees, workplaces) one can observe patterns of motivation and behaviour which are highly varied in terms of skill acquisition. Our analysis of individual traineeship contracts and the case study carried out in three vocational training centres in Catalonia enable us to present a systematic picture of these patterns of behaviour in the following sections.

### The behaviour of the educational establishments

In the educational establishment, the main person involved in a traineeship is the school tutor. This tutor responds in varying degrees to the function assigned to him or her by law. The school tutors we interviewed <sup>(2)</sup> had no hesitation *a priori* in sending the students to the companies, though for various reasons they exempted some students from traineeships. In Catalonia as a whole, accreditation of the total time for workplace training amounts to a considerable volume as can be seen in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. shows the percentage of enrolled vocational training students who have spent *some time* in traineeship or, in other words, the percentage of students who did not get total exemption from traineeships. Thus,

Table 3.1. **Traineeship coverage for vocational training students in Catalonia Courses from 1997-98 to 2001-02**

Academic course	Coverage (%)
1997-1998	68.78
1998-1999	68.26
1999-2000	66.98
2000-2001	63.32
2001-2002	62.03

Source: Mària (2003: 122); calculation based on student census

<sup>(2)</sup> In Mària (2003: 162-211) there is a study (mainly qualitative) of how traineeships function in three vocational training centres in Catalonia. This study included discussion groups with teachers who manage the traineeships.

in 2001-2002 almost 4 out of 10 students obtained *total* accreditation for their traineeships. Partial accreditation (completing 50% of the minimum mandatory period) was achieved by 2 out of 6 students who did not get total accreditation. This means that the mandatory period is achieved by 4 out of 10 trainees (cf. Mària, 2003, p. 126).

Our case study shows that some tutors credit more time than that stipulated by the legislator. This is explained by a combination of two factors: first, the tutors feel out of their depth as they now have to manage so many new traineeships; secondly, they find that some of the traineeship contracts with the companies have not been well negotiated and the students are treated as cheap, low-skilled labour<sup>(3)</sup>.

On the whole, establishments running *voluntary* traineeship schemes before LOGSE was adopted have lower operating costs and cooperate with companies which offer the most efficient traineeships.

### The involvement of the students

The students who go in for work-based experience are faced with different situations and adopt different attitudes. We can identify two major groups of students (cf. Mària, 2003, pp. 205-207):

- a) Students who have not previously worked. These students accept the challenge of this traineeship with less insistence on the acquisition of technical skills because they are 'just starting to work' (*socialisation in the workplace*) and this is enough motivation for them.
- b) Students who already have work experience. In general, they are older than the first group, and are willing not to ask for total accreditation except if they think this job is interesting because it could lead to future employment, or if they are acquiring many *technical skills*.

In all cases, the training content of the traineeship partly depends on the student's attitude during this period. A student interested in learning will ask an employee to teach her more or to give her additional tasks after she has completed the initial traineeship period, or else urge the school tutor to persuade the company to impart new skills. Other students are only interested in 'getting through the traineeship'; they are inclined to accept a convenient job in a company close to their homes or with less exacting tasks.

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<sup>(3)</sup> In order to avoid this misuse, the Administration has limited the maximum periods of work experience. These periods are sometimes less than the customary work experience periods in some school establishments which already had work experience schemes before LOGSE. Thus, a period of transition is required to convince the companies that they should take in students and continue taking them even if it is only for a short period.

Table 3.2. **Types of workplace receiving vocational training students for traineeships.**

Course 2001-2002	
TYPE OF CENTRE	% CENTRES
Individual companies and self-employed persons	25.52
Companies with limited liability	35.35
Public limited companies	20.93
Cooperatives and agricultural societies	2.25
Foundations and associations	8.68
Public sector	5.45
Others	1.82
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Mària (2003: 147)

### The behaviour of the workplace

We found that companies in Catalonia were generally very interested in attracting trainees. But not all companies interested in *attracting* students were also interested in *transferring skills* to the students during their traineeships.

The extent of the companies' readiness to train becomes clear when we analyse the data (see Table 3.2.) from companies receiving students for traineeships.

It should be noted that, in Spain, individual companies, self-employed persons and companies with limited liability (the first two boxes in the table) are mainly SMEs. Table 3.2. thus shows that eight out of ten workplaces are enterprises and that of these, two are relatively large (public limited companies) and six are SMEs (companies with limited liability and individual entrepreneurs). But when it comes to transferring skills to trainees, SMEs face one great difficulty: they lack adequate structures to organise training in terms of the needs of both trainees and employees (cf. Mària, 2003, pp. 153-154). In many cases they do not complete the official plan of activities (orientation for training) nor do they allocate permanent or well-trained tutors.

Yet the case study showed that some SMEs do offer interesting training to trainees. For instance, some offer informal training by other employees at times when these employees have less work – that is, they become unofficial tutors. Other companies try to extend the traineeship and gradually give trainees more difficult tasks, provided the trainees respond positively <sup>(4)</sup>.

<sup>(4)</sup> The theory underlying this behaviour which we observed is to be found in LÉNÉ (2002: 101ss).

## Chapter 4: The role of the market

Why, then, do the companies handle skills transfer to trainees so differently? To some extent, the internal structure of the company and its relations with other firms in the sector conditions its behaviour towards trainees (cf. Léné, 2000). But in the case of Catalonia we thought it especially relevant to analyse how the labour market affects companies providing training.

Our explanation for the influence of the labour market on the behaviour of the enterprises is the concept of the *semi-external labour market* (cf. Mària, 2003, p. 78). The semi-external labour market for an enterprise consists of a group of persons who have been trained for specific jobs in the company (they are 'half in') but have no work contract with the firm (they are 'half out'). Workplace training which does not permit remuneration for the students enables the company to generate a semi-external labour market at very low cost (i.e. the cost of teaching activities and the cost of any errors committed by the trainees). This type of market enables the employer to overcome labour shortages or replace staff on leave at short notice. Alternatively, they may acquire quickly productive new staff by recruiting a trainee at the end of the traineeship.

When workers are in short supply, employers tend to internalise the semi-external market by offering work contracts to trainees who demonstrate that they have acquired the skills necessary for the job. When labour supply is less tight the employer can take in trainees without offering work contracts.

The figures we received for Catalonia on the labour market for vocational training students or certificate holders show that we are now entering a period of shortage. The data on the number of students enrolled for vocational training (see Table 4.1.) shows a considerable decline between the early and late 1990s.

Table 4.1. **Trends in the number of enrolled students for vocational training in Catalonia**

Course	No of enrolled students
1991-1992	160 663
1992-1993	160 730
1993-1994	165 641
1994-1995	157 489
1995-1996	142 112
1996-1997	122 306
1997-1998	104 988
1998-1999	79 263
1999-2000	64 250
2000-2001	60 589
2001-2002	62 332

Source: Mària (2003: 116)

Table 4.2. Enterprises having difficulty in finding candidates for jobs, by sectors. June 1999 to June 2001

Sector	% of enterprises with difficulties
Industrial	42.3
Construction	42.9
Sales services	31.6
Non-sales services	20.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33.1</b>

Source: Observatori de la formació (2002: 255-257)

Table 4.1. shows a significant decline in the number of students enrolled in formal vocational training: in the 2001-02 course they amount to 38.8% of those enrolled in the 1991-92 course. This decline is due both to reduced age cohorts and to a greater proportion of youths entering university.

On the other hand, a survey carried out in Catalonian companies between June 1999 and June 2001 shows that about a third of these companies having trouble recruiting workers. Table 4.2. presents the relevant figures.

Table 4.2. indicates that the labour market today shows clear symptoms of shortage and noticeable bottlenecks in the industrial and construction sectors.

The decline in the number of students enrolled in vocational training and the tight labour market imply an *increase in the bargaining capacity of the students and the educational establishments* when asking companies to receive trainees. According to the evidence we obtained from the case study, bargaining – when it is done - takes the following form: students who feel their traineeship is not effective exert pressure on the company to change it by threatening to abandon the contract and complete their traineeships in another company. School tutors act as mediators in the conflict, and support trainees vis-à-vis the company. But trainees and educational establishments do not always exploit the negotiating potential they have, either because a given trainee is not interested in learning, or because a given vocational training establishment is not interested in broadening its contacts with companies, being a ‘captive’ of the few enterprises which take in its students <sup>(5)</sup>.

To conclude, in Catalonia the *semi-external labour market* is becoming a matter of necessity for some companies and the schools’ and trainees’ bargaining capacity (which however does not always lead to better training!) is often exercised.

<sup>(5)</sup> In the case study we found that some of the more talented trainees were being trained in subjects related to industry, a sector with major bottlenecks in Catalonia, as we saw in Table 4.2. Trainees are received with eagerness by companies which are genuinely interested in teaching them. Companies even provide illegal financial remuneration and offer jobs at the completion of the traineeship. (Cf. Mària (2003: 174, 185, 192, and Chapter 6 passim).

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

We have explained how skills are acquired in workplace training in Catalonia, by *analysing* the confluence of three factors: the law and institutions; the behaviour of the actors; and the pressure exerted by the market.

From this *analysis* we conclude that the relative weakness of the law is sometimes compensated for by the behaviour of the actors. Some traineeships offering good training are the result of conscientious and well-directed interaction between educational establishments, trainees and companies. But as the Catalan enterprises receiving trainees do not always have the facilities or the desire to offer training, the initiative generally comes from the students and the schools. *What the law does not demand and what the enterprises do not concede spontaneously, can be demanded by the students and the schools thanks to labour market developments.* The labour market for holders of vocational training certificate is now undergoing a period of short supply. This means that companies are induced to offer proper training, facilities and even work contracts at the end of the traineeship.

With respect to our *evaluation* of the Catalan model of how skills are acquired via work-based experience (the evaluation to which we referred in the introduction to this article), the results of our examination indicate that it is of *average effectiveness* (cf. Mària (2003, pp. 223-224). Though planned training activities are not entirely fulfilled (especially with regard to technical skills), many students do learn a great deal during their periods of work.

We believe that if trainees are to acquire skills more effectively, the Administration (which is responsible for the proper application of the law, including setting stricter requirements for companies) on the one hand, and schools and trainees (who should exert pressure on company tutors during traineeships) on the other, need to work together. On the whole, the outcome of this dual pressure is positive both for the students and the companies. Traineeships are an opportunity for companies to develop and refine the learning resources inherent in their production process. In this connection, vocational training centres can develop into excellent travelling companions, helping the company achieve its goals.

The dynamic training resources of traineeships have a skilling potential for the workforce, and at the same time can help raise the productivity of companies – a goal we would do well to heed. ■

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# Young people of low educational level: promoting innovative projects

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## SUMMARY

Data from the Balearic Islands (Spain) on the number of young people dropping out of the education system with no formal qualification and on the general level of education of the young population as a whole indicate that this region is not on a par with most of the other regions in Spain and the European Union as a whole. The regional government commissioned a study of this phenomenon from the University of the Balearic Islands.

This article presents the main aspects of the study. It outlines the remit as specified by the regional government, characterises the main issues of the socio-occupational integration of young people in the Balearic Islands, describes the general research approach applied (basic concepts, phases and methodology) and concludes with the study's main results and conclusions.

## Key words

Employment-training relationship, level of training, professional training, vocational preparation, regional employment, skill level

## 1. Introduction

The main objective of the study presented below was to contribute findings and instruments to assist regional training and vocational integration policy targeted towards young people of low educational level.

The research method started out from the premise of research for action. The main concepts used were: young people with a low educational level, socio-occupational integration, innovative projects and good practice. The article summarises the study under the following headings:

- the issue and study remit;
- basic concepts, study phases and methodology;
- results;
- conclusions.

## 2. The issue and study remit

This section describes the distinguishing features of the socio-occupational integration of young people in the Balearic Islands and the characteristics of regional demand.

### 2.1. Specific problems relating to the employment and social integration of young people in the Balearics

The employment and social integration of young people in the Balearic Islands are subject to a number of socio-economic and educational factors:

- (a) it is easy to find a job,
- (b) economic activity is largely service-related and
- (c) the general level of education is low.

Each of these factors is addressed in brief below.

#### *a) It is easy to find a job*

The Balearic Islands are heavily dependent on tourism; there is a large supply of jobs in the service sector and the construction industry. As a result, the regional activity rate of young people aged 15 to 24 (40.38%) is higher than the national level (32.70%) and very close to the European rate for this age bracket (41.16%).<sup>(1)</sup>

Within this age group, young men tend to benefit most. The unemployment rate among young men aged 15 to 24 stands at 9.25%, slightly below the national rate (9.8%), although higher than the overall European average (6.51%)<sup>(2)</sup>.

The fact that it is so easy to find work - albeit often only temporary employment - is one reason for educational disaffection and early school dropout. In the Balearic Islands, the proportion of those over 16 who are still at school is lower than both the national and European average; in fact, this figure begins to diverge substantially from age 17 (Balearic Islands 62.8%, Spain 74.4%, EU 85.7%<sup>(3)</sup>), the gap subsequently widening even further.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Source: EUROSTAT (<http://eurostat.com>). The figures relate to the year 2000.

<sup>(2)</sup> Idem.

<sup>(3)</sup> Source: National Institute for Quality and Evaluation (2000) and Cedefop (2001).

### *b) Economic activity is largely service-related*

As indicated, the importance of tourism to the Balearic economy means that most jobs are in the services sector. The proportion of the population working in the services sector is almost eight percentage points higher than in Spain as a whole and 2.5 percentage points higher than in the European Union as a whole <sup>(4)</sup>.

69.72% of young people aged 16 to 24 are employed in the service sector - mainly tourism. Employment tends to be seasonal; the level of agricultural activity is very low (0.53%). Most young people employed in heavy industry (19.68% of the total) work in the construction industry, which derives much of its impetus from the heavy demand for tourist and holiday facilities <sup>(5)</sup>.

### *c) Low educational level*

In view of premature dropout and growing disaffection in the final years of schooling - no doubt due to the good job prospects - the educational level of young people in the Balearics is below the national average <sup>(6)</sup>. In fact, the number of those holding post-compulsory certificates of secondary education is lower in the region than anywhere else in Spain.

Similarly, with the exception of the first cycle of compulsory secondary education, the percentage of young people aged 16 to 35 leaving school between 1990 and 2000 with the appropriate educational certificate is lower in the Balearic Islands than in the rest of Spain across all levels of education. For example, the number of those with a certificate of higher education is 10% lower than in the rest of Spain: only 32.8% of young people complete higher education compared to the national average of 43% <sup>(7)</sup>.

## **2.2. Study remit**

In January 2000, the Balearic Islands government signed a pact with employers' and trade union organisations on employment, social cohesion and measures to boost the regional productivity. The pact includes a number of annexes, one of which addresses the issue of the training and employment of young people.

Sectoral advisory committees comprising representatives of the social partners and other relevant stakeholders were set up to handle the issues listed in the various annexes.

One of the fundamental issues addressed by the advisory committee on youth was the funding of projects for young people. A major question was how to ensure the survival of innovative projects concerned with the train-

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<sup>(4)</sup> Source: regional government of the Balearic Islands.

<sup>(5)</sup> Idem.

<sup>(6)</sup> Various studies have highlighted the fact that those with a low educational level encounter greater difficulty in finding a job (Descy, 2002; Kovacs, 2003).

<sup>(7)</sup> Source: National Statistics Institute (2000).

ing, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level implemented as a response to calls for innovative projects – many of which did not match the overall policy of the Balearic government - at a time when it was considered that pioneering initiatives of this kind should be self-sustaining and share their qualities and good practices with other projects.

Against this background, a research group set up by the University of the Balearic Islands was given a wide remit to conduct a study designed to devise tools to formulate and implement policies concerned with the training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level in the Balearic Islands. The essential elements of the study - jointly formulated by representatives of the ministries of employment, training and social welfare and organisations implementing youth projects, which were also members of the advisory committee and the University of the Balearic Islands - were as follows:

- Target group: young people aged 16 to 30 having failed to obtain the minimum educational qualification in the form of a certificate of compulsory secondary education (*graduado en educación secundaria*) at the end of compulsory schooling;
- Territorial focus: definition of priorities to be set at territorial level and proposals on the role of local employment pacts;
- Differentiation: the study was to take account of age group and gender differences;
- Recommendation: while being of an essentially analytical character, the study was to lead on to recommendations on both specific actions to be implemented and studies to be initiated or continued;
- Contributors: organisations concerned with the training, employment and social integration of young people, as well as information provided by the relevant public agencies;
- Phases: an initial phase (May and June 2001) was to address examples of good practice in the Balearic Islands and generate initial conclusions and recommendations; a second phase (September 2001 to June 2002) was to examine other issues.

### 3. Nature of the study: basic concepts, phases and method

This section describes the basic concepts, phases and method of the study.

#### 3.1. Basic concepts

The basic terms of reference for the research were: young people of low educational level, employment, social integration, innovative projects and good practice.

The term 'young people of low educational level' was understood in the narrower sense of the term to mean those having failed to obtain a mini-

mum (level 1) vocational qualification under EU comparability criteria (Council of the European Communities, 1985). In the Spanish education system this is the qualification attained on completion of compulsory secondary education or within specific training programmes (Ministry of education and science, 1988).

The concept may be broadened to include:

- young people whose highest qualification is a certificate of secondary education or apprenticeship (Loos, 2002, 18);
- under-25s who have completed compulsory education but are not adequately skilled to find a first job or who have left school without a certificate of secondary education and have no access to vocational training (Colson, Gerard, 1997);
- young people who have failed to complete the second cycle of secondary education - UNESCO's CINE 3, the criterion used for Cedefop's NewSkills projects ('New vocational qualification needs and persons without qualification', Cedefop, 2000).

The concept of the link between employment and social integration has its origins in the report by Schwartz (1985) who considered the employment of young people as one element of a broader process of transition to adulthood within a given social and historical context, as well as the OECD report on young people in a changing society (Coleman, Husen, 1989). Although, strictly speaking, 'occupational integration' and 'employment' do not have exactly the same meaning, employment and social integration has since become synonymous with socio-occupational integration.

When discussing measures for the social education of young people, both terms are used to mean integration into the world of work of people of low educational level and those in a situation of exclusion or social vulnerability.

For the purposes of our research, the term 'innovative projects' was understood to mean both projects that have received funding under a Community employment and human resources development initiative, as well as those which helped improve the methods and results of work with young people of low educational level, even if they had not been granted financial assistance.

The term 'good practice' is generally used in the field to denote a new and effective method of delivering training (Loos 2002, 12). In training, employment and social integration the term has become widely used in connection with the training and employment policies promoted by the European Union. In an article on European vocational training research, Sellin and Grollman (1999, 80) refer to the study of best practice as being aimed at improvement, as 'cross-border research activity in Europe is closely bound up with the political process of European unification'.

The term is used to tap knowledge generated from experimentation with new forms of training, employment and social integration for groups with special difficulties.

Interesting contributions in the field of the socio-occupational integration of young people of low educational level were found in various documents and publications (IFAPLAN, 1987; Ketter, Petzold, Schlegel, 1987; Commission of the European Communities, 1994; Schwartz, 1994; European Commission, 1997).

### 3.2. Phases and method

Following a proposal from the representatives of the various ministries involved, it was agreed that the study should be organised in two phases. The relatively short first phase was to devise means for the design and implementation of training and employment policies for the target group under the terms of the employment pact.

A technical working group was set up consisting of 14 practitioners active in the field of the training, employment and social integration of young people, representing the organisations on the employment pact advisory committee on youth employment, as well as a number of other bodies, professional experts and experts from the University of the Balearic Islands. The working group held several meetings and drew up a report, the key results of which are presented below.

The second phase principally involved the compilation of statistical data, analysis of documentary resources<sup>(8)</sup> and the formulation of recommendations. This phase was conducted on the basis of ongoing cooperation with the organisations represented on the advisory committee, with assistance from the professional staff of the ministries who either provided statistical data or acted as intermediaries. Organisations and individual professionals from the islands of Menorca and Ibiza also became increasingly involved in this phase of the project.

The final report was first submitted to the ministries which had commissioned the study and subsequently to the representatives of the advisory committee and the Ministry of Education and Culture. It was then published in book form (Salvà, ed., 2002) and made available for comment on all three Balearic Islands.

The method applied in the research was based on the principles of research for action<sup>(9)</sup>, which seeks to combine theory and practice in addressing reality. It was designed to encourage analysis of individuals' own actions and to ensure that reality is grasped from within. While not

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<sup>(8)</sup> Documentational research was carried out on the subject of "youth and employment". This involved consulting general documentation on European policies and regional strategies, local, regional and national plans, programmes, projects and actions, as well as articles on the subject matter of the study.

<sup>(9)</sup> This is the methodology used by our research group. Relevant publications resulting from this type of research relating to the training and employment of persons of low educational level include Salvà, Pons, Morell (2000), Salvà, Calvo, Cloquell (2001) and Salvà, Oliver, Casero (2002).

discounting statistical data, it does not attach excessive importance to measurable and observable data. Its criterion for evidence is that the findings are an expression of ordinary social life, while at the same time appreciating the value of practical experience in theoretical research (Calvo, 2002, 114).

## 4. Results

This section presents the main results of the study. The first section outlines the results of the first phase, with reference to good practice and government policy. The next section examines the main educational and labour market indicators, as well as available provision. Finally, the third section presents recommendations for policy in the field of the training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level.

### 4.1. Good practice and government policy

The results of the first stage of the study mainly served to achieve a consensus among the various players as to what constituted good or bad practice and to identify the opportunities and obstacles in this regard.

#### Characteristics of 'good practice'

##### *General*

- The measures start out from a global and integrative perspective of the socio-occupational integration of young people.
- They are linked to the reality of the labour market (most frequent job supply, new sources of employment, the seasonal nature of the economy, the fact that it is relatively easy to find a job and earn money).
- They are related to the young people's local and social environment.
- Their starting point is young people's needs but they also deliver adequate training.
- They involve the enterprises.
- They integrate young women with a low educational level.
- They integrate young people facing major financial, educational and social problems.
- They maintain relations with other practices, institutions, etc.
- They provide instruments to adapt to the new demands of the labour market. They provide for multiskilling.
- They start out from a broad concept of training which also includes personal development and the social dimension.
- They include training in information and communication technologies.

### *Method*

- They link work and learning, include alternance between training and work in the enterprise in situations of production.
- They break with the school-based method of schools and use innovative methods (youth involvement, reinforcement of tutorials and the role of the group, etc.).
- They work with individualised pathways and include a strong involvement of the young participants.
- They follow up clients placed in employment, supporting their overall socio-occupational integration process. They take account of integration periods.
- They incorporate broad evaluation as an element of the working process.

### *Resources*

- They have high-quality human and material resources.
- They have a good team of professionals (teamwork, engaged in training, etc.).

Conversely, 'bad practice' includes: starting the intervention from age 16 onwards with no liaison with secondary schools; evaluating success merely on the basis of the number of placements, without taking social aspects into account; designing the project on the basis of formal project specifications rather than real needs; developing training content which fails to respond to business sectors offering recruitment potential; organising activities without taking the summer peak in economic activity into account (the normal pace cannot be maintained during this period).

These elements were then used as a basis for 31 recommendations on government policy to encourage good practice. These are subsumed under 14 headings and 14 sets of comments, presented under three main headings in accordance with the Ministry of Employment and Training's latest call for grant applications, which are the principal source of finance for projects in our field. These recommendations are discussed in further detail in section 4.4.

## **4.2. Educational and labour market indicators**

The results which are summarised in section 2.1 were consistent with the outcomes of other studies (Quevedo, Salvà, 1997, Carbonero, 1998).

Again reflecting the findings of other studies as well as general trends, a breakdown of the figures by gender shows that young women are in a better position as far as education is concerned but in a worse position with respect to the principal labour market indicators.

Although available data do not suffice to fully clarify a number of the issues addressed by the study, a series of indicators was developed to pro-

vide an initial approach for the identification of territorial priorities. These are as follows <sup>(10)</sup>:

The number of students failing to obtain a certificate of secondary education: 2 359 (27.05% of the total secondary school roll);

the number of students passing the certificate of secondary education but failing in a particular subject: 2 657 (30.68% of the total secondary school roll);

the number of students in the first cycle of compulsory secondary education <sup>(11)</sup> failing to go on to the second cycle: 2 276 (20.53% of the total first-cycle roll);

the number of students in the first cycle of secondary education going on to the second cycle but failing in a given subject: 4 627 (41.74% of the total first-cycle roll);

the number of unemployed, broken down according to age and gender; unemployment rates, broken down according to age group and gender.

On the basis of these indicators and combinations thereof, the features of each island and municipal area were identified, comparisons were drawn and priorities set.

### 4.3. Available training provision

From the 1980s onwards, a series of measures have been implemented by the Spanish authorities to promote the transition of young people into working life, especially those coming out of compulsory education without the certificate of secondary education. As alternatives to formal education, the purpose of these measures is to deliver initial vocational training and upgrade initial training.

These measures originated in the Spanish government's Training, Workshop and Craft Centre Programme, launched in 1985 under the first national vocational training and employment plan (*Plan FIP*) which, subject to certain changes, is still in force today. Subsequently, the General Law on the Education System (LOGSE) of 1990 introduced the concept of 'social guarantee programmes', while legislation was adopted on various forms of contract, known as training contracts in their present form. Responsibility for these programmes initially lay with central government but, with the exception of the training contracts, the autonomous communities are now the competent bodies.

Figures for the social guarantee programmes show that the vast majority of participants in the predominantly school-based 'job induction' courses <sup>(12)</sup> are male (65.8% of a total of 701 in the reference year).

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<sup>(10)</sup> Academic year of reference: 1999/2000.

<sup>(11)</sup> Compulsory secondary education comprises two two-year cycles.

<sup>(12)</sup> All social guarantee programmes provide for a vocational preparation element. The reference here is to one of the programme modalities or types known as "job induction courses".

Figures for the training workshops and craft centres show that young men are again well in the majority, the programme sponsors invariably being local authorities. These programmes have a lower level of participation (48 in the reference year) than the social guarantee programmes. Although figures are not broken down according to gender, the occupations are heavily male-oriented. On the basis of the results of a previous study (Quevedo, Salvà, 1998) and direct knowledge of the training workshops and craft centres, this points to the fact that, like the social guarantee programmes, the training workshops and craft centres mainly serve the male population.

Figures are only available for the training contracts and there is no information as to the actual training provided <sup>(13)</sup>.

Although the *Plan FIP* is not specifically targeted to young people, most of the participants (2 461, representing 56.8% of the total) are under 30.

Over and above this provision, a number of measures in the region are co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). But as the figures are not broken down by age, it was only possible to identify how many under-29s were involved in a specific activity: 125 in 2000.

The Balearic government recently published a series of regulations which also relate more or less directly to this field. However no statistical information is as yet available.

#### **4.4. Policy recommendations on training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level**

This section follows on from and expands on section 4.1 in which the results of the first phase of the study were presented. It was drawn up following theoretical analysis and field work and focused on educational and labour market indicators and the various resources available.

##### **Objectives, principles and lines of action**

Policy relating to the employment of young people of low educational level is linked to two closely related factors, i.e. finding a job and vocational training. But these two factors are also part of wider-ranging processes that affect the present and future of young people. If we accept that it is necessary to improve the present status of young people as a means of improving their future status, the general objectives for any action targeted towards young people of low educational attainment will be:

- (a) steady employment,
- (b) a job which promotes the transition to adult life and social integration, and

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<sup>(13)</sup> A detailed study is discussed in the referenced article (Quevedo, Salvà, 1998).

(c) vocational training to at least level 1 <sup>(14)</sup> as a basis for ongoing life-long learning.

To achieve these objectives, the various governmental agencies and other players involved must liaise closely, thinking globally while acting locally; they must recognise the importance of ongoing improvements, draw on the know-how of specialised bodies, make use of young people's creative potential, ensure consistency between theory and practice in social policy, and take due account of gender and territorial considerations.

#### *Areas of action*

The study identified a total of 16 areas of action for the Balearic Islands, indicating priority action along with key management and organisational aspects in each case. The areas of action are as follows:

##### *Area 1. Vocational qualifications and accreditation*

Three recommendations:

- (a) draw up a list of level 1 vocational qualifications suitable for young people;
- (b) specify the training programme leading to these qualifications; and
- (c) define the criteria for their accreditation.

##### *Area 2. Accreditation of centres specialised in the training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level*

Two proposals:

- (a) define the status of centres specialised in the training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level, and
- (b) draw up the regulations for accreditation of these centres.

##### *Area 3. Improving existing programmes*

Existing programmes need to be made more effective. This can *inter alia* be achieved by extending these programmes to young people with difficulties and by taking account of gender. A number of essential improvements are in any case required to adjust the schedules and training courses to the realities of the relevant economic activity, and to improve the information compilation systems. It is also necessary to set up a committee for each programme which will design, monitor and assess the results of action plans in the short and medium term.

An essential improvement is a change in the training/work paradigm. Training and work should not be regarded as isolated activities occurring at specific moments in a person's life but, on the contrary, as a process which may assume a variety of forms.

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<sup>(14)</sup> Level 1 is the minimum recognised by the European Union. It is attained by a pass in the certificate of secondary education (currently 'graduate of secondary education'). There are also plans to make it possible to attain this level via specific forms of job-related training, to be regulated by the appropriate bodies.

*Area 4. Converting training contracts into training programmes*

Combining a job with technical and practical training can be highly effective under the right conditions. However this method is seldom used effectively, either in our own autonomous community or in Spain as a whole. Making the best use of this mode of training requires collaboration agreements between the agencies and establishments that implement youth projects, on the one hand, and the enterprises and sectoral employers' associations on the other.

*Area 5. Upgrading guidance and counselling services*

These services should be incorporated into the local committees referred to in connection with Area 13 and targeted towards young people at various stages of their development. A number of specific recommendations relate to the guidance and counselling services of centres and schools delivering compulsory secondary education and the creation of specialised guidance services.

*Area 6. The social economy*

Although not exclusively targeted towards young people, the measures proposed should also take account of the needs of young people of low educational level. We propose stepping up efforts in the field of sheltered employment and including relevant clauses in public authority contracts; moreover, youth employment firms should become legally independent.

*Area 7. Work with employers*

Three recommendations:

- (a) promote the use of cooperation contracts at various levels (sectoral union and employers' organisations, firms, etc.) between employers and agencies implementing youth employment projects;
- (b) establish a status for firms involved in youth employment projects;
- (c) define and publicise good practice.

*Area 8. Work with young women of low educational level*

This is essential for every area and every form of action. Proposals:

- (a) set specific objectives to incorporate the principle of gender equity into every action;
- (b) provide training on gender-related issues for trainers and project managers;
- (c) design and implement guidance modules and courses targeted towards young people;
- (d) valorise jobs traditionally carried out by women of low educational level and reduce horizontal and vertical segregation;
- (e) set up experimental projects with young single mothers;
- (f) set up experimental projects with young sex workers.

*Area 9. Young people facing social exclusion*

Training programmes should be more accessible to young people facing

social exclusion or social difficulties. The proposed lines of action include helping the authorities to introduce more flexibility and experimentation into ongoing projects, implementing plans and pilot projects targeted towards young immigrants from non-EU countries, and collaborating with bodies who work with young people and the socially excluded.

#### *Area 10. Continuing training*

This is one of the principal difficulties encountered by persons of low educational level. In our opinion, continuing training for this target group should be organised under the National Qualification System. Two proposals:

- (a) introduce continuing training into programmes and projects for young people of low educational level, and
- (b) convert existing provision into continuing training projects for the same target group.

#### *Area 11. Programmes and measures for young people aged 21 to 30*

Although the priority tends to be given to second chance schemes for 16 to 20-year-olds, a number of young people in the 20 to 30 age bracket also wish to return to formal education. Moreover, as the Balearic Islands show high dropout rates among 17 to 20 year-olds, second chance measures at this level are of strategic importance. The proposals in this area include:

- (a) adaptation of adult education programmes and tests for admittance to the formal education system,
- (b) promotion of experimental projects in this field,
- (c) consideration of the particular characteristics of these young people in the various measures, and
- (d) a study of their needs and of available provision.

#### *Area 12. Training for trainers and managers*

A plan of proposed activities and priorities should be drawn up. This should include a mobility programme, an annual meeting for an exchange of information and a discussion of innovations, working groups, training and accreditation for working with young people, as well as courses, workshops and seminars on various related topics.

#### *Area 13. Creating local committees for the training, employment and social integration of young people*

This proposal is based on the French model of *missions locales*, set up in response to the report by Bertrand Schwartz on the employment and social integration of young people (Schwartz, 1985) <sup>(15)</sup>.

#### *Area 14. Helping social integration*

Helping young people achieve social integration cannot be divorced from

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<sup>(15)</sup> The *missions locales* provide young people with information, guidance and follow-up throughout the process of socio-occupational integration and offer assistance with the various problems encountered in the course of transition – training, qualifications, health, accommodation, access to cultural facilities and leisure time.

occupational integration; the proposed activities take account of both these aspects. The recommendations include a number of actions regarded as particularly relevant for the social integration of young people of low educational level:

- (a) use of the media to combat stereotyped concepts and images of young people and presentation of alternatives, and
- (b) adoption of integrated youth policies.

#### *Area 15. Adopting efficient systems for the compilation and use of information*

The inadequacy of current systems for the compilation and use of information was a constant problem throughout our study. Recommendations:

- (a) the establishment of indicators and
- (b) programme and project supervision and assessment.

#### *Area 16. Administrative efficiency*

Our recommendations imply radical changes in the current practice of the public administration. We emphasise the need to integrate the activities of the various bodies responsible for policy administration, to create a specialised unit and to provide training for technical and administrative personnel.

*Establishing the priorities of these areas of action highlighted the importance of each of these fields. This reflects the broad consensus on the presented proposals expressed at all the meetings.*

## 5. Conclusions

Given the nature of the study, some of its conclusions have already been touched upon under 'results' above, especially in the section on policy proposals. Nevertheless, and by means of conclusion, we would like to highlight the following aspects:

- a) A striking feature of educational participation is the high proportion of young people dropping out of the educational system without the secondary school leaving certificate, or at least without achieving a pass in all subjects. In terms of youth participation in the labour market, there is a lack of statistical data that would allow a territorial analysis. Yet such data, along with statistics from the education system, are indispensable if trends are to be evaluated and relevant policies implemented.
- b) Various aspects of policy are in need of improvement. These may be summarised as follows:
  - Resources must be planned from a global perspective, taking account of issues to be addressed, objectives pursued and extant

theoretical and practical knowledge. It is indispensable to apply EU guidelines, especially those set annually within the European employment strategy.

- Coherent policies and proper networking are necessary. This implies breaking down administrative barriers between areas (employment, education, youth, social services, etc.) and levels of the administration which hamper coherence. Local players (public administration, educational establishments, associations, etc.) have a central role to play in the design, implementation and evaluation of these policies.
- Evaluation systems must be rendered more effective. Programme evaluation at present does not identify results that need improvement. In some cases it is difficult or indeed impossible even to find relevant statistics.

c) On professional and specialised bodies, we note a high level of interest in and commitment to improving the programmes, as well as a broad consensus on the recommendations of this study.

The regional government's reaction to the study was also very positive, as evidenced *inter alia* by its publication in book form, the various information sessions organised on the subject and the incorporation of a number of our recommendations into government policy.

Nevertheless, our study merely represents the first stage towards the introduction of innovative policies for the dissemination of good practice in the field of the training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level in our region. The adoption of our recommendations will require not only technical resources, but also political will – the political will to bring this issue forward, to address the problems related to vocational qualifications, to recognise the fundamental importance of quality, to work with those sectors showing the most pressing needs, to account for gender differences and to convince the public administration that all these recommendations can be made reality. ■

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# EUROPASS Training <sup>(1)</sup> Plus: Practicert

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### Key words

Europass,  
training credit,  
trainee assessment,  
vocational training,  
vocational preparation,  
international relations

### SUMMARY

As teachers in German vocational education, the authors have a considerable interest in and responsibility for developing intercultural business skills, which are increasingly vital for successful management across cultures. Special international competence may help trainees find attractive jobs and may also strengthen their companies' position on the global market.

Particularly in the context of European integration, cross-border work placements offer an appropriate tool for qualifying trainees to cope with international situations at work. Such training modules away from home require special coordination with foreign partners and careful consideration of the curriculum, pre-departure preparation, language training, organisation, supervision, monitoring and assessment.

Valid certification of the intercultural learning progress, which should find wide acceptance by employees, seems particularly important in order to document the added value of training abroad for both trainee and employee.

(<sup>1</sup>) Editor's note: On 1 January 2005, Europass Training was replaced by Europass Mobility.

## Background

Almost a quarter of a century ago, Felix Kempf, Head of the Vocational Training Department in the National Executive Committee of the DGB (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund – Federation of German Trade Unions) since 1965 and a leading member of many European bodies, summed up the ‘Gemeinsame Politik der EG auf dem Gebiet der Berufsbildung? – Die Sicht der Gewerkschaften’ (Common policy of the EC in the field of vocational education and training? The trade union perspective). The question mark in this publication on education policies in the European Community was deliberate. However, Kempf called it ‘a little one’. Looking back at the period from 1965 to 1980, he believed it was ‘arrogant and wrong to underestimate or belittle the work of the EC in the area of vocational education and training. What is worrying is that whole passages of this article still apply!’ There was the same feeling of déjà-vu at a recent conference on cross-border cooperative training (21-22 April 2004 in the Haus des Handwerks in Berlin). The current recommendations of the BIBB (Federal Institute for Vocational Training) experts do not differ significantly from those made by a four-country working party (CH-D-F-Lux) under the overall lead of the German Foreign Office, submitted to the government commissions concerned on 1 June 1997 under the title ‘Initiative zur Steigerung der Qualifizierung der Arbeitskräfte für grenzüberschreitende Tätigkeiten und Mobilität’ (Initiative to step up workers’ training for cross-border occupations and mobility). However, it cannot be denied that progress has been made in improving the mobility of young Germans.

Just showing the Europass Training document (over 70 000 have been issued since its launch in 2000, half of them in Germany alone) was once considered an indication of a trainee’s flexibility with regard to job mobility. Now the time has come to introduce Europass Training Plus <sup>(2)</sup>. This is no coincidence: mobility is increasingly finding itself at the heart of initial training. While in the past only about 0.7 %, or 11 000, of all trainees in the German dual system of vocational training gained work experience in other European countries, according to the BIBB the number may now be as high as 16 000. This represents 1.0 % of a total of approximately 1.6 million trainees <sup>(3)</sup>. However, these numbers need to be increased considerably. By 2013 the EU Commission wants to enable at least 150 000 trainees per year across Europe to take advantage of the Leonar-

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<sup>(2)</sup> Editor’s note: In 2005 Europass Training was replaced by Europass Mobility, one of the five instruments of the Europass framework (see <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>). Europass Mobility is a record of any organised period of time (called Europass Mobility experience) that a citizen spends in another European country for the purpose of learning or training (vocational education and training, higher education, voluntary work, etc.).

<sup>(3)</sup> It should be remembered that the BBiG (German Vocational Education and Training Act) no longer applies to the just under 200 000 young people who are in full-time in-school training. A considerably higher proportion of these young people go on work placements abroad than those in the dual training system, the system through which only about 60 % of a school year gain their vocational skills (dpa. Kulturpolitik, No 18/2004, 26 April 2004).

do da Vinci programme and gain experience of working abroad, as opposed to the 45 000 at present. Compared to the declared intentions of the Commission regarding increased mobility in the sphere of general education in schools (at least 10 % of pupils should be able to take part in the Comenius programme between 2007 and 2013, as opposed to 3 % currently) and particularly in the sphere of higher education (the aim is to have 3 million students receiving Erasmus funding by the year 2010, amounting to a threefold increase), there are few exchanges among vocational education trainees <sup>(4)</sup>.

Nonetheless, politicians have grounds enough for promoting the status of experience abroad in vocational education and training. The draft of amendments to the German Vocational Education and Training Act provides that young people can complete occupationally relevant parts of their training abroad (up to a quarter of the training period) as an integral component of their initial training. Implementation of this long overdue reform will make new demands on teachers. These will be addressed in this article <sup>(5)</sup>. The improved legislative framework is accompanied by increased funding for mobility which will be provided by the Leonardo vocational training programme from 2007. In addition to the planned consolidation, streamlining, decentralisation and simplification of the new generation of programmes in the field of education and training from 2007, part of the Lisbon strategy is to make Europe the world's most competitive economic area by 2010. The primacy of economic strategies in general and in the field of vocational education in particular naturally has an effect on educational objectives, methods and content. EU politicians' proposals for improvements also include higher quality standards for 'European work placements' – and not just because of applicant demand which exceeds the budget available through EU education and training programmes. This will also be taken into account in the context of the 'framework for the transparency of qualifications' prescribed under Priority I of Leonardo's 2005-2006 Call for Proposals.

ECVET stands for 'European credit (transfer system) for vocational education and training' and is a system for evaluating European work placements. It is related to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which is already recognised in higher education institutions across Europe. In future ECVET will be used to evaluate the potential of mobility measures and help them achieve recognition as important components of lifelong learning. At the same time, the system will help make VET qualifications more comparable across Europe. It is no longer a case merely of certifying foreign language skills, but of certifying any occupation-related qualifications acquired in Europe <sup>(6)</sup>.

This is where Europass II – currently Europass Mobility – comes in. The EU Commission's proposal for the new Europass did not pass the hurdle

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<sup>(4)</sup> [ec.europa.eu/comm/dgs/education\\_culture/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm) (retrieved on 31 January 2005).

<sup>(5)</sup> [www.bmbf.de/pub/eckwerte\\_bbig\\_reform.pdf](http://www.bmbf.de/pub/eckwerte_bbig_reform.pdf) (retrieved on 31 January 2005).

of the European Parliament at the first attempt, but it seems likely that it will be adopted in the first half of 2005 <sup>(7)</sup>. With its scope extended to include general education, in future it will certify mobility experiences of all kinds, although there is a risk that it could become so arbitrary and widespread that it might lose its relevance for vocational education and training. It will probably consist of the following documents: the Mobilipass itself, the European CV, the European Language Portfolio, the Certificate Supplement and the Diploma Supplement. It remains unclear – in respect of VET – precisely which diplomas and certificates are meant. Cedefop is responsible for the required electronic technology and has already developed a prototype. The new Europass must provide a reference framework for vocational education and training and must therefore be open to further and possibly more relevant and specific documents, which could complement it and thus significantly increase its information value for the head of HR in an enterprise. The outcomes and significance of phases of training abroad, relocation of learning sites to other countries, placements abroad during initial vocational training, cross-border cooperative training and the like will be more transparent if the ECTS points system of accreditation in higher education is extended to cover the occupational sphere as well. According to the pleasingly ambitious ideas of the EU Commission, ECVET should be ready for implementation by 2010. For years the German-French youth organisation *Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk/Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse* (DFJW/OFAJ) has been pioneering such work through the Leonardo pilot project Practicert, which, under the working title 'Europass Plus', has set itself the goal of evaluating and certifying supplementary qualifications acquired during initial training. Not only are the European work placements themselves analysed – the quality of both the pre-departure training and the after-return evaluation can be observed and included in the ECVET evaluation. The evaluation of skills and competences acquired through time spent working and studying abroad and European recognition of mobility by means of the Europass Plus represent a chance to promote its sustainability in VET.

This article reflects only *one* outcome of the Leonardo project Practicert / Europass Plus; the acquisition of intercultural competences. For that rea-

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<sup>(6)</sup> In a very interesting working paper 'Zum Umgang mit im Ausland erworbenen Qualifikationen' (Dealing with qualifications acquired abroad), written for the above-mentioned conference on cross-border cooperative training held on 19 April 2004, Klaus Fahlke, head of the National Agency in the BIBB, pointed out that the question frequently asked by the enterprises, educational institutions and trainees involved in placements abroad is: 'What form of recognition, credit or certification is planned or possible for qualifications acquired abroad? Lack of recognition of qualifications is regarded as a significant obstacle to the mobility of workers in the EU. This circumstance affects the conception of transnational training measures.' The author is right to point out that although Europass Training, which has been used up to now as a standard European document, confirms a period of residence abroad, it does not certify the additional qualifications acquired during the stay.

<sup>(7)</sup> Editor's note: Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004 on a single transparency framework for qualifications and competences (Europass) was actually adopted on 15 December 2004.

son, this article focuses on outlining the pragmatic considerations<sup>(8)</sup> necessary to gather 'intercultural competences' within the framework of Practicert and to evaluate or certify them with ECVET Credit Points.

## The birth of the Practicert project

DFJW/OFAJ supports around 700 German and French placements every year constituting part of initial vocational training. The average placement lasts seven weeks. In addition the organisation promotes around 600 joint programmes a year for approximately 15 000 trainees, young employees and unemployed young people. In Germany the DFJW is one of the organisations which issue the Europass and publicise it at annual evaluation and planning conferences and during appraisals of the document, which is crucial for promoting occupational mobility in Europe. DFJW/OFAJ has, moreover, participated in a number of projects aimed at increasing trainee mobility and improving the quality of measures.

The fact that quality improvements are already under consideration is evidence that weaknesses were found even in the preparation phase of European placements, beginning with the training of vocational school teachers. This is why DFJW/OFAJ, together with the Danish PIU-Centret, developed 'Modules and materials for the trans-national training of trainers and teachers in VET institutions' in another Leonardo pilot project. The results were recorded on a double CD-ROM and awarded the Europäische Sprachensiegel (quality seal for languages) in 2002.

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<sup>(8)</sup> Use of the term 'pragmatic considerations' already points to a fundamental scientific standpoint. Without looking in greater depth at the academic concept (this has already been done elsewhere, see for example Alexander, 1996, pp. 32–51), the methodology here will – for pragmatic reasons relating to the project – focus on the concept of pragmatic decision-making and its two addenda by Stachowiak (1973, p.52 ff.).

Pragmatic decision-making: Determine what it is you construe as knowledge only on the basis of the intended ends (purpose, objectives, goals) that you as an individual or member of one or more groups working towards sufficiently homogeneous goals have set for a given time period. That is, do not attempt to achieve knowledge devoid of knowledge-based intentions and which does not produce 'knowledge to an end'.

First addendum to pragmatic decision-making: The intentionality of knowledge, and thus the ad hoc definition of knowledge, should not degenerate into ideas which are abstractly pragmatic (Stachowiak, 1973 p.52).

Second addendum to pragmatic decision-making (safeguarding against a perpetual downgrading of knowledge): 'Excluding cognitively non-binding preliminary drafts... the repertoire of pragmatic definitions of knowledge should not be transcended with a metatheoretical approach' (Stachowiak, 1973, p.52).

Within the framework of such liberalness, the test methods for the validity or invalidity of theories are qualified and a pluralism of methods and theories relating to the search for certification criteria emerges. On the one hand, the use of the intuitive, extra-pragmatic, spontaneous and playful is fully legitimate in this definition of pragmatic decision-making. On the other hand, the liberalness characterised here is fully compatible with a strictly scientific approach: 'Exactitude becomes even more important, the more undogmatic, flexible and open to discussion are the fundamental plans of the individual theories resulting from processing documentation of experiences. [...] Empirically-based theories can take on something of the character of technical systems in which great freedom on axioms and strict adherence to the rules of deduction exist complementally' (Stachowiak, 1973, p. 60).

Evaluations of reports on schemes promoted by DFJW/OFAJ revealed substantial quality differences among work placements abroad. These were caused primarily by a failure to properly integrate the work placement into the actual initial training programme, lack of communication between the home educational institution and the host enterprise, lack of support during the placement, inadequate information on the skills and competences of the learner, i.e. on potential tasks for the learner, etc. This led to the launch of another Leonardo project, again together with PIU in Denmark. A manual for all those involved in organising work placements abroad aimed at improving and assuring the quality of occupation-related periods of residence abroad. If indeed transparency is engendered by guaranteeing quality in this way, it ought surely to be possible to assess and then certify the additional skills acquired through such a work placement.

Practicert was a logical progression of the joint efforts of DFJW/OFAJ and PIU to increase the European mobility potential of young trainees. Drawing up criteria for the certification of additional occupational, language and specialist qualifications and of intercultural competences was designed to increase the relevance of Europass. In the meantime, however, PIU has amalgamated with Cirius to form the Danish national Leonardo agency, and is no longer a potential project partner. DFJW/OFAJ therefore sought the services of a coordinator with a vast amount of experience in issues of European certification – the International Certificate Conference.

There had been previous attempts to increase the significance of Europass. In *Bulletin Officiel*, Jean-Luc Melançon of the French Ministry of Education tried to include vocational schools in a model scheme covering the whole sphere of education, '*sections européennes*'. He wanted to Europeanise vocational education and training by making training uniform throughout Europe, and he introduced the Europroexamination to this end. Three French academies participate in Europro: Bordeaux, Dijon and Toulouse. Ultimately, the *Académie de Dijon* became a partner of the Practicert project. However, the material developed by vocational school teachers (subject and language teachers from the hotel/catering, motor vehicle and energy sectors) was heavily biased towards country-specific concerns and revealed marked deficits in intercultural training. Forming a group of German and French vocational school teachers should remedy this.

Due to their differing educational systems, the two countries have different conceptual approaches. In Germany the dual system of training predominates; duality is often simulated even in full-time in-school education. In contrast, school-based education and training is prevalent in France. Europro also favours school examination practices: it includes a final oral examination which is credited using the usual French 20-point system. Before this, participants complete two work placements, one in Germany and one in Britain. Thus Europro follows the French system of training. Searching for ways to adapt Europro to other education and training systems (i.e. in Germany and Italy) was therefore an urgent priority. Persuading the Vocational Education and Training Department of the Lower Saxony Min-

istry of Culture to become an important partner was an initial step.

This collaboration made it possible to establish more intercultural approaches in Europro (including during preparation for European work placements). Practicert and Europro remain linked in a network of personal and professional contacts. Europro is also becoming increasingly popular in France. Whereas in 2001/2002 five vocational schools participated in the *Académie de Dijon*, this number had already risen to 12 in 2003 – representing almost a third of all vocational schools in Burgundy. With this expansion to other regions of France will follow automatically.

## Definition of intercultural competences

'If I were again facing the challenge of integrating Europe, I would probably start with culture,' Jean Monnet, founder of the European Union, once declared. For him, culture is the context in which things happen; outside that context even legal matters lack significance (Trompenaars, 1993, p. 8). This is not the only view of culture. Almost every author attempts to create his (°) own definitions (Perlitz, 1995, p. 302). Nevertheless, there are points which connect the chaotic terminology of culture. Since the seventeenth century the word 'culture', which comes from the Latin *cultura* in the sense of agriculture and cultivating body and mind, has been associated on the one hand with tilling the soil and on the other with nurturing intellectual refinement. Over time, the generally accepted meaning of the term 'culture' as the totality of intellectual and artistic expressions of life (of a community, a people) developed (Baumer, 2002, p. 77; Hofstede, 1997, p. 4-5). Richard Hall, the renowned cultural anthropologist, sees culture more as a 'hidden dimension', which is firmly rooted, biologically and physiologically, and is even comparable to an extraordinarily complex computer (Hall, 1966/1982, p. 3; Hall/Hall 1987, p. 4). Another well-known anthropologist, Geert Hofstede, considers culture from a wider angle. His thoughts seem to be the most pertinent in the context of the present exposition, especially as most culture-comparative management research studies from the 1980s and 1990s use his definition (Perlitz, 1995, p. 303). Hofstede derives his definition of culture from social anthropology and includes not only activities which refine the mind, but also the ordinary and banal elements of daily life, such as greeting, eating, showing emotions and maintaining personal hygiene.

All in all, Hofstede presents culture as a group-specific, collective phenomenon of commonly shared values, as a collective programming or software of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group of people or nation from another (Hofstede, 1997, pp. 5-6) (10). Accordingly, culture can be used as a criterion for distinguishing or differenti-

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(°) Aus Vereinfachungsgründen werden männliche Bezeichnungen gewählt.

ating groups, organisations, enterprises, sectors or societies (Bea/Haas, 2001, p. 454 f.). Moreover – and this is central to the acquisition of intercultural competences – in contrast to human nature, culture is learned and not inherited (Hofstede, 1997, pp. 5-6; cf. also Trompenaars, 1993, p. 13) <sup>(1)</sup>. This makes it possible, to a certain degree, to understand facets of other, foreign cultures, to roam between two or more cultures and thus acquire intercultural competence <sup>(12)</sup>.

Unlike culture, competences are relatively simple to define: ‘Competences denote a successful outcome of the learning process for the learner himself and his capacity to act independently in the private, occupational and socio-political [and cultural – authors’ comment] spheres. In practical terms the learning outcome is (however) a qualification’ (German Education Council, 1974, p. 64) <sup>(13)</sup>. Whereas *qualification* can refer in particular to the usefulness of a skill on the labour market and more generally to its desirability in occupational, social and private situations, and can be documented by certificates such as Europass Plus, *competences* can be interpreted as a learnable characteristic of the person involved (Herbrand, 2002, p. 48; Bader/Müller, 2002, p. 176; cf. also Lüdtkke, 1975, p. 175).

The concept of intercultural skills is just as hard to define as the term culture. Nevertheless, numerous authors have attempted to identify factors which can explain the success of intercultural collaboration. ‘Since, however, it remains unclear which factors play a key role in humans’ ability to adapt to foreign cultures, there has, to date, been no agreement on what comprises intercultural competence. Among other things, there is controversy over the differing significance and weight of various factors and dimensions of intercultural competence’ (Jaßmeier, 2003, p. 218). Nevertheless, taking pragmatic decision-making into account, a definition of the term according to Thomas Baumer (2002) will be given here. In the broadest sense, intercultural competences can be understood as ‘the abil-

<sup>(10)</sup> ‘Culture [...] is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. It is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.’ (Hofstede, 1997, p. 5).

<sup>(11)</sup> Similar comments are to be found in American literature on international management. Cf., for example, Deresky, 2000, p. 105.

<sup>(12)</sup> Trompenaars’ onion model: ‘Culture comes in layers, like an onion. To understand it, you have to unpeel it layer by layer’ (1993, p. 6). If culture is represented as an onion with three levels, it might look like the following:

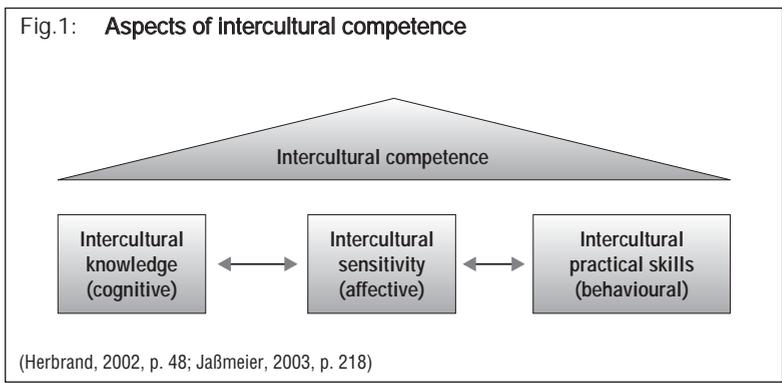
- visible level: behaviour and cultural products (management style, lifestyle, negotiating tactics, workplace design, etc.)
- conscious level: values and norms (individualism, equality, role of women, etc.)
- subconscious level: subconscious basic cultural assumptions (concepts of space and time, relationship of humans and environment, ideas about the nature of humanity, etc.)’ (Baumer, 2002, p. 78).

<sup>(13)</sup> The definitions of competences and qualifications used by the German Education Council as early as 1974 are still applicable in the fields of vocational and economic education today; a distinction is still made between competences which can be learned, for example in vocational schools, and qualifications of practical use on the labour market (Alexander, 1996, p. 9 ff.; cf. also Jungblut, 1998, p. 99; Kuhlmeier, 1998, p. 137).

ity to communicate successfully with other people' (p. 76). In the narrower sense, Baumer offers: 'A person is intercultural competent when he recognises and understands the specific concepts of perception, thinking, feeling and actions of people from foreign cultures when working with them' (p. 80). The idea of teamwork between mobile young people is fundamental to the European work placements at the centre of Practicert. It is precisely this teamwork which allows operational criteria for evaluation to be set up.

Although there is no clear definition of intercultural competence, there are, nevertheless, several recognisable aspects which may be used as terms of reference for pre-departure training in intercultural competences, during the placements themselves and in the after-return evaluation (cf. Jaßmeier 2003). A categorisation based on pragmatic decision-making seems logical here – without going into a discussion of different approaches. The subject can be divided into its cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions (Figure 1), which can also be regarded as training goals. The dimensions are interrelated; their borders are fluid. Whereas the cognitive dimension refers to knowledge of a culture (intercultural knowledge), the affective dimension concerns sensitivity to the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of a culture in connection with modification of personal attitudes towards the previously alien (intercultural sensitivity). These two dimensions are complemented by a third, communicative-behavioural, dimension: intercultural practical skills. These presuppose intercultural sensitivity and intercultural knowledge and equip trainees with the capability to act appropriately in culturally delicate situations (Apfelthaler, 1999, p. 194; Demorgon, 1996, p. 10 f.; Herbrand, 2002, p. 48; Jaßmeier, 2003, p. 218 f.; cf. also Axel, Prümper, 1997, p. 352 f).

*Intercultural competence* is also important for acquiring abilities and skills in order to work efficiently in a different cultural setting. For (training) enterprises this is particularly important in areas such as customer care, teamwork and personal development. Once trainees have picked up these intercultural competences they can be an economic asset to the training companies. A prerequisite for the acquisition of intercultural competences is a cosmopolitan attitude on the part of both enterprises and trainees. Only



those young trainees who demonstrate cosmopolitan attitudes when applying<sup>(14)</sup> for a placement abroad have the capacity to develop intercultural competences; they are the only ones motivated enough to acquire intercultural knowledge. This is linked to the development of cultural awareness. Cultural awareness consists primarily of those intercultural skills and abilities which depend on the insight that we have our own way of thinking and acting which (may) be due to completely value-free differences from other cultures (Apfelthaler, 1999, p. 185). Top of the list are tolerance of other organisational forms in the host country, diplomacy and tact. These factors are even more relevant than mastering the language of the specific country, which outsiders often mistakenly regard as paramount<sup>(15)</sup>.

The acquisition of intercultural competences in this sense covers information about foreign cultures, developing empathy for them and creating patterns of behaviour which reflect an awareness of one's responsibility for oneself and one's actions. The range of entrepreneurial cosmopolitanism is broad; teaching intercultural competences can be assigned to political science classes in vocational schools or it may be included in knowledge dissemination approaches such as presentations by various information providers. But only a longer-term period abroad allows young people to acquire intercultural competences quickly and easily, as various studies have demonstrated (Apfelthaler, 1999, p. 184 ff). It is precisely here that Practicert comes in; this broad range of intercultural competences, starting with the motivation to undertake a European work placement, continuing with the acquisition of techniques for mastering intercultural tasks and culminating in the European work placement itself, is ultimately evaluated and certified in the after-return evaluation.

## Problems associated with the certification of intercultural competences

Although the modularisation of training resulting from the accreditation and certification of separate training phases is viewed with scepticism in Germany, it is generally well-received in Europe. Thus it is a concept that Germany cannot ignore, especially since the ECVET system is opening up new opportunities for lifelong learning (German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2004, p. 206; Heidemann, 2004, p. 1

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<sup>(14)</sup> Ideally a cosmopolitan attitude – Weltoffenheit – should be one of the criteria when recruiting and selecting new employees, since working in an intercultural environment places greater expectations on an employee than similar work in monocultural surroundings. At the least, employees should display empathy, tolerance, the ability to deal with conflicts, a willingness to learn about other cultures and lack of prejudice, a willingness to integrate, communication and team skills and a general interest in intercultural cooperation (Herbrand, 2002, p. 143 ff).

<sup>(15)</sup> Some organisers offer special language preparation courses for promoters of intercultural education and training, e.g. the DFJW's further training programme: [www.dfw.org](http://www.dfw.org). Mastering a lingua franca will always make communication easier between all partners.

ff.)<sup>(16)</sup>. In the current discussion on certification through ECVET there is debate on the usefulness of ECTS for recognising credit points for training phases. The application of ECVET could not only increase the transparency and recognition of training outcomes, but also facilitate transfer from vocational education and training to study at university. In this way ECVET would enhance the overall quality of vocational education and training and make it generally more appealing. Practicert must consider at least two questions on the basis of pragmatic decision-making concerning the credit rating of stages of training in European work placements:

- (1) To what extent can a consensus be reached within Europe on making the credit points system uniform – for intercultural competences, for example?
- (2) To what extent can academic and vocational education and training be viewed as equivalent, making it possible to compare ECTS credit points for studies (irrespective of subject) with credit points attained through ECVET?

Three basic rules for efficient implementation of the ECVET system must be considered when reaching pragmatic consensus on the first question<sup>(17)</sup>. However, formulating course units and assessment criteria must involve reaching a pragmatic consensus with international partners – in this case the partners in the Leonardo project Practicert.

Practicert might solve the second issue by making the workload of full-time students, which corresponds to 60 ECTS credits during the academic year, equivalent to a workload of 60 ECVET points for people undergoing vocational education and training. Correspondingly, a 24-30 hour workload would correspond to one ECTS credit point or one ECVET credit point<sup>(18)</sup>. After that, the timescale of the pre-departure training module and the proposed number of credit points for the European work place-

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<sup>(16)</sup> Cf. also [www.na-bibb.de/uploads/leo/ecvet\\_eu-kommission\\_leitlinien.pdf](http://www.na-bibb.de/uploads/leo/ecvet_eu-kommission_leitlinien.pdf) (retrieved on 31 January 2005).

<sup>(17)</sup> These basic rules are:

- The goals of the training path, the training programme or the components of a qualification are knowledge, skills and abilities which must be acquired or mastered at a specified reference level. These will be formulated, collected and organised in units.
- In accordance with an agreement at European level, a maximum number of credits from all units will be allocated to a complete course of training, training programme or qualification programme. This agreement makes it possible to allocate a number of credits to each unit (or group of units) on the basis of the relative weight of each unit in the overall group. The transfer and exchange value of each unit is defined in credit points.
- A cooperation agreement links the training sites responsible for imparting mobility capabilities to participants in ECVET. This agreement constitutes mutual trust among the providers. It includes all the units linked to training in another educational or vocational education and training system. It also includes elements of the learning modules, learning programmes, placements, course units etc. in which the learner will participate to heighten his mobility potential. This agreement, together with other documents (Europass, Certificate Supplement, Diploma Supplement, etc.) guarantees the transparency of the individual mobility process, the targets of learning activities and the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills and abilities' ([www.nabibb.de/uploads/leo/ecvet\\_eu-kommission\\_leitlinien.pdf](http://www.nabibb.de/uploads/leo/ecvet_eu-kommission_leitlinien.pdf), p. 4) (retrieved on 31 January 2005).

ment itself would have to be determined. Furthermore, consideration should be given to how behavioural dimensions of intercultural competences might be documented and tested, perhaps by European placement mentors. As part of the after-return evaluation, operational criteria would be used to diagnose the behavioural dimension of intercultural competences, so that the relevant intercultural qualifications could be certified in Europass Plus – together with ECVET credit points. In a further step, a decision must be made on how far the ECTS grading scale from A (excellent) to FX/F (fail) should be applied<sup>(19)</sup>.

## Preparation

### **Trainers/vocational school teachers must have intercultural skills to prepare trainees for work placements abroad**

Not many trainers and teachers assigning work placements currently have experience of working abroad. This situation is likely to change in the future. European integration and greater acceptance of European educational programmes will play a vital role in achieving this. That does not mean that the many trainers and vocational school teachers now supporting the idea of *work placements abroad* and *learning site relocations to other countries* are less experienced or insufficiently qualified for this task. But interested persons and newcomers do need to know what competences are expected of them in order to perform their desired job.

Personal qualities are the most important attributes for workers in the international field. This applies to both participating trainees and organisers. First among these attributes are *acceptance of different educational structures in the host country* and the *ability to be diplomatic* (affective aspect of intercultural competences). Ideal candidates are committed, open to new ideas and flexible. They will have learned to master even difficult situations confidently.

It is important that managers are involved in cross-border contact at an early stage. In France and southern European countries in particular, managers can often forge links denied to ordinary employees at educational institutions. In many countries, school/industry contacts are established exclusively by enterprise and school administrations. These then mediate between partner institution personnel responsible for cooperation. It has proved helpful for representatives of an institution to participate in meetings between partner institutions and to familiarise themselves with condi-

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<sup>(18)</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/education/programmes/socrates/ects\\_de.html](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/education/programmes/socrates/ects_de.html) (retrieved on 12 December 04, p. 1)

<sup>(19)</sup> There appear to be no results as yet, as an InWent GmbH conference in Hanover (17 January 2005) revealed.

tions in the host country, in order to gain practical onsite experience of the behavioural aspects of intercultural competences.

It also benefits the sending institution if staff involved in cross-border education and training receive the support of school administrators and all the teaching staff, since there will inevitably be situations in which they must harmonise to find common solutions, for example when pupils need to be released from lessons during their visit to the partner institution.

Preparatory visits are a great help when creating new school and training partnerships. These are supported by European educational programmes and youth organisations. It is useful to link up with national coordination offices, since they provide guidance and support which are very useful in establishing lasting partnerships. Although the application procedure takes some flexibility away from participants, the forms give applicants an awareness of important aspects of a preparatory visit and facilitate subsequent interaction with partners in the host country.

It will not be possible to give outsiders a detailed impression of the multi-faceted experiences of a stay abroad. However, European education programmes, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and bilateral institutions (DFJW, German-Polish Youth Office, the German-Czech coordination offices Zukunftsfond and Tandem) offer many introductory and preparatory courses and provide accompanying material for VET facilitators <sup>(20)</sup>.

## Certification module: Pre-departure training as preparation for the European work placement

Decentralised learning arrangements during set periods of vocational education and training abroad in the form of European work placements place VET teachers and trainers in an unfamiliar role. At home, trainers and trainees are almost always in direct contact, enabling the trainer to influence and guide the learning process as the situation demands. In contrast, during European work placements the usual trainer can only intervene in the learning process to a very limited extent, even accounting for the use of telecommunications. Such intervention would actually be contrary to the basic principle of European placements and make them less interesting

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<sup>(20)</sup>The further training programmes can also be found on the Internet, for example at [www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu), [www.dfjw.org](http://www.dfjw.org).

<sup>(21)</sup> At national level there has been little or no progress with our demand for adequate preparation for placements abroad as an enhancement to a VET course. It is small consolation that the situation is little better elsewhere. According to Apfelthaler (1999, p. 184) even in multinational enterprises only 30 % or at most 45 % of employees are prepared for working abroad and encountering foreign cultures. Richard Mead goes even further: 'Only 12 % of employees in 51 multinational US corporations had been offered seminars and workshops on cross-cultural differences and doing business abroad. Other research estimates that 65 per cent of United States MNCs do not offer training to their expatriates before sending them overseas' (Mead, 1998, p. 423).

pedagogically. Despite this, even at a distance, learning must be organised as effectively as possible to achieve the optimal intercultural learning outcome. For this reason it is useful to prepare trainees for (intercultural) situations that might arise during their stay abroad before they start the placement (pre-departure training) <sup>(21)</sup>.

The objective is to provide enough information to help trainees take in the extremely complex world of work in the host country and guide their awareness. This can prevent decentralised learning abroad leading to uncertain outcomes. Adequate preparation gives a placement structure and reduces its risk of failure.

There are concerns that mobility measures for young people in initial vocational training may be poorly prepared at international level, too. Data on the type and scope of preparation for young trainees sent to work abroad does not seem to be available. Surveys are difficult to conduct because these training phases are decentralised in isolated enterprises and schools, and the modern placement movement is still in its infancy. At present it is only possible to note with regret that systematic preparation for placements abroad is rare. This is particularly unfortunate as young trainees are not yet personally or mentally equipped to cope with problems arising while they are abroad. They lack the backup on which experienced expatriates can rely. Young people on work placements abroad are much more likely to experience an ineffective training phase than delegates from companies operating internationally. In extreme cases young people may thus abandon their placement.

It is an urgent requirement that all those responsible for training act to avoid such outcomes. The task they face is new, and as a first step they must establish the goals of preparation for a work placement abroad and the curricular content to achieve these goals.

### **Possible curricular elements of work placement preparation**

Following the analysis and reduction of several lists produced for experienced employees going to work abroad, published among others by Apfelthaler (1999, p. 184 ff.), we propose – on the basis of pragmatic decision-making – that at the *affective intercultural competence level* (intercultural sensitivity) international work placements should achieve the following as their primary objective:

**Trainees on a placement should engage with the foreign culture competently, fairly and efficiently.**

This primary goal can be divided into the following sub-goals, which constitute basic criteria for awarding ECVET credit points. Employees sent abroad should:

- possess the sensitivity necessary in intercultural contexts;
- be able to adapt quickly to other environments;
- be able to cope with uncertainties and ambiguities;
- show interest in thinking beyond the boundaries of their own culture;
- display willingness to look beyond stereotypical ideas of other cultures;
- be able to integrate into new work teams.

At the *cognitive-geographical* level, (intercultural knowledge) participants should acquire as much *complex knowledge of the foreign culture and their own culture* as possible. The list below is the result of pragmatic consensus; individual items or sub-blocks may be more relevant depending on the situation in the host country. The list is intended to function as a stimulus to debate:

- language of the country <sup>(22)</sup>,
- demographic data of all kinds,
- geographical information,
- information about transport systems,
- availability of modern communications technology,
- the school system,
- educational status of the workforce,
- the role of women,
- the role of minorities,
- the role of the host country's history,
- property ownership structure,
- safety regulations,
- forms of worker co-determination,
- environmental awareness,
- political situation/distribution of power,
- trade unions and employers' federations,
- tax issues,
- regional business development,
- the influence of religion on attitudes to and at work,
- legal peculiarities,
- leisure activities.

Dealing with a selection of these or other topics may help increase trainees' awareness of various problems in the host country and help take some of the pressure off young people coping with the complex experience of living abroad, making it easier to handle. This preparation could then progress to a work or observation task during the practical phase. The objective of such a task would be to guide the trainees' attention in a partic-

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<sup>(22)</sup> The expansion of foreign-language competences is traditionally and justifiably regarded as a main goal of placements abroad. The popularity of Britain, France and Spain as host countries is explained by the widespread use of their languages and the expectation of trainees that gaining experience of the language in its natural context will be useful in school and in the workplace. Of course, it is worthwhile attempting to reduce or avoid language problems for trainees in these countries by a situational approach to language tuition in school during the preparation phase. This also applies to placements in which English, French or Spanish have the function of a lingua franca.

ular direction and provide a basis for an assessment interview or presentation upon completion of the placement. This would make it possible to diagnose and evaluate in particular the behavioural dimension of intercultural competences acquired <sup>(23)</sup>. With regard to accreditation with ECVET credit points the question is: how many hours should be allocated to such pre-departure training? For example, if the trainee workload comprised a three-day workshop of eight hours a day, it could be accredited with one ECVET credit point.

## From European work placements to cross-border cooperative training – working towards certification of European training phases by the international VET cooperative

Despite the total number of trainees participating in bilateral programmes, up to now placements of trainees in the dual system have lagged far behind expectations. Cross-border cooperative training could improve the figure significantly <sup>(24)</sup>. The idea is obvious, and initial tests are being run in border areas, something from which we could all learn. These usually started with full-time courses. The distances travelled were not excessive, so that in case of conflict, personal mediation by a trainer from the home institution was possible. Nevertheless, these first attempts were not without problems – usually administrative ones – because of, for example, differing training systems. There were serious differences in the amount of theory and practice in training courses in participating partner countries. This led to difficulties ensuring reciprocal recognition of final examinations. Ways to overcome these bureaucratic obstacles must be found as quickly as possible. There is a centuries-old tradition in craft training in particular which can provide a basis for training abroad. Although it is true that a journeyman's travels did not start until *after* initial vocational training, participants on placements would be around the same age.

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<sup>(23)</sup> In the first instance it may be assumed that only operable, that is observable, criteria can be used for evaluation purposes in the sense of test theories. On these grounds, evaluation of affective dimensions will be impossible a priori. In contrast, cognitive dimensions can readily be tested in written or oral tests and therefore evaluated by observers.

<sup>(24)</sup> For us, a possible basis for cross-border cooperative training could be trainers from the same occupational sphere in different European countries developing a joint training concept for initial vocational training and agreeing on the supplementary training content to be provided by the partner. The objective is achieved in cooperative training if, on completion of the regular training period, the final accreditation can be given by at least two European countries. Young people must be able to gain cross-border experiences as part of their initial vocational training. In the past this was only possible after initial training – for example for travelling journeymen.

<sup>(25)</sup> Trainees particularly suited for cross-border cooperative training are, for example, construction workers (e.g. roofers), heating engineers, agricultural mechanics and vehicle mechanics, electricians and parquet layers.

Pragmatic considerations seem to suggest that cross-border cooperative training is particularly appropriate for Chambers of Trade <sup>(25)</sup> which already have experience of European training. The following steps should be considered:

- a large part of initial vocational training should take place in one, or perhaps even two, institutions of training partners abroad;
- these phases of training should consist of long periods of residence abroad (four to six months); a one-year stay might be more practicable for German trainers;
- the trainees receive certificates from their host countries in addition to those of their own country, as is the practice in academic education. This is already done in many higher education cooperatives.

An important counter-argument will probably be that the projected time abroad will only allow the trainees to get to the point where they are just starting to become reliable workers and make a profit for their enterprise. In many cases it will probably not be easy for trainees to catch up with missed vocational school lessons on their own. Some training experts maintain that for a project to work successfully as a training cooperative, it must be under the direction of competent bodies such as the Chambers of Trade, in cooperation with a VET centre and the partner organisations abroad. A first step could be requiring trainers to become mobile themselves. Trainers would go abroad to view the actual training conditions for their apprentices and to arrange training phases. Together with their partners abroad they would structure the period of training – normally three to three and a half years – in such a way that periods spent abroad do not extend or diminish overall training time. At the same time, a project for harmonising training plans could be used to integrate periods spent abroad into a binding framework.

The possibility of certifying cooperative training through ECVET presents a great opportunity to increase the quality and appeal of the German dual VET system. This is particularly pertinent against the backdrop of the previously mentioned move towards a bigger international element in VET thanks to the amendment of the BBiG. This article reflects only *one* aspect of the Leonardo project Practicert/Europass Plus: the acquisition of intercultural competences. The pragmatic decision-making approach used in the Practicert project shows us that there are definite possibilities for formulating criteria for all dimensions (affective, cognitive and behavioural) of intercultural competences. These can be included in the framework of Practicert and can be evaluated and certified with credit points. It is clear that cooperative training would greatly facilitate both pragmatic consensus-building on criteria for the aspects of intercultural competences and the consensus-oriented award of ECVET credit points, as well as corresponding certification by Europass Plus. ■

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# Do we provide opportunities or only value productivity?

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## SUMMARY

With a view to improving the quality of life of persons living with disabilities without direct intervention but in the context of action at the level of their personal development, and with the institutional support of the University of the Balearic Islands and funding from 'SA Nostra' Caixa de Balears, we decided to develop, implement and evaluate a training programme aimed to generate a change in attitudes towards people with mental disabilities. The programme is targeted to professionals who have an impact on personal development.

On the basis of the experience of one of the businessmen in the group of professionals that was set up for the purpose of our experiment, we seek to highlight the possibility of inducing change, from an initial attitude focused on the productivity of the enterprise to one based on the principles of normalisation and equality of opportunities; the latter is more conducive to mentally disabled people achieving social and occupational integration.

## Key words

Training programme, continuing vocational training, professional permanent training, adult training, social integration, mentally disabled person

## Introduction

According to Schalock (1995, 1999, 2003), quality of life has multiple dimensions; professional action addressed to the disabled population must include: *'emotional well-being, interpersonal relations, material well-being, personal development, physical well-being, self-determination, social inclusion and rights.'*

Including these dimensions leads to a change in action undertaken and to a restructuring of services and current social policies.

Power (economic, political or social), intelligence, beauty, prestige, etc. are at the top of our scale of values. We become socialised into these values and accept them as valid without reflecting on how they affect the ability of persons starting from a position of inequality to take on a social

Table 1. **Balearic Islands. Distribution according to age and type of disability (absolute data and horizontal percentages)**

Type of disability	Age 0- 14	Age 15-29
Mental retardation	1 118	1 363
Mental illness	59	352
<b>Total (mental)</b>	<b>1 177</b>	<b>1 715</b>
Visual	90	222
Hearing	114	196
<b>Total (sensory)</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>418</b>
Osteoarticular	100	359
Nervous and muscular	263	584
Expressive	41	41
Chronic diseases	156	336
Unspecified	63	96
<b>Total (physical)</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>1 416</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2 004</b>	<b>3 549</b>

role. We act from a perspective of superiority, on the basis of implicit attitudes of 'pity' or 'charity', or, at worst, rejection, closing the doors to the capacities of this group.

We have created a social structure in which there is no room for less advantaged groups, and do not act to move towards greater tolerance and acceptance.

In J. Rosselló's analysis of the situation in the Autonomous Community of the Balearic Islands (1999), the data broken down according to type of disability shows that for the 14 to 29 age bracket, mental disability is more prevalent.

## Relevance and rationale of the study

Persons living with disabilities are confronted with numerous, severe obstacles in the course of their lives. They face deficits at various levels: in the prevention of genetic anomalies, in family counselling, in educational and careers guidance, in educational, occupational and social inclusion, in accessibility to different environments, etc.

Based on the researchers' analysis of the situation, we created a process targeted at professionals who are able to help persons living with disabilities. The underlying assumption was that the quality of life of this group depends also on what these professionals do. The selected professionals worked in the following fields: health (e.g. doctors, nurses, dieticians), education (e.g. teachers, psychologists, educational psychologists, trainers), industry (e.g. entrepreneurs, workplace trainers), guidance and counselling (e.g. lawyers, social workers), etc. These were the occupational groups targeted by our attitude training programme.

To deal with an issue of this kind we felt it is necessary for the different professionals to apply the same approach. Setting up an interdisciplinary group is therefore not simply an interesting exercise but indispensable if we are to move towards a more open society, one that is capable of understanding and accepting personal differences.

## Concepts

The approach of our training programme followed the new definition of mental disability (AARM, 1992) which attaches importance to all dimensions of the person, with diagnosis taken into account only for the purpose of planning the appropriate support. According to this definition, mental retardation is

*'a disability that results from the interaction between limitations in capacity (intelligence and adaptation abilities) and the demands of the environment' (1).*

If we accept this definition, programmes solely designed to mitigate the limitations of retarded persons are inadequate. Instead, what matters is to create a personal support system taking account of clients' abilities as well as their limits.

A full-scale *bibliographical* search based on an entire series of descriptors (e.g. programme, professional attitudes, social inclusion, mental retardation, intellectual disabilities) and various databases (Eric, Francis, British Education Index, Dissertation Abstracts International, Social Scisearch, PsycINFO, Sociological Abstracts, Teso, Redinet, etc.) failed to come up with any *attitude training programme* for the identified occupational groups in relation to the mentally disabled.

The articles corresponding to the key words tended to be descriptive or psychometric studies pointing to differences in attitude among professionals, without however including a programme to improve these attitudes.

## Method of compiling and analysing information

'Why is the investigative perspective so different for each type of disability? Is it not possible to complement research on each pathology or disorder with research on the various syndromes? Would it not be possible to achieve much more progress by integrating the different investigative perspectives and approaching different scientific fields focused on persons living with a disability?' (Verdugo 1997, 123).

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(1) For a deeper insight into the concept of mental retardation, cf. Luckasson, R., Schalock, R.L., Snell, M.E., Spitalnik, D.M. (1996, August). The 1992 AAMR definition and preschool children - Response from the Committee on terminology and classification. *Mental Retardation*. 247-253.

Taking these questions into account, we came to believe that our research had to be based on:

- a concept of disability centred on the interaction between individual and environment
- a perspective centred on quality of life rather than just efficacy of services;
- a method which does not limit research to the researchers but also allows for the needs of the professionals, the disabled and those relating to them.

A qualitative method permits research to be based on experience, on reflection upon our own practice.

We believe that to generate critical knowledge as a fundamental part of our attitudes it is important to experience the situation under investigation, to compare it with the participation of a team of researchers, and to generate multiple methods, allowing us to consider:

- that a method should be adapted to the object of research and not the other way around;
- that what is important is not what can be substantiated by theory, but whether we can create meanings and/or attitudes in the subjects; theories are simply tools to analyse a given reality;
- that in implementation we should never adopt a normative approach but retain a hypothesis that allows us to reflect on the player's own processes and which is thus converted into critical knowledge.

Without departing from the critical paradigm, we entered into action-related research in order to highlight the concrete frame of reference for the type of research conducted. Smith (1993, p. 88) refers to action-related research as studying a social situation in order to try to improve the quality of the action itself. According to Pérez Serrano (1990, p. 58), this and numerous other definitions have a number of characteristics in common, which can be considered as the fundamentals of action-related research:

- practice: start out from practical problems, take on commitments, create a new form of practice, involve the participants, and improve practice;
- reflection: knowledge and intervention, thought and action, reflection and action, self-critical reflection;
- improvement: self-criticism, promotion of social and personal change, attitude change, understanding the situation, combining research, action and training.

## Objective of the training programme

All in all we see that conducting action-related research leads directly to the responsibility of the participants to reflect on their own practice. This is the real objective of the programme and the research presented in this re-

port: to encourage each of the participants to reflect on their occupational practice. The maxim guiding the research (the decision to opt for this type of method was no doubt also influenced by the researcher's training and her previous research experience carried out on the basis of a qualitative paradigm <sup>(?)</sup>) was the following:

*Reflection on one's own practice is the basis for improving the real situation being researched, and is also the first step towards attitudinal change.*

The areas required for an individual's development (health; social, educational and occupational integration; rights and obligations; quality of life; family, social and sexual relations, etc.) were analysed during the group sessions. Here, the aim was to put forward proposals for professional action based on the principle of normalisation, as redefined by Wolfenbenger in 1972:

*'Using culturally normative means (familiar and valued techniques, instruments, methods etc.) to improve the living conditions of a person (income, shelter, health services) at least to the level of those open to the average citizen, and to improve or support in the best way possible the person's conduct (abilities, skills), appearance (clothing, grooming etc), experiences (adaptation, feelings, etc), status and reputation (labels, attitudes etc).'* (Muntaner 2001, pp. 21-22)

The information obtained from the initial interviews, training sessions, personal diaries and final interviews allowed us to establish the categories which helped us analyse the data; these were entered and indexed by means of the NUDIST (non-numerical unstructured data, indexing, searching and theorising) software system.

The following section shows, once again, that the individual finds him/herself in a constant process of change, as demonstrated by the experience of one of the entrepreneur members of the interdisciplinary group.

## Selection criteria for setting up an interdisciplinary group

Setting up an interdisciplinary group representing all the occupational fields mentioned above proved to be an arduous task, which caused a certain degree of concern and anxiety.

One of the selection criteria for the creation of this group was initial training. Within these profiles we excluded professionals who had already received some form of related training (i.e. concerning disabled persons). These included teachers, specialists in educational therapy and educational psychologists.

(?) Rosselló Ramon, MR. (1996). *Investigació i dissenys en teoria del currículum*. Palma de Mallorca: Universitat de les Illes Balears.

Muntaner, J.J. (1998). *Estrategias de intervención del profesor de apoyo en el proceso de atención a la diversidad en centros de educación primaria*. Unpublished research paper.

Secondly, it was decided to limit the target group to the mentally disabled. Here we drew on the extensive experience of Díaz Aguado (1995, 18):

*'... the most serious problems of rejection are to be found in the case of mental disability and cerebral paralysis. These are followed by sensory (hearing and visual) deficiencies, along with speech disorders and epilepsy. Finally, motor disabilities appear to cause the least rejection.'*

Assuming that attitude guides action (Smith and Mackie, 1994), we applied the premise that changing the attitude towards the mentally disabled would be the most likely to bring about a changed attitude toward the disabled population as a whole.

## Consolidating the group of professionals

With a letter in which we explained the objectives of the training programme, we contacted doctors (gynaecologists and paediatricians), lawyers, nurses, entrepreneurs, educators (specialists in pedagogy and educational organisation), clinical psychologists and social workers – in other words, professionals matching our selection criteria who are involved in helping the mentally disabled, but who lack training related to the subject of our study.

Politicians, specialised agencies, NGOs, etc. were ruled out because persons in these occupational groups do not receive the same initial training and accordingly belong to different professional associations. This makes it very difficult to apply established selection criteria and contact mechanisms to form a random sample.

The letter was sent out to the various professionals in the relevant professional associations and as the replies came in, an initial interview was organised to agree on participation in our experiment. In this interview, we tried to identify the practitioner's ideas, concepts, feelings and behaviour towards the mentally disabled, i.e. to identify the initial attitude which was the starting point of the experiment.

On the basis of the research contract presented to the participants during the initial interview, we concluded the agreement on participation in the programme and called in the members of the group to begin the training sessions.

The interdisciplinary group finally comprised 13 members: two entrepreneurs, a lawyer, three social workers, four nurses, a dietician, a psychologist and an educator. The only professionals originally earmarked that were not finally represented in the group were doctors, unable to participate because of their working hours.

A total of ten training sessions were organised. Individual contacts were also maintained on an ongoing basis to compare and follow up the objectives at a more individualised level. In the course of these sessions and contacts, the participants experienced numerous and significant changes, both at a professional and a personal level.

In this report we have decided to present the process as seen through the eyes of one of the entrepreneurs in the group. This businessman experienced change: whereas he initially considered disabled persons only in terms of their limitations, he begins through the programme to understand their abilities.

## Towards a more favourable attitude: from productivity to opportunity

'From the cultural point of view, the first point to be emphasised is the low average level of education of persons living with a disability, principally the mentally disabled ... Finally, precariousness is an element which defines the economic situation of the disabled population, triggered by their low level of occupational activity and a high percentage of inactivity'. (Rosselló 2000, 119)

We present here the case of a 30-year-old entrepreneur who runs a gardening business in Palma de Mallorca. He was contacted through the employers' association of which he is a member and asked if he would be interested in joining the interdisciplinary group that was aiming to induce favourable attitudes towards the mentally disabled. With no particular reason or preconceived idea, merely on impulse and out of curiosity, he decided to set aside two hours a week at the end of his working day to reflect upon his own attitude towards the mentally disabled.

His initial attitude may be defined by terms such as pity and ignorance, aspects which condition an attitude based on inequality, i.e. on the entrepreneur's superiority vis-à-vis the mentally disabled – an attitude which is experienced by the disabled as overprotection and negation of their abilities.

Following reflection on this point during the sessions, the entrepreneur began to lose this attitude of superiority toward the mentally disabled. This allowed him to stand up for their rights and at the same time demand that they fulfil their obligations. This is how he put it in the final interview:

'The change I went through was a change of feeling. I don't feel sorry for them any more because I see myself as being their equal, on the same level. I now think that if I were to take on disabled persons in my business who were not up to the job, I would have no hesitation in telling them that they weren't suitable and taking on someone else' (final interview, p. 251). <sup>(3)</sup>

But the entrepreneur was as yet unaware that his professional situation allowed him to improve the quality of life of disabled persons. It was in

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<sup>(3)</sup> The numbers at the end of each paragraph correspond to the page numbering in the annexes to the research report: De la Iglesia Mayol, B. (2002). *De les Dificultats d'aprenentatge a les Dificultats en el Procés d'Ensenyament-Aprenentatge*. Palma de Mallorca. Universitat de les Illes Balears. Unpublished thesis.

the course of one of the training sessions, following reflection and the comments from his peers, that he realised how an employer can take action to further an individual's development:

'If you offer them an opportunity to work, that is the beginning of a solution to many things. You're giving them everything! Security, stability ... AND, if you don't give them just a job but also training and assistance, you can offer them emotional well-being and personal success as well' (6th session, p. 202).

We can see the changes this businessman experienced in analysing the occupational integration of the mentally disabled. These changes have brought highly significant consequences for his own occupational practice.

The change is evident when we consider how at the beginning of the sessions the entrepreneur defends his own approach from a business point of view, i.e. exclusively in terms of business productivity.

'As a businessman, I would ask myself: what is more profitable for me? We have to be realistic. I would hesitate to take on mentally disabled workers in my business, if only for reasons of productivity' (initial interview, p. 47/48).

This means that the employer would only ask an applicant what type of disability they have – without taking into account that in a job interview applicants do not tend to refer to what they *cannot* do, but try to portray and emphasise the abilities they have, i.e. what they *can* do. A further and more important consequence of this attitude is that only persons whose job application/CV does not specify a certain percentage of disability will be short-listed for an interview. This already rules out the possibility of disabled persons working in an ordinary working environment.

'I wouldn't interview every applicant, only those I'm interested in, I can't afford to waste time. I would ask them what disability they have and then I would decide to interview them or not, depending on whether or not I am interested in them' (fourth session, p. 191).

Here we can also observe the businessman's attitude that he has to control the type of disability the workers have and that *they* are the ones who have to adapt to the workplace.

This initial idea was called into question by the other professionals in the group session. Following group reflection and personal analysis, the entrepreneur decided to provide his work premises with the necessary infrastructure to cater for a mentally disabled worker. This is how he put it during the sixth session:

'The business has to be prepared to take on a person living with a disability and we have to have the infrastructure to be able to deliver training' (sixth session, p. 204).

Once he became aware that his own feelings, behaviours and ideas were not conducive to the development of mentally disabled persons, and with the input of the ideas of the other professionals, the entrepreneur made a commitment to adapt the structure of his business to be able to take on a mentally disabled person. It should be pointed out that this decision was

not motivated by financial reward but by the idea that to change and cater for people who are different enriches the entire workforce.

Before concluding our report, we would like to give a brief summary of the changes the businessman began to introduce at the end of the ten training sessions originally scheduled. In keeping with his commitment, he called a meeting of the group to analyse his plans for the extension of his business, wishing to determine whether his proposals were based on the principle of integration or, on the contrary, segregation. As this exercise required more than one session, two further reflection sessions were held before the final presentation of the business extension project. Without any financial compensation or assistance from the public institutions of our region, the entrepreneur decided to undertake this project on his own. Despite many obstacles during the recruitment process, which caused him considerable concern, he had – and still has – every cause for satisfaction.

‘What struck me most was to see that as employers we are not prepared to take on persons with disabilities. I have to add that we actually get very little help for this. Any business initiative is complicated by definition, so just imagine how complicated this one is. You’re not even informed by employers’ associations of your obligations towards this group’ (final interview, p. 251).

## The voice of the participants

Finally, as we consider this process to be the most significant of the entire exercise, we asked the protagonists of the attitude change programme to summarise what they had learned in a few words.

### *Lawyer:*

‘... today I wouldn’t defend the fact that the mentally disabled can draw benefits, as I would first of all try to adopt measures to enable them to work. I no longer solely see working in terms of the money you earn and the security it gives you, but also in terms of the personal satisfaction that having a job implies’ (final interview, 232).

‘(The research) helped me to open up to this world, broaden my views and understand just how painful it can be to be faced with the impossibility of social integration.

Cooperating with other professionals showed me how they approach the problem and act towards disabled people from their professional perspective’ (final interview, 232).

*Dietician:*

'I didn't realise that there were so many obstacles in their way ... They have the right to happiness just like anyone else' (final interview, 235).  
'I am now more aware of the situation of the mentally disabled and so now you fight and defend your ideas more. I think it is fundamentally important to argue they are people who deserve the same respect as everybody else. All human beings think and that's enough in itself (final interview, 235).'

*University nursing graduate 1:*

'Professionally [it has helped me] provide better care for my patients, I treat them better and understand them better ...on a personal level, it has made me think over things and change. Now I don't get out of their way as I did before, I want to approach them and get to know them as people. I'm no longer afraid of what a mentally disabled person may ask me. I have more resources for action' (final interview, 238).

*University nursing graduate 2:*

'Above all [the research] has helped me personally. I am more open-minded, I think about things more, I now tend to analyse things which in the past I just didn't bother about. I am more tolerant, I don't say 'no' so quickly. It has also helped me realise that there are other professionals out there and that we can handle the subject from different perspectives. Also, that we have to take action together and that we are not alone' (final interview, 242/243).

*University nursing graduate 3:*

'It helped me understand not only what I think but also what other people think and experience. It's much better this way, sharing other professional points of view. It would be terrible if we were only to focus on the health world. I was very pleased to see what the social workers do, and to see that there are also employers who are concerned about this issue ... it rids you of your prejudices' (final interview, 246).

*University nursing graduate 4:*

'Before [the programme] I treated them well, but it's different now, I treat them more personally and I am more aware of what I am doing' (final interview, 250).

*Entrepreneur 1:*

'It's thanks to the experiment that I decided to recruit a mentally disabled person to work in my business' (final interview, 252).

'It was enriching since it helped me relate better to other professionals. It was interesting to see how they put into practice what we discussed in the sessions and what they thought about different issues on a professional level' (final interview, 253).

*Entrepreneur 2:*

'I volunteered to test their eyesight free of charge at certain institutions but there was no response. It's the parents who come to my surgery and I can see that they have very bad eyesight. This means that the institutions do not provide this kind of care' (session 4, 189).

*Educator:*

'Yes, I did benefit from the programme, I now think differently from the way I did before. I read education at university and I decided to opt for organisation and pedagogy, in part because I didn't like the area of disability, as I'd only had experience with the severely disabled. But now this has changed; I'd like to work in this field now' (final interview, 256).

*Psychologist:*

'In the sessions, I had the impression that I was waking up to the world. If I hadn't participated in the programme, I would have just continued going to work, going back home, closed up within my own four walls, in my own little world. Now, I have come into contact with lawyers, entrepreneurs, social workers ... I have the feeling that I have opened up' (session 10, 227).

'I don't work as a psychologist now, but ever since we started the first session I felt I would like to work in this field. I try to influence the attitudes of people around me, although I would like to do something more' (session 10, 228/229).

*Social worker 1:*

'I didn't take the opinion of nurses into consideration before but now I do. I felt the need to collaborate closely with different professionals. In my work too there is a lack of weekly meetings to supervise our work together. It's fundamental' (final interview, 259).

*Social worker 2:*

'The commitment we can make is to cooperate more closely with institutions which do not belong to our organisation. There's a lack of coordination between institutions' (session 10, 229).

'I have changed my way of thinking and I see that it is necessary for all professionals to join forces. It's like flogging a dead horse if we don't' (final interview, 261).

'Now I focus the programme more on the users' capabilities rather than their disabilities. Moreover, I have managed to get a person of 15 out of the house for the first time' (final interview, 261).

*Social worker 3:*

'What I am determined to do is focus on what they feel and think. And give the mentally disabled people I deal with a better quality of life. Now I know I am better trained' (session 10, 230).

‘Now I give them the opportunity to take their own decisions, I don’t take decisions on their behalf any more’ (final interview, 262).

‘It has helped me relate better to people living with disabilities, because now I no longer see them or approach them from an attitude of compassion. I try to help them help themselves and get them to ask me for help. They are the ones who have got to know what they want. It will also help me a lot in my relations with other professionals’ (final interview, 264).

## Issues for further research

In the course of designing, implementing and evaluating the programme described above, we came across new interests, needs and issues, requiring further in-depth examination and research. This is a reflection of the constant restrictions and limitations of our research: limitations such as narrowing down the sample to specific professional roles, confining the research to the mentally disabled, not being able to carry out a follow-up in the various workplaces. These obstacles shall have to be overcome in later research. We would therefore like to put forward a series of issues for reflection which may be of use to others wishing to conduct research that aims to improve the quality of life of less advantaged persons and groups. The following is a list of issues which could be examined in greater depth by such a study:

- Determine how to move forward from the interdisciplinary group of professionals to inter-institutional coordination in the interests of action and the development of programmes and services.
- Analyse how to disseminate and promote respect for the rights and obligations of persons living with disabilities.
- Take action in terms of training for health professionals to cater for the needs of disabled persons and their families, especially when the diagnosis is given, as well as follow-up in coordinating with the other professionals intervening in the process of personal development.
- Deliver attitude change programmes to induce more favourable attitudes towards persons living with disabilities. These should be offered by the official institutions which deliver training to all relevant professionals who can play a role in developing social structures which cater for different needs.
- Make it a requirement for employers to recruit persons with disabilities.
- Seek to amend existing legislation to introduce measures to promote the social and occupational integration of the mentally disabled.
- Revise the criteria and the reasons for diagnosing and certifying a person as disabled.
- Foster favourable attitudes towards persons living with disabilities starting from initial vocational training.

- Revise the basic assumptions on which services and programmes for persons living with disabilities are based.

We should like to conclude our report by expressing the hope that answers will be found to some of the questions raised and moreover that there will always be professionals with the same degree of selflessness and commitment as those who were the main players of this programme. It should be added that the same dynamic of reflection and analysis is currently being developed with professionals in different educational institutions.

Finally, we should like to thank the professionals who are moving towards more favourable attitudes, towards the integration and development of the mentally disabled, and who are also enabling change and eliminating prejudices towards the occupational profile of the mentally disabled – prejudices which many of us display, before and during the implementation of programmes designed to improve the quality of life of persons living with disabilities. ■

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# Launching a Syrian apprenticeship scheme: paving the way for change

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## SUMMARY

This article charts the progress of a project to introduce an apprenticeship scheme providing school and company-based training for the first time in Syria. It traces the successes and failures of the project.

Syria is new territory for this kind of initiative. The article outlines some of the difficulties of working in a highly centralised environment where government, schools and industry have little experience of working together. It describes how special attention was paid to building bridges between the different participants at all levels and how this paid off. It also shows how this modest pilot project is preparing the ground for a much more ambitious overhaul of the Syrian vocational training system.

## Introduction

The Syrian Arab Republic has been engaged in tentative economic reform for several years now. The aim is to move away from a centrally planned economy to a more market-orientated approach. Syrian moves in this direction are clearly a response to international trends such as globalisation and increasing economic integration. However, the country is also driven by the need to find solutions to domestic problems such as high youth unemployment and low productivity.

It is within this context that the country's vocational training or VET system is coming in for more scrutiny. Improving VET to produce suitably qualified graduates is seen as a fundamental tool for fighting unemployment and improving the performance of industry. The European Training Foundation (ETF) has been working in Syria for the last three years. Since January 2001, its project to introduce the concept of apprenticeship schemes to Syrian vocational training has been quietly spreading its own particular brand of innovation. The scheme is pioneering in several ways which will be discussed in greater detail later on in this article.

## Key words

Training, apprenticeship, Syria, social dialogue, pilot

## Tables and figures:

*Two tables provide an overview of the numbers of participating companies and new apprentices in the section on conclusions. Brief interviews with key Syrians who are taking part in the apprenticeship scheme are included at the end of this article.*

This article provides some brief information on Syria's labour market, VET system and general business environment before turning to the apprenticeship scheme itself. It aims to trace the development of this project, charting its successes and failings and the reasons why. It also attempts to explain how the Syrians themselves see the progress of this scheme. In the absence of a formal evaluation of the project, the article describes the main outcomes produced so far.

The article is based on first-hand interviews with a range of stakeholders in the project and information supplied by the ETF.

## The Syrian economy and labour market

The Syrian economy has several features in common with those of neighbouring countries such as Jordan and Lebanon. All three countries have high birth rates, giving rise to a relatively young population <sup>(1)</sup>. In all three countries, many people are employed in the informal sector of the economy and unemployment rates are high <sup>(2)</sup>. All three are in transition from a traditional economy based on local consumption to a more globalised one. As a result, the labour market is experiencing conflict between traditional sectors and ways of doing things and modern sectors which have very different qualification needs. However, there are notable differences between the Syrian labour market and economy and those of the other two countries.

Many of the best-qualified people in all three countries emigrate for economic reasons and many of these are employed in higher-paid jobs in the wealthier states of the Gulf. But Lebanon and Jordan themselves also play home to substantial groups of foreign workers, who tend to do much of the low-paid, low skilled work. Syria is a net contributor to this exodus – especially in the case of Lebanon – as it is estimated that more than half a million Syrians are currently working in Lebanon, many of these employed in construction or agriculture.

While Lebanon has a markedly liberal economy with a large role for the private sector, Syria has stayed true to the school of centralised state planning which other countries in the region, such as Egypt, started moving away from 20 years ago.

Since the 1990s Syria has taken steps towards liberalising its economy and, since the 1991 Law No. 10 on investment, the private sector has grown fast. Nevertheless, the Syrian state is still a dominant force in the economy and state-owned enterprises remain in charge of important sectors such as the production of cement, cotton yarn <sup>(3)</sup> or mineral water.

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(1) In 2001, the annual population growth rates were as follows; Syria 2.5 %, Jordan 2.8 %, Lebanon 1.3 % (source: Statistics in Focus, Eurostat).

(2) According to Eurostat, in 2001 unemployment rates were as follows; Jordan 29.7 %, Syria 10.3 %, no figure was available for Lebanon, (source: Euro-Mediterranean Statistics, Eurostat). Journalistic sources such as The Syria Report or Syria Today put Syria's unemployment figure as considerably higher at around 16 %.

It is not easy to find accurate, up-to-date information on Syria's labour market; the tradition of central planning means standards of information-gathering are often poor. The existence of a large informal economy, estimated to account for around 40 % of workers, and the fact that many low-paid public sector workers have a second job, also tend to confuse the issue.

Several characteristics do stand out, however. Syria's high population growth rate - 2.7 % per year from 1995 until 2000 - means that young people tend to dominate the workforce. In 2001, people under 25 made up over 36 % of workers. Young people are also far more likely to be unemployed; in 2001 10.3 % of the workforce was unemployed, but 89 % of these were new entrants to the job market. Even by the standards of the Middle East, the participation of women in the Syrian economy is low. In 2001, only 21.3 % of women over 15 worked outside the home compared to 83.3 % of men. Job prospects for women are limited; over half of those employed worked for no pay in family businesses, while very few women either employed other people or were themselves self employed. Finally, the public sector is a major employer of men and women, accounting for 26 % of jobs in 2001. In recent years, jobs in the informal sector have been growing at the expense of those in the formal private sector. By 2001, the percentage of people working informally had reached a total of 39 % compared to 33.8 % in 1995.

ETF experts have identified various problems which prevent the Syrian labour market from fulfilling its potential. Private employers tend to use informal contacts to find and hire workers, while the placement work carried out by government employment offices is extremely limited. There are few effective mechanisms for matching job seekers with the jobs available and no services providing advice or guidance to job seekers. Trade unions and employers' associations are not especially well developed in Syria and so cannot play much of a role in training and research or lobbying the government to invest in these areas.

## The Syrian VET system

Syria's VET system has evolved little in recent years. It consists of two phases; secondary and post-secondary. Secondary VET takes place at secondary technical and vocational schools. Programmes, aimed at 16 to 18 year olds, last for three years. Graduates are awarded a vocational secondary certificate as skilled workers and either join the job market or carry on with their studies at post-secondary VET institutes or, in very limited numbers, at universities. Although other ministries are involved, the Ministry of Education provides around 90 % of secondary VET. Post-sec-

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<sup>(3)</sup> Syria's textile industry is a case in point. 90 % of cotton yarn is produced by the Public Establishment for Textile Industries. Private companies, who tend to concentrate on fabric and garment-making, are obliged to buy the yarn at prices set by the government.

ondary VET is provided at technical intermediate institutes and lasts two years. Entry requirements include a general or vocational secondary-school certificate. Graduates are awarded the qualification of high-grade technician. They can then either join the labour market or, in very limited numbers, go to university. There are 16 ministries involved in the provision of post-secondary VET, although most technical intermediate institutes are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education (around 35 % and 20 % respectively). The latter is responsible for formulating policy for post-secondary VET.

The system is mainly school-based, with little direct input from the world of work. This means it is unresponsive to labour market needs and the training it provides often has little relevance to the labour market. The government's central management of the system gives individual schools little freedom to adapt curricula or teaching material to local conditions. There is not much capacity for predicting needs for new skills and occupations and almost no provision for retraining people once they have left formal education.

The combination of a supply-led VET system, which is unable to adapt to changes in the economy, and a labour market which has no mechanisms for matching supply and demand for labour, is one reason behind the high levels of unemployment seen in Syria today.

Syrian society tends to regard VET as the poor relation of the education system. Middle-class Syrian parents would far rather their children became doctors or engineers than technicians, even though job prospects for the latter can often be better. At the other end of the social scale is a large group of people with little or no qualifications; overall literacy rates for women, for example, stand at a mere 56 %. This makes it hard for industry to find the skilled workers it needs. 'The problem we have here in industry in Syria is that there are only unskilled workers and management,' says Muhammad Ali, production manager at Habitex clothing company in Damascus, 'between them there is a big gap; we have very few skilled workers or people to act as middle-management.'

Syria's thriving textile industry is a case in point. One thousand companies, mostly based in Aleppo or Damascus, currently employ around 300 000 people. The sector is probably the most competitive and export-orientated sector of Syrian industry; Habitex for instance exports 90 % of its T-shirts to Europe. It also requires a lot of labour as there are limits to how far one can automate the process of making ready-to-wear clothes.

'The major problem with this very labour-intensive industry is precisely the labour,' says Anas Abou Jieb, an expert in garment technology at the Damascus Chamber of Industry (DCI). The workers, typically women, usually come from rural areas near the big cities and tend to have little formal education. Companies are obliged to meet the high standards of quality required for export, but the workforce has low productivity and finds it hard to grasp complex procedures such as those required for ISO certification. It is also hard to find supervisors, so many companies have set

up their own training departments and strive to bring people up through the ranks.

## Globalisation and the Syrian business environment

In common with other countries in the region, Syria wishes to revitalise its economy and become more involved in international trade. The government has been negotiating an association agreement with the European Union for several years now. This is part of a wider free trade agreement which aims to reduce tariff barriers and promote greater economic integration between the European Union and nine <sup>(4)</sup> countries of the Middle East and North Africa by 2010. While the EU-Syria negotiations have been lengthy and often held up by political issues, it is hoped the agreement will be signed soon.

Syria has already made moves towards boosting trade with other Arab countries by signing free trade agreements such as the one with Jordan in October 2001. However while regional trade barriers have come down, significant volumes of inter-Arab trade remain elusive. For Syrian manufacturers, opening up to trade with the EU could mark the definitive transition from a relatively protected environment to a much more competitive one. But if the trade barriers come down without sufficient preparation, the effect on Syrian industry could be traumatic. Once again the Syrian government has taken some steps towards domestic economic reform since the 1990s but change has been limited, and the fact remains that, today, Syria is not an easy place in which to run a business <sup>(5)</sup>.

The problems business people in Syria face include excessive bureaucracy, restrictions on international trade, heavy-handed government intervention in the labour market and a weak financial sector. It takes more than a year to set up a business in Syria, according to a recent report by the Syrian-European Business Centre, and investors must complete all the formalities in person. Duties are payable on a wide range of imports and customs clearance can be slow. The large public sector and high levels of labour protection make for a rigid labour market. Even in the private sector, the government often intervenes in setting wages, imposing across the board increases which are not linked to any increase in productivity. Finally, the Syrian banking system is old-fashioned and inefficient, making it hard to raise capital. This sector could soon improve, however, as the gov-

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<sup>(4)</sup> These are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authorities, Syria and Tunisia.

<sup>(5)</sup> The Global Business Environment Ranking, which covers 60 countries and uses a range of indicators to evaluate the business environment, gives Syria a very poor rating, according to the Investor Roadmap for Syria (Syrian-European Business Centre).

ernment recently authorised three privately-owned, foreign banks to begin operations in Syria.

One area where there has been discernible progress is taxation. The formerly punitive tax regime, which included a rate of tax on profits of up to 63 %, has been reformed by Law no. 24 which came into force in 2003. This law has reduced tax on profits to 37 %, while companies issuing their stock to the public can benefit from the lowest rate of 20 %. In terms of corporate taxation, companies in Syria now bear a comparable tax burden to their counterparts in Turkey (30 %), Jordan (25-35 %) and Egypt (35 %) <sup>(6)</sup>.

## The apprenticeship scheme

The aim of the apprenticeship scheme is to show how relevant, practical content can be introduced to Syrian VET and, at the same time, establish the practice of social dialogue. The idea was born back in February 2000 during a workshop organised in Damascus by the ETF. Hatem Al-Homsi, then deputy education minister, was aware the country's VET system was not producing the right kind of graduates and asked the ETF to help change this state of affairs. He persuaded a group of Syrian industrialists to get involved and a pilot scheme began to take shape.

The ETF came on board officially a year later in January 2001, bringing its expertise on how to reform VET systems and a contribution of EUR 600 000 for a three-year programme. At the outset the ETF set itself two aims. The first was to make the Syrian VET system more responsive to the needs of the labour market by involving employers in designing and operating vocational training. The second aim was to give people the know-how to run a sound pilot scheme involving several hundred apprentices within three years.

The project grew from fragile beginnings and, for some, it was not clear exactly how it would work. Karl-Axel Skjolstrup began helping out as an ETF expert on VET reform policy in 2001. 'At grass roots level I came across a handful of industrialists who wanted to do big things but who were not sure whether they had the political influence to do them,' he says.

The Syrians had some previous experience of the German dual system whereby trainees divide their week between the training centre and a placement in industry. A pilot dual scheme involving one VET institute in Damascus had been underway until the early 1990s. Bearing this precedent in mind, the ETF helped the Syrians design a pilot programme of school and company-based training adapted to the Syrian context. It was decided to concentrate initially on Damascus and to work with just four trades; making ready-to-wear clothes, and the engineering trades of automation, mould-making and mechanical handling.

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<sup>(6)</sup> According to Emerging Syria 2005, Oxford Business Group.

In September 2001, the operational phase of the project kicked off with 82 apprentices beginning their training at three training centres in Damascus – Adnan Merdan College, Dommer College and the Third Intermediate Institute – and one of 19 public and private sector companies. Students spent four days a week at their training centres and two days at companies; they retained their official status as scholars. By 2003/04 the number of companies had risen to 34, while the number of apprentices remained stable at 83 per year. During 2003, the scheme was extended to Aleppo, where training in two trades was undertaken by 110 apprentices at Al-Assidi College and 14 companies.

The project consists of three components; curriculum development, teacher training and a policy or framework component. A common thread to all three is the importance of building bridges between the different actors. Syria is a country where the state plays a very prominent role in both education and the economy and there is no tradition of dialogue between government and the private sector. The ETF believed that promoting that dialogue and getting employers actively involved in both designing and delivering training was the fastest way of improving VET in Syria.

Thus at the top of the tree, overall responsibility for the scheme lies with a steering committee comprising Ministry of Education officials and representatives from industry. Below this, an apprenticeship unit was set up at Damascus Chamber of Industry to carry out the day-to-day running of the project. IT and teacher training was given to mixed groups of teachers, technicians and supervisors from industry. Curriculum development has also been carried out by mixed groups. 'What the project has done is to bring together national planners and the operational experience of teachers, people in industry and heads of colleges in Damascus and Aleppo,' says Noel Dempsey, ETF expert on curriculum development, 'in Europe, you might not think this is much, but here this has been a major departure.'

For this to happen, a new degree of trust had to be built up between government officials and industrialists, two very different groups of people who were not used to working together. 'In Syria there is a big divide between the public and the private,' says Eva Jimeno-Sicilia, Head of the Department for the Mediterranean region at the ETF, 'so there was a certain amount of distrust between the government and the private sector.' Both parties had to be prepared to give up portions of power and take on new roles. The government, which was used to taking all the decisions on VET, had to accept that industrialists should have a say not just in designing courses, but also in allocating resources. Industrialists had to take on board the fact that training is also their responsibility and learn how to identify their needs. Some of the most heated discussions at the monthly meetings of the steering committee were about who was responsible for what and whether people were fulfilling their roles properly.

## Curriculum development

In May 2001 four curriculum committees were established and began the task of producing new curricula for each of the trades. These used a modular design and included training plans for industry placements. A core group of teachers helped to flesh out the new curricula by producing modular lesson plans and tests. During 2001, key personnel were selected and trained, including industrial training officers whose main job is to act as liaison between industry, schools and apprentices. During the visits to companies they also collect first-hand information which is being used to set up a basic national database on the project. A new post of curriculum officer in schools was approved, although making the post work properly proved difficult. Also in 2001, an informal curriculum innovation unit was set up to capitalise on the expertise gained and provide input to the apprenticeship scheme.

The curricula, drawn up by a mixed group of people from schools and industry, including many engineers, were competence-based. However delays in equipping workshops at the VET schools, the time needed for teachers to become fully competent with new equipment and reticence on the part of Ministry of Education officials mean that, in terms of delivery, the scheme is still moving towards being fully competence-based. 'The barriers were the evolution from the old system to the new and the time needed for commissioning the equipment,' says Dempsey.

ETF experts were impressed by the enthusiastic way the Syrians involved at ground level responded to the demands of the project. For instance, people from industry and schools worked very well together on drafting a system of tests. However, as time went on, the project came up against a number of problems. Operational staff complained of a lack of clear organisational structures and adequate management support. For instance the curriculum innovation unit functioned as a voluntary, informal organisation from 2001 until 2003. In October 2002, the participants called on the project's steering committee to set up a more formal structure but this was not forthcoming.

Progress was also held back by a lack of resources. Although a national apprenticeship unit was formally established in June 2003, this was consistently understaffed due to the Ministry of Education's reluctance to commit full-time staff to complement those ceded by the Damascus Chamber of Industry. Ministry staff were only seconded on demand and tended to give apprenticeship duties a low priority compared to their 'normal' duties. Moreover the Chamber of Industry did not recruit enough industrial experts to help run the scheme. As a result, the existing staff were overstretched and the project became behind schedule in areas such as basic statistics and the national curriculum test bank. Resources such as transport or internet connections were very slow in coming.

The issue of financial compensation for effort invested in the scheme

was also crucial. Teachers in Syria are not well-paid and most take a second job to supplement their incomes. While this means a member of the teaching staff will sometimes have hands-on industrial experience, it also means people have little time to spare for non-essential duties. Teachers and school directors participating in the scheme were not compensated in any way for the extra hours they put into attending meetings, training and doing curriculum design. This meant some people's commitment and availability diminished over time. In general, the slow wastage of local experts, both from industry and schools, was a continuing problem.

## Teacher training

Five training programmes for trainers were organised in Damascus or Aleppo between June 2001 and December 2003. A total of 123 teachers and instructors from industry attended. The programme covered areas such as course design, industrial analysis, adult learning, project work, testing techniques and presentation skills. Trainers were introduced to new methods and materials such as the use of visual aids, lesson plans and modules.

Most teachers responded well to the experience. 'Using the old way of teaching, I would just deliver the information to the students. Now I start a discussion with them to see if they have really understood what I am saying or not,' says Ghoufran Bayazid, who teaches automation at Damascus' Third Intermediate Institute. Care was taken on these courses to ensure an equal mix of people from schools and industry so as to break down barriers and enable networking. 'These workshops are a very good way of setting up a dialogue between teachers and industry in an informal way,' say Ahmed Oyouun, industrial training advisor for the project.

For the sake of sustainability, Syrian mentors in Damascus and Aleppo were encouraged to become trainers of trainers themselves and conducted several courses under ETF supervision. Support was provided on a cascade basis. 'Of course we gave them a lot of support on the second course they gave, but by the third course, our input was down to 10 % or 20 %,' says Atef Abdel Malak, an ETF teacher training expert. Other courses allowed some teachers to brush up on information technology and engineering skills. Others gained valuable practical experience by doing a placement in industry themselves.

Training centres have benefited from refurbishment as a result of the project. The Syrian government has spent around EUR 700 000 on new school equipment. Here the close links established between schools and industry by joint training courses really paid off. A mock production line set up at Adnan Merdan Garment College in Damascus in 2002 was planned and installed with considerable input from a local textile company, Al-Hamaly. A similar one has since been installed at Al-Assidi College in Aleppo.

## Framework

In this part of the project, a lot of time and energy was devoted to helping the participants clarify their roles and responsibilities in the scheme. Handbooks were written for all the major actors in the scheme such as apprentices, company supervisors and members of school boards. Basic management courses were held for key people covering areas such as time management and office IT. In 2002, it was decided to set up school boards with three members each from government and private companies. The boards aim to give extra management support for the apprenticeship schools and provide another channel for company involvement. Following a training course in November 2003, the boards held their first meetings in late 2003. As they are a new phenomenon in Syrian education, there are still many uncertainties about how they will work within the current legal framework. For instance, setting up the boards aims to give schools greater autonomy, but they cannot decide how to spend their budgets as all financial decisions are still taken centrally.

One major achievement was producing a policy paper to pave the way for introducing a national apprenticeship scheme in the future. It is hoped this Green Paper will become law within one or two years. The basic structures will comprise an apprenticeship fund with joint private/public funding, a secretariat to administer the scheme and a qualification/curriculum development organisation in charge of training plans and courseware. While answerable to the ministry, the apprenticeship organisation will be independent of the existing education system and will enjoy a high degree of autonomy.

Drafting the policy paper has also launched the debate on how to pay for a nationwide scheme. The idea is to share the financial burden, with the government funding 100 % of costs at the outset, but with the proportion shifting to a 50/50 split in a few years' time. For Karl-Axel Skjolstrup, ETF expert on framework conditions, these moves bode well for the future sustainability of the scheme. 'All this goes to show that the Syrians have taken ownership of the project and have accepted the idea of a management structure independent of government,' he says, 'they are moving towards the idea of public/private partnership.'

## Aleppo comes on board

One of the biggest successes of the project is the ease with which it has been introduced in Syria's second city, Aleppo, which was not in the original plans. A joint delegation of industrialists and local government representatives took the initiative and persuaded the scheme managers to let them try out the scheme in their city. In April 2003, work began on two trades, mechanical handling and garment-making, using curricula already

developed in Damascus. By July, Al-Assidi College had been converted into a dedicated institute of technology and staff appointed. An apprenticeship office was set up at Aleppo Chamber of Industry (ACI). In September 2003, 110 apprentices began training at Al-Assidi and one of 14 participating companies.

As the decision to begin in Aleppo came towards the end of ETF official involvement, an extension was granted to allow further training and support to be provided during 2004. During 2003, with modest support and very little time to make things ready, the Aleppo team achieved an impressive amount. An extremely close working relationship was established between government and industry, even though this kind of initiative was new to both. Antun Al-Jouni, director of the Aleppo apprenticeship unit, puts this down to local industrialists' appreciation of the importance of well-trained workers. 'People at ACI agree that this is the only way to go about upgrading Aleppo's industry,' he says, 'you can always buy in machinery, but you cannot buy in good workers.'

## The future

Representatives from Syria's third city Homs have participated in training activities during 2004 and are preparing to begin training their first batch of apprentices in September 2005. Discussions are also underway on how to launch the scheme in Latakia. In Aleppo, the social partners have set some specific goals for introducing new trades and expanding student numbers. From September 2005, the Aleppo scheme will include the trade of foundry and the possibility of extending this to the tourism sector is currently under discussion. The social partners are also aiming to boost the number of apprentices from the current level of 4.5 % of VET students in Aleppo to at least 10 % by the year 2010.

Further good news for the project as a whole is the European Commission's decision to commit EUR 21 million funding to a much more ambitious programme aimed at overhauling the entire Syrian VET system. This Meda project, known as 'Modernisation of the VET system in Syria', started in September 2004, is scheduled to last for four years and will pay special attention to fostering the links between vocational training and the labour market. The apprenticeship scheme will continue as part of this broader initiative, and three of the apprenticeship schools – two in Damascus and one in Aleppo – have been selected to be part of a group of 16 schools scheduled for substantial upgrading.

The ETF is currently providing support to the European Commission in the financing and launching phase of this new project. The ETF's continuing involvement in the apprenticeship scheme in Aleppo is seen as a way of keeping the momentum going for reform and paving the way for the MEDA project.

## Conclusions

The apprenticeship scheme scored some notable successes over the past three years, but it has also come up against problems. The whole issue of management was one of the biggest headaches. There was often a contradiction between the spirit of the scheme, which emphasised decentralisation and creating public-private partnerships, and the centralised way the scheme was managed by the ministry. Existing conditions of work, particularly in the Ministry of Education, were not really conducive to smooth implementation of the project. The project's steering committee lacked direction and failed to focus sufficiently on the problems of day-to-day management and implementation. Staff with little experience of apprenticeship issues were put to work on the scheme. These management deficits, coupled with the lack of resources, meant that the apprenticeship unit was often not as effective as it could have been.

Syrian inexperience of this kind of project plus a certain resistance to change meant achieving results often took longer than expected. 'We are not just operating a dual system, we are changing the attitudes of people at the Damascus Chamber of Industry, the ministry, in the schools and even the students,' says Haytham Al-Yafi, an industrialist and member of the steering committee, 'but you have to understand that these are the habits of 30-40 years and suddenly you are trying to change them in just three years.'

The question of resources was a constant issue. All too often too few people were being asked to do too many things, which meant parts of the project were held up or only half completed. People in schools and companies were not given any financial compensation for all the extra hours they put in. Also, in a large, sprawling city such as Damascus, there was rarely enough transport provided to allow heads of schools or industrial training officers to carry out their duties efficiently. In such a climate, there was little incentive for staff to take on new responsibilities and the risk of people getting demoralised was great.

On the plus side (7), a large volume of work was done and a lot of organisations and individuals have benefited in the process. The number of participants in terms of companies and apprentices is shown below.

Curricula have been revamped in the four pilot sectors and procedures established to align them with modern learning concepts. Handbooks have been written providing guidance to all the main players in the scheme. A pilot system of testing and certification has been designed and a test run was carried out in January 2004. However, full implementation has not yet been achieved due to a lack of commitment from the Ministry of Education.

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(7) An external evaluation of all ETF projects in Syria is due to be carried out in 2005. In the absence of an official evaluation, any verdict on the success or failure of the apprenticeship scheme can only be based on informal feedback from stakeholders and ETF experts and tangible outcomes.

Table 1.

**DAMASCUS**

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
<b>No of participating companies (*)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>
Mould making	10	8	6	7
Automatic control	6	8	13	5
Mechanical handling	4	6	11	7
Ready to wear clothes	5	8	8	7
<b>No of new apprentices</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>83</b>
Mould making	17	16	13	11
Automatic control	12	18	40	17
Mechanical handling	11	18	35	16
Ready to wear clothes	42	32	62	39

(\*) The total number of companies does not correspond to the breakdown per trade as some companies participate in more than one trade and not all of them took on new apprentices in a given year, i.e. 2003/04.

Table 2.

**ALEPPO**

	2003/04
<b>No of participating companies</b>	<b>14</b>
Mechanical handling	7
Ready to wear clothes	7
<b>No of new apprentices</b>	<b>110</b>
Mechanical handling	52
Ready to wear clothes	68

Teachers, company supervisors, civil servants and school board members have benefited from training in areas such as information technology and management as well as teaching skills. A total of 123 people, including teachers, trainers and supervisors attended five training courses for trainers between June 2001 and December 2003. More courses, mainly in Aleppo, were carried out in 2004. Five Syrian mentors were trained to become trainers of trainers and conducted several courses. A total of 26 teachers and industrial trainers completed courses on information technology, while 53 people completed one of three courses on engineering subjects such as fluids technology.

The framework component of the project led to the establishment of a clear management structure which it is hoped will provide a solid basis for the future. While much remains to be done, a total of eight management training courses were held and the capacity for both management and co-operation among all the stakeholder groups increased accordingly.

On a wider scale, the ETF and its Syrian partners have shown that it is possible to set up and run a pilot apprenticeship scheme involving companies and schools in just three years. Moreover, a blueprint for launching a nationwide scheme has been produced and the debate about how to pay for this has been launched. Finally, the project has been used by the EU

as a way of testing the readiness of the Syrian VET system for further systemic change. The fact that the EU has committed itself to supporting much broader reforms in Syria is partly due to the success of the apprenticeship scheme.

Thus, with all its shortcomings and imperfections, this modest pilot scheme is making a difference to the bigger picture. Perhaps its most significant contribution is launching the whole process of social dialogue between government and employers. The project has managed to build bridges at all levels: between teachers and company supervisors, school directors and industrialists, between the Ministry and the Chamber of Industry. This dialogue has only just begun and has yet to produce the necessary change in the culture of management. However, the commitment shown to the apprenticeship scheme by both government and industry beyond the end of ETF support means this process of change will continue. For industrialist Haytham Al-Yafi, it is still early days, but he is certain that the change will come. 'The biggest success is acceptance by the government that the private sector is an important social partner and can improve the output of a project such as this,' he says. 'What the ETF has done for us is to initiate that major shift in opinion about public-private partnership.'

## Teachers

### Teachers gain industrial experience

Mazen Kiddo heads the Dommer Centre of Technology, a new VET school on the outskirts of Damascus. With 12 years' experience as a teacher of technical subjects, until recently he combined his work in education with a second job in industry. For Kiddo, a big advantage of the apprenticeship scheme is that it allows both teachers and trainees to gain practical experience. 'Teachers need real industrial experience,' he says, 'at the moment, an engineer may teach grinding but will not have hands-on practical experience.'

Lila Al-Jabr teaches at Adnan Merdan garment college where 50 % of teachers have attended training courses under the scheme. Like many teachers in this sector, Al-Jabr trained to teach domestic rather than industrial sewing. Changing to training for industrial production meant many of the machines and processes were unfamiliar to her. She spent a week training on the shop floor at a company that makes clothes for Adidas. 'I became familiar with the production line techniques for T-shirts and trousers and acquired a lot of skills to pass on,' she says <sup>(8)</sup>.

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<sup>(8)</sup> All interviews were carried out by the author in Damascus, Syria in December 2002.

## Apprentices

### Apprenticeship makes trainees grow up fast

Lina Tormeh, curriculum officer at the Third Intermediate Institute, sees a big difference in the students as a result of the apprenticeship scheme. 'They know how to deal with us and you see that you can depend on them much more than other students their age,' she says. 'The scheme is really good for the students, they become more self-reliant, it makes them grow up fast.' The apprentices, who are usually aged between 16 and 20, spend four days a week at VET school and two days at the company. They are paid a minimum of USD 10-14 per month and many have the chance to work full time at the company in the summer holidays. Each is assigned a supervisor who is responsible for their training and welfare in the company.

But in spite of the best efforts of all concerned, going into a company for the first time can still be a shock to the system for a young Syrian. 'My first day at the company, I was afraid. The workers thought that we were kids playing truant from school,' says Ahmed Yasser, a second-year apprentice in garment-making, 'But after we had broken the ice, it became very easy to get on with them and to learn from them.' Hala Ali, also learning garment-making, agrees. 'At home we are spoilt, we don't have to do anything so at first it was a big change to have to work, but we got used to it quickly,' she says.

## Training Officers

### A sharp learning curve for all

Kawkab Al-About, together with head of human resources Mustafa Kazzaha, is one of the mainstays of the apprenticeship scheme. She came to the scheme in 2000 after 10 years' experience on the shop floor producing clothes for Adidas. As industrial training officer for the scheme at the Damascus Chamber of Industry, she turns her hand to many different jobs. 'At the outset, I spent one year at the garment college giving practical input to teachers on the industry. I designed courses for the teachers on how to use the machines and how to give practical information to the apprentices. I also took the teachers to visit the companies to see how the work is really done,' she says. She has also designed a two-week course and curricula for all the different trades, and produced the apprentices' logbook for the garment-making trade in just two months. 'We wrote the logbook in both Arabic and English,' she says. 'It helps the student learn some English and I must admit I have learnt some myself in the process.'

One of the defining characteristics of the scheme is that all involved are on a sharp learning curve, not just the apprentices. Al-About is pleased to have acquired new skills and contacts through her job; 'Now I have a lot of

information on the industry. I worked in one company for 10 years, now I regularly visit 10 different companies. I have seen a lot of different systems and machines,' she says. The only drawback is that there is often just too much to do even though Al-Aboud often puts in a 12 to 14-hour day. 'I have met lots of people through this job; I talk to the workers, the supervisors, the bosses and the students. I am very happy but also very tired,' she says.

## Company Supervisors

### **Company keen on graduates of the scheme**

Muhammad Ali, production manager at Habitex clothing company, believes that in future the apprenticeship scheme will make his life much easier. His company, which exports 90 % of production to Europe and North America, suffers from a shortage of skilled workers. 'Our employees are usually from the villages, they are not highly educated so it is difficult to make them understand complex regulations such as those for ISO 1400,' he says. He currently has 15 trainees at his company and notices the difference between them and his workers. 'The students listen to me more and show more interest than my workers because they really want to learn,' he says. Ali aims to employ several apprentices once they have finished their training and hopes the apprenticeship scheme will expand. 'If it expands, then I can put as a condition for all new workers that they be graduates from this scheme,' he says. ■

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# Reading

Section prepared by Anne Waniart of the Documentation Service with the help of the European network of reference and expertise (ReferNet)

## Europe International: information, comparative studies

### **Adult learning in the digital age: information technology and the learning society / Neil Selwyn, Stephen Gorard, John Furlong**

London: Routledge, 2006, 224 p.  
ISBN 0415356997

Technology-assisted learning is viewed globally as a crucial factor in establishing a skilled workforce and empowering citizens, as it offers opportunities to those who would be otherwise excluded. Governments around the world have therefore set targets and developed policies to help all adults learn, work and live with the support of information and communications technologies (ICTs). This illuminating and engaging book sheds light on the ways in which adults in the 21st century interact with ICTs for learning at home, work and within the wider community. Based on one of the first large-scale academic research projects in this area, the authors present their rich and detailed findings to generate practical recommendations for the use of new technology in a learning society, inviting debate on why ICTs are believed to be capable of affecting positive change in adult learning; the drawbacks and limits of ICT in adult education; what makes a life-long learner; what people use ICT for in the home, work and community; the wider social, economic, cultural and political realities of the information age and the learning society. Adult learning addresses key questions and provides a sound empirical foundation to the existing debate, highlighting the messy realities of the learning society vs. e-learning rhetoric, telling the story of those who are excluded from the learning society, and offering a set of powerful and stark recommendations for practitioners, policy-makers, and politicians, as well as researchers and students.

### **A common European framework for teachers' professional profile in ICT for education / edited by Vittorio Midoro.**

Ortona: Edizioni Menabo, 2005. - 159 p.  
ISBN 88-86396-98-8

This book is an outcome of the uTeacher project, carried out in the context of the eLearning Initiative during the period December 2003-June 2005.

uTeacher aims to understand and define the professional profile of a teacher facing the challenges that the knowledge society and ICT pose to schools. This profile is captured in a 'Common European Framework for Teachers' Professional Profile in ICT for Education' (CEF), the subject of this book. The CEF can be seen as a means for the exchange and transfer of experience in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) across Europe. The book is the result of a cooperative effort carried out by the uTeacher partnership working in tandem with the network of European experts that was established in uTeacher. <http://ulearn.itd.ge.cnr.it/uteacher/docs/book2final.pdf>

**Competing for global talent / Christiane Kuptsch and Pang Eng Fong, eds.  
International Institute for Labour Studies – ILS.**

Geneva: ILO, 2006, 286 p.  
ISBN 92-9014-776-8

Global talent has never been more mobile or sought after. A complex phenomenon that takes many forms, the movement of people with skills includes migrants crossing borders for temporary stays abroad as well as for permanent settlement and students moving in order to study for degrees abroad or to find opportunities to use their skills. Countries attracting global talent increase their stock of human and technological skills; in the past decade many have welcomed foreign growth. This book includes general and theoretical papers on skilled migration and on the experiences of Australia, India, Japan, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It addresses the socio-economic and cultural challenges triggered by increased mobility, in a world where globalising and localising forces are at work simultaneously.

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inst/download/competing.pdf>

**E-learning in tertiary education: where we stand.**

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD  
Centre for Educational Research and Innovation - CER  
Paris: OECD, 2005. - 289 p.

Following the burst of the dot-com bubble in 2000, skepticism about e-learning replaced over-enthusiasm. Rhetoric aside, where do we stand? Why and how do different kinds of tertiary education institutions engage in e-learning? What do institutions perceive to be the pedagogic impact of e-learning in its different forms? How do institutions understand the costs of e-learning? How might e-learning impact staffing and staff development? This book addresses these and many other questions. The study is based on a qualitative survey of practices and strategies carried out by the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) at 19 tertiary ed-

education institutions from 11 OECD member countries – Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States – and 2 non-member countries – Brazil and Thailand. This qualitative survey is complemented by the findings of a quantitative survey of e-learning in tertiary education carried out in 2004 by the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) in some Commonwealth countries.

**Human resource development in the public sector: the case of health and social care / by James Stewart and Sally Sambrook.**

London: Routledge, 2006, 288 p.

Routledge Studies in Human Resource Development

ISBN 0-415-39410-4

Across Europe and the world, countries are attempting to develop their health and social policies and practices to address the global challenge of increasing demand and pressurised supply, created by ageing populations, emerging technologies and finite resources (financial and human). This text provides examples of attempts to develop HRD practices in health and social care contexts within France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Romania, Russia, the UK and the USA. Thus, the book is European and international in both scope and appeal.

**Labour supply and incentives to work in Europe / edited by Ramón Gómez-Salvado.**

Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2005. - 424 p.

ISBN 1 84542 129 9

This publication highlights recent developments in the labour supply in Europe and gives a detailed assessment of their link with economic policies and labour market institutions. Despite major changes in European labour supply during the past few decades, the literature still lacks a comprehensive study of the relationship between labour supply and labour market institutions from a macro perspective. The contributors, themselves from a variety of academic disciplines and backgrounds, consider aspects of labour supply such as incentives to work, determinants of labour force participation and new forms of employment relationships. Each original and specially written chapter has its own discussion chapter to follow it. The book ends with a valuable panel discussion on the topic of labour supply in an enlarged Europe. Contents: Introduction Part I: Incentives to work 1. A matching model of non-employment and wage pressure 2. Tax effects on work activity, industry mix and shadow economy size: evidence from rich country comparisons. Part II: Factors affecting labour force participation 3. Mothers; changing labour supply in Britain, the USA and Sweden

4. Women's hours of market work in Germany – the role of parental leave  
5. The determinants of labour force participation in the European Union  
6. Hiring incentives and labour force participation in Italy. Part III: New forms of employment relationships  
7. Recent developments in part-time work in EU Member States: trends and policy  
8. Matching workers to jobs in the fast lane: The operation of fixed-term contracts.

**Learning while working in small companies: comparative analysis of experiences drawn from England, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain / editor Alan Brown.**

Warwick: SKOPE, 2005. - 156 p.

*SKOPE, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7A, Tel. (44-2476) 524694, Fax (44-2457) 572855, E-mail: skopeac@wbs.warwick.ac.uk*

The first part of this report examines the findings from each of the six countries on issues concerned with learning, working and SME development. The second part outlines the technical findings associated directly with the Interdisciplinary, sequential-specificity, time-allocation, life-span (ISSTAL) model, and shows that, with some adaptations, the model may serve as a theoretical frame to study and analyse relationships between individual and organisational characteristics and participation of technical workers in training. The third part examines findings from the research on participation in continuing vocational education, training and learning with a view to considering the implications for policy, practice and research.

**Longitudinal studies for education report: European and North American examples / Cornelia Kristen [et al.].**

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF  
Berlin: BMBF, 2005. - 92 p.  
(Educational reform ; 10)

The report presents a systematic overview of selected longitudinal studies on the course of education in various European countries and North America, some of which have been going on for decades. The studies encompass important stages in the educational biographies of children, youths and young adults. The authors show how longitudinal studies can be used for the purposes of reporting on national education. Conclusions are drawn for the establishment of a longitudinal study on education in Germany.  
[www.bmbf.de/pub/bildungsreform\\_band\\_10\\_eng.pdf](http://www.bmbf.de/pub/bildungsreform_band_10_eng.pdf)

**Policy instruments to foster training of the employed: final report lifelong learning.**

Zoetermeer: EIM Business and Policy Research, 2005. - 133 p.

Chapter 2 of this report, 'Participation in training in various countries', and Chapter 3, 'Impact of training of the employed', focus on answering the first three research questions. What does EU comparative data tell us about investment in employer-provided training? What can we learn from comparing EU data on investment in employer training with comparable information from other OECD countries? What is known about the impact of employer-provided training on enterprise performance and on employee career development? Chapter 4 'Measures to promote training of the employed' discusses the results obtained from the research questions and which main instruments and incentives can be identified that stimulate training of the employed. What relevant information can be obtained on these instruments and incentives? Chapter 5 'Determinants of success' focuses on research questions and profiles of the good practices selected are presented in Annex III. The chapter ends with some overall conclusions and policy recommendations. Which criteria can be used to identify good practices? Which good practices can be selected? How successful have these policies been in terms of generating interest (take-up)? How can we characterise good practices? To what extent do good practices differ from other practices?

**Silent revolution: the impact of the Internet on careers guidance / Leonardo Evangelista**

Casale Monferrato: Edizioni Sonda, 2005. - 119 p.  
ISBN 88-7106-429-x

Most careers guidance practitioners and their clients currently use the Internet; yet there is a lack of comprehensive information concerning the effect of the Internet on careers guidance practices and methods. The aim of the study is to look at these aspects in depth and to investigate what strategies can be adopted to improve the use of the Internet in careers guidance.

[www.orientamento.it/orientamento/rivoluzioneUK.zip](http://www.orientamento.it/orientamento/rivoluzioneUK.zip)

**Technology and the decline in demand for unskilled labour: a theoretical analysis of the US and European labour markets / Mark Sanders.**

Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2005. - 288 p.  
ISBN 1 84542 132 9

The position of low-skilled workers in the labour market has deteriorated significantly over the past three decades. What has caused this deteriora-

tion and what can explain the different labour market responses throughout the OECD? Mark Sanders addresses these questions and evaluates proposed policies to improve upon the present situation and prevent further deterioration in the future. The author develops a theoretical framework that produces two hypotheses to explain the shift in relative demand as well as the different ways in which this shift has manifested itself. The framework is then extended by introducing unemployment, and additional hypotheses are proposed to explain the main EU–US differences. The dynamics thus uncovered yield somewhat unorthodox policy implications on income, labour market and technology policies in Europe and the US.

**Trading up: potential and performance in non-formal learning / edited by Lynne Chisholm, Bryony Hoskins with Christian Glahn.**

Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2005. - 171 p.  
ISBN 92-871-5765-0

Understanding, explicating, recognising and evaluating the quality of non-formal learning in the youth sector are questions for which researchers, policymakers and those working with young people are now trying to find answers. Developing productive relations between non-formal learning in schooling, higher, continuing and vocational education and employment is a more recent concern. The European Commission and Council of Europe Partnership Programme on Youth Research 2003-2005 held a seminar in April 2004 to debate these issues, starting with the view that learning is important wherever it takes place, in so far as it contributes towards fostering personal development, active citizenship, employability and social inclusion. This publication supports current efforts at European and national levels to improve the quality and recognition of non-formal learning not only in the youth sector, but also in other education and training contexts.

**Vocationalisation of secondary education revisited / Lauglo, Jon; Maclean, Rupert.**

Dordrecht: Springer, 2005. - 376 p.  
(Technical and Vocational Education and Training ; 1)  
ISBN 1-4020-3031-2

The book is a cutting-edge contribution to the debate which has occurred for some time on the pros and cons of secondary education becoming more closely and explicitly related to preparing young people for work. The book, which provides concrete examples of the vocationalisation of secondary education with particular reference to the situation in Africa, is part of the Springer series on “Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Issues, Concerns and Prospects” and complements the “International Hand-

book of Technical and Vocational Education and Training" and other publications in the "International Library of TVET" all of which are publications of the 'UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for TVET' in Bonn, Germany.

**Von der Schule in die Arbeitswelt: Bildungspfade im europäischen Vergleich / Jens U. Prager, Clemens Wieland (Hrsg.)**

**[From school to work: educational pathways in a European comparison.]**

Bielefeld: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2005. - 155 p.

ISBN 3-89204-868-1

Compilation presenting different educational pathways young people all over Europe are taking to transfer from school to work.

## European Union: policies, programmes, participants

**20 years of the European social dialogue: state of play and prospects / Claude Didry ed.**

Brussels: ESC, 2005. - 39 p.

It was on 31 January 1985 that the leaders of the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE), the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) met for the first time at the Val Duchesse Priory near Brussels, at the invitation of Jacques Delors, the new President of the Commission. This summit meeting was the starting point for what is nowadays referred to as the "European social dialogue". This social dialogue is not simply a form of corporatism, in which trade union experts focus exclusively on social issues. It is the expression of a 'model of society' (as emphasised by Jacques Delors), based on the principle of participatory democracy.

**Draft opinion of the Section Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on transnational mobility for education and training purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility. COM(2005) 450 final / Rapporteur Tomasz Czajkowski.**

European Economic and Social Committee - EESC

(SOC, 222)

Brussels: European Economic and Social Committee, 2006

The EESC welcomes the Commission's proposal on the European Quality Charter for Mobility and notes that since 2000 the number of individu-

als migrating for educational purposes has tripled, thanks to educational and international exchange programmes. The EESC sees these programmes as an opportunity to build a European society of tolerance open to all religions, ethnic groups and sexual orientations. The EESC firmly approves of the new generation of programmes and training proposed by the Commission in 2004.

[http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/eu/pub/esc/2006\\_0001\\_en.doc](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/eu/pub/esc/2006_0001_en.doc)

### **Fundamentals of a common quality assurance framework (CQAF) for VET in Europe / Fernanda Oliveira Reis.**

European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture

Technical Working Group Quality in VET

Brussels: European Commission, 2006, 16 p.

Analytical presentation of the major outcome of the Technical Working Group Quality in VET's work in view of implementing its mandate. The CQAF constitutes a European reference framework to ensure and develop quality in VET, building on the key principles of the most relevant existing quality assurance models. It may be considered as a cross-reading instrument that can help policymakers and practitioners get a better insight of how the existing QA models work, to identify areas of provision that need improvement, and take decisions on how to improve them based on common quantitative and qualitative references. It also allows for capturing and classifying best practice within and across Member States.

[http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/eu/pub/commission/dgeac/2006\\_0001\\_en.doc](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/eu/pub/commission/dgeac/2006_0001_en.doc)

### **Skillsnet: die Relevanz des Europäischen Netzwerks zur Früherkennung von Qualifikationsanforderungen / Manfred Tessaring, Norbert Wollschläger. [Skillsnet: the relevance of the European Network of Early Identification of Skill Needs.]**

In: Qualifikationen im Wandel: Nutzen und Perspektiven der Früherkennung, p. 129-135

Bielefeld: Bertelsmann Verlag, 2006

(Qualifikationen erkennen - Berufe gestalten, 12)

ISBN 3-7639-3419-7

This article presents the European Network of Early Identification of Skill Needs named Skillsnet. Skillsnet brings together highly qualified researchers and other stakeholders from across the world to present and discuss outcomes and methods of research and analysis of new and changing skill needs as well as the medium to longer-term prospects of skills available on the labour market. The network provides the impetus for new activities and projects in the early identification of skill needs by bringing in a

multidisciplinary cross-country perspective. The outcomes of research are actively discussed with policymakers, practitioners, training organisations, employment services, social partners and others actively working on the identification of skill needs with a view to their transfer into education and training policy and practice.

More information on the SkillsNet can be found at: [http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects\\_Networks/skillsnet/](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Projects_Networks/skillsnet/)

### **The supply and demand of e-skills in Europe / Erik Frinking (et al)**

Leiden: RAND Europe, 2005. - 104 p.

This report covers work performed between January and June 2005. It provides overviews of different approaches used when studying supply and demand of professional e-skills and of the current situation relating to the supply and demand of professional e-skills in the European Union and its Member States with the US as contrasting nation.

[http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/eu/pub/commission/dgent/2005\\_0001\\_en.pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/eu/pub/commission/dgent/2005_0001_en.pdf)

### **Working together for growth and jobs: next steps in implementing the revised Lisbon strategy: Commission staff working paper.**

Commission of the European Communities

In: SEC (2005) 622/2 of 29.04.2005

Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 2005

The European Council of March 2005 called upon the Commission, the Council and the Member States to relaunch the Lisbon strategy by refocusing on growth and employment in Europe, in accordance with the Commission's proposals. As a follow-up, the Commission recently adopted a proposal for the first integrated guidelines for growth and jobs for the period 2005-2008. These guidelines will serve as the basis for Member States to draw up their first National Reform Programmes by this autumn. This Staff Working Paper follows the announcement made in the integrated guidelines adopted by the Commission on 12 April and serves the main purpose of providing guidance to Member States in drawing up their respective national reform programmes, in particular in terms of structure and content. As a counterpart to the national reform programmes, the Commission will shortly present a Community Lisbon Programme, covering all actions to be undertaken at European level in support of the goals of growth and employment.

[http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/eu/leg/eurodoc/2005/0257\\_en.pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/eu/leg/eurodoc/2005/0257_en.pdf)

## From the Member States

**CZ European common principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning in lifelong learning: Epanil.**

National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education;  
Prague: The National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education, 2005

The project is concerned with developing processes and pathways which will improve adults' access to further education by identifying and validating their non-formal and informal learning. Target groups are adults with no qualifications or with low qualifications.  
<http://www.epanil.net> de

**DE Jahrbuch Personalentwicklung 2006: Ausbildung, Weiterbildung, Management Development / Schwuchow, Karlheinz; Gutmann, Joachim.**

[Yearbook of personnel development and continuing vocational training 2006.]

Neuwied: Luchterhand Verlag, 2006, 343 p. + CD-ROM  
ISBN 3-472-06291-6;

The yearbook is divided into the following subject areas: objective performance improvement; internationalisation and intercultural competence development, benchmarking within personnel management, personnel management in IT companies and career development.

In addition to the trend monitor for personnel development, the yearbook offers best practice concepts for personnel development and continuing training. The latest research findings and case-studies from enterprises are presented for each subject area. Additional input in the form of tips for literature and Internet links are given. The service section has been put on a CD-ROM and this contains working material and checklists for download, studies and market surveys, and a database on economic promotion in the area of initial and continuing training.

**Qualifikationen im Wandel: Nutzen und Perspektiven der Früherkennung / Hrsg.**

**Hans-Jörg Bullinger [et al.]**

[Changing qualifications: the use and perspectives of early recognition.]

Bielefeld: Bertelsmann Verlag, 2006, 156 p.

(Qualifikationen erkennen - Berufe gestalten, 12)  
ISBN 3-7639-3419-7;

This document reports on the following issues: early recognition of skill requirements; early recognition in innovative and new occupational sectors; European dimension of early recognition of skill needs. The last chapter also introduces the Cedefop network Skillsnet. With the initiative on "Early recognition of skill requirements" and the establishment of the frequency research platform, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research has been making an important contribution for many years. The technical conference "Changing qualifications: the use and perspectives of early recognition" took stock of early recognition activities to date, assessed their usefulness for the vocational training system and discussed the need for further action with representatives of politics, the economy, trade unions and science.

- EE **Eesti kutseharidussüsteemi arengukava aastateks 2005-2008.**  
**[Vocational Education Development Plan 2005-2008.]**  
Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium - HTM  
Tartu: Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2005, 48 p.  
*Elukestva õppe arendamise sihtasutus Innove, Tel. (372-6) 998080, Fax (372-6) 998081,*  
*E-mail: [katrin.ausmees@innove.ee](mailto:katrin.ausmees@innove.ee), [www.innove.ee](http://www.innove.ee)*

The purpose of the development plan is to set goals for the development of vocational education in Estonia up to 2008 and to plan necessary measures, activities, and resources. The development plan is based on positions achieved by the implementation of the Action Plan for Developing Estonian VET System in 2001-2004 (Tegevuskava kutseharidussüsteemi arendamiseks Eestis aastateks 2001-2004). For the years 2005–2008, three main strategic goals have been set for the development of vocational education: vocational education should be in compliance with the needs of the development of the Estonian economy and labour market; the level and image of vocational education should improve; and students who have completed vocational education should find their place in the labour market.

- EL **Growth and ICT: an opportunity for Greece / Viviane Reding.**  
Open Forum for Competitiveness and Growth. Athens, Greece.  
2005, December 5  
Athens: [s.n.], 2005, 15 p.

This document is the speech of Mrs Reding, member of the European Commission responsible for Information Society and Media, at the Open Forum for Competitiveness and Growth, held in Athens, Greece.

[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/commission\\_barroso/reding/docs/speeches/athens\\_20051205.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/commission_barroso/reding/docs/speeches/athens_20051205.pdf)

ES **Análisis y propuestas para la mejora del sistema de formación continua en las empresas / equipo de redacción de Formadores.**  
[Analysis and proposals for improvement of the continuing training system in companies.]

**Equipo de redacción de Formadores;**

In: Formadores, N° 1 (2005), p.12-19

Madrid: Confederación Española de Centros y Academias Privadas, CECAP, 2005

ISSN 1139-4161

This is an analysis of the current continuing training model. It covers its objectives, improvements vis-à-vis the previous model, and its weaknesses with regard to technical support, application of computer technology, other training incentives and the amount of training provided by the Administration.

IE **Building on our vision: FÁS statement of strategy 2006-2009**

Training and Employment Authority - FÁS

Dublin: FÁS, 2005. - xxiv, 71 p.

*FÁS, P.O. Box 456, 27-33 Upper Baggot Street, IRL-Dublin 4,*

*Tel.: (353-1) 6070536, Fax: (353-1) 6070634, E-mail: info@fas.ie, www.fas.ie/*

The first FÁS Strategy Statement covered the period 2002-2005. The second, presented here, follows an extensive consultation period and a review of key research and policy reports. The Strategy identifies eight new priority goals which include: continuous workforce development; strengthening social inclusion and labour market equality; advocating and contributing to a national Human Resource and Skills Development Strategy; providing higher quality programmes and services; and providing the skills and qualifications for an increasing number of immigrants to access the Irish jobs market. The Statement describes the services it will provide to achieve these goals and the monitoring process to be deployed.  
[www.fas.ie/information\\_and\\_publications/strategy/sos\\_eng/foreword.htm](http://www.fas.ie/information_and_publications/strategy/sos_eng/foreword.htm)

CY **Κινητικότητα του ανθρώπινου δυναμικού στην αγορά εργασίας της Κύπρου 2000-2004 / Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus.**

**Κινητικότητα του ανθρωπίνου δυναμικού στην αγορά εργασίας της Κύπρου 2000-2004.**

**[Mobility of the human resources in the labour market of Cyprus 2000-2004.]**

Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus - HRDA, Research and Planning Directorate – RPD.

Nicosia: Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus, 2005, 281 p.

ISBN 9963-43-763-X.

*HRDA, PO Box 25431, 2 Anavissou Str., Strovolos, CY-1392 Nicosia, Cyprus, Tel. (357) 22515000, Fax (357) 22428522, E-mail: hrda@hrdauth.org.cy, Www.hrdauth.org.cy*

The main aim of the study is to examine the mobility of the human resources in the labour market of Cyprus for the 2000-2004 period. This study analyses the mobility of employed persons towards inactivity and unemployment, of inactive people towards employment and unemployment, and of unemployed people towards employment and inactivity.

LV **Latvijas profesionālās izglītības sistēmā nepieciešamas izmaiņas / Jānis Āboltiņš.**

**[Required changes within VET in Latvia.]**

Rīga: Delfi, 2005, 2 p.

The Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) is a non-governmental, politically neutral organisation bringing together businesses in various sectors across the country. LCCI represents business interests in the dialogue with national and local governments, and participates in the drafting of commercial legislation in Latvia. This paper focuses on education reforms, describing ways for effective implementation that will support the country's transformation into a knowledge-based economy. The opinion of the LCCI chairman is also included.

<http://www.delfi.lv/archive/index.php?id=11484496>

LT **Kompetencijų vertinimas neformaliajame ir savaiminiame mokymesi: monografija / Rimantas Laužackas, Margarita Teresevičienė, Eglė Stasiūnaitienė.**

**[Assessment of competencies in non-formal and informal learning.]**

Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto leidykla, 2005, 224 p.

ISBN 9955-12-075-4

*Vytautas Magnus University, Centre for Vocational Education and Research, Donelaicio str. 52 - 401, LT-44244 Kaunas, Lithuania, Tel. (370 - 37) 327827, Fax:(370 - 37) 327823, E-mail: zur\_pr@fc.vdu.lt, www.vdu.lt/prsc*

The monograph analyses how education outcomes acquired in different learning environments are assessed and recognised. Assessment of skills acquired by non-formal and informal learning involves systematically recognising learning outcomes achieved outside formal education institutions - through work experience, workplace training, preparatory courses in private organisations, seminars, individual training, voluntary work, and activity in community and family. The aim of this type of assessment is to identify the overall skills of the person and to encourage the transfer of skills to other environments - education system, industry, services or agricultural fields – with a view to achieving professional mobility more easily. The opportunities and difficulties in creating a system for the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning are analysed and key elements of the system identified. The experience of other countries is also described. The monograph presents a case study of such outcome assessment in the retail sector.

HU **Áttekintés a "Bologna folyamat" magyar irodalmáról: 2000-2004: bibliográfia / Volt Pál.**

**[An outline of the Hungarian literature on the "Bologna-process" / 2000-2004: bibliography.]**

Tatabánya: Modern Üzleti Tudományok Foiskolája, 2005, 5 p.  
*Modern Üzleti Tudományok Foiskolája, Tel. (36-34) 520400,  
 E-mail: info@mutf.hu, www.mutf.hu*

The bibliography collects a selection of journal articles, books and some internet resources concerning the higher education reform called "Bologna-process" in Hungary.

<http://www.mutf.hu/kepek/Bologna-bibliografia.pdf>

NL **Beroepskwalificaties en domeinen in het mbo: twee kanten van de medaille.**

**[Professional qualifications and domains in secondary vocational education: two sides of the same coin.]**

Commissie Arbeidsmarkt & Onderwijsbeleid  
 [S.I.]: Commissie Arbeidsmarkt & Onderwijsbeleid, 2005, 26 p.

In early March, the Committee on Labour Market and Educational Issues published its recommendations to the Colo board on the use

of domains in senior secondary vocational education [MBO]. 'Job qualifications and domains in senior secondary vocational education: two sides of the coin' is a response to the current debate on domains and presents the views of the knowledge centres on the link between domains and job qualifications. The committee indicates that the domains are not guiding aspects for collaboration in developing qualification profiles, but that professional practice and professional trends in jobs are. Although a classification into domains positively impacts the student's selection process, its use should not result in the random combining of (parts of) qualification profiles. On the issue of listing a domain on a diploma, the committee says that this does not have any added value for the student or the labour market. Recognition and recognisability of the diploma is at the same level as the qualification and any differentiation in the number of graduates.

<http://coördinatiepunt.nl/userimages/beroepskwalificaties%20en%20domeinen%20in%20het%20mbo.pdf>

**De competentiegerichte kwalificatiestructuur in het MBO: gevolgen voor leren en opleiden / Annelies Bannink.  
[Competence-based qualification structure in vocational education: the consequences for education and training.]**

Onderwijs en Gezondheidszorg, Vol 29 (2005) No 2, pp. 9-12

Houten: Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum, 2005

ISSN 0920-8100

*Bohn, Stafleu Van Loghum, Postbus 246, NL-3990 GA Houten,  
Tel. (31-30) 6385700, [www.bsl.nl/](http://www.bsl.nl/)*

In a few years' time, the health care programmes of upper secondary vocational education will focus on performance-related learning. The OVDB is developing a performance-related qualification system that forms the basis of curricula for the health care programmes. For health care professions, the performance-related qualification system is based on the report 'Gekwalificeerd voor de Toekomst' (Qualified for the Future) and the job profiles formulated later. The content of the qualification profiles will be aligned with recent health care trends. This article responds to the following question: What concrete changes for learning and teaching can be expected from implementing the new qualification system?



## Issues recently published in English

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## EURYDICE

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The Education Information  
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**F** (32-2) 600 53 63  
**W** <http://www.eurydice.org>

## EVTA

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European Vocational Training  
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Belgium  
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**F** (32-2) 64 07 139  
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## ILO

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International Labour Office  
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CH-1211 Geneva 22  
Switzerland  
**T** (41-22) 79 96 959  
**F** (41-22) 79 97 650  
**W** <http://www.ilo.org>

## KRIVET

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The Korean Research Institute  
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KR-135-102 Kangnam-gu,  
Seoul  
Korea  
**T** (82-2) 34 44 62 30  
**F** (82-2) 34 85 50 07  
**W** <http://www.krivet.re.kr>

## NCVER

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National Centre for Vocational  
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**A** P.O. Box 8288  
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**F** (61-8) 82 12 34 36  
**W** <http://www.ncver.edu.au>

## OVTA

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Overseas Vocational Training  
Association  
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Mihama-ku  
JP-261-0021 Chiba-shi  
Japan  
**T** (81-43) 87 60 211  
**F** (81-43) 27 67 280  
**W** <http://www.ovta.or.jp>

## UNEVOC

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International Centre for  
Technical and Vocational  
Education and Training  
Unesco-Unevoc  
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D-53113 Bonn  
Germany  
**T** (49-228) 24 33 712  
**F** (49-228) 243 37 77  
**W** <http://www.unevoc.unesco.org>

## European journal of vocational training Call for articles for the thematic issue on

assessment,  
recognition/validation and  
certification of informal  
learning/knowledge/  
competences

Definitions of **informal and non-formal learning** can be found in Cedefop's report 'The learning continuity: European inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning'. They were occasionally discussed during the second half of the twentieth century, but they have been addressed recently for two main reasons:

- diminishing natural resources and seeking for the alternatives, in particular knowledge;
- lifelong and lifewide learning as a means of improving the position of individuals.

The EU promotes informal and non-formal learning in a number of ways, and in particular through validation. In some European countries systems of assessment, recognition and certification of informal learning have been established to increase the stock of explicit knowledge and to enable its utilisation. This should help individuals to improve their social position and personal wellbeing and to increase their employability and encourage further learning and knowledge acquisition. However, as z's report states approaches to validating non-formal and informal learning on the secondary and tertiary levels are still predominantly experimental.

**The purpose of a thematic issue** is to make a step beyond the above-mentioned Cedefop report. We would particularly welcome proposals from researchers and others who have examined and evaluated how established systems of validation of non-formal and informal learning work in practice. Thus, the articles may address issues such as:

- the attitudes of various social groups, organisations and stakeholders towards the assessment, recognition and certification of non-formal and informal learning (ARCNIL). What is the origin of this terminology? Where and by whom is it used?
- the structure and functioning of the national systems of ARCNIL;
- the role of national qualification standards and the modularisation of education and training programmes in ARCNIL;
- application of ARCNIL in corporations and other organisations;
- the relationship between formal education and training and ARCNIL;
- the social, professional, personal and economic effects of ARCNIL;
- the educational change that is needed to tackle emerging challenges (at the theoretical and empirical levels, at the structural and organisational levels, actor representations, and so on).

Various approaches and forms are welcome:

- **policy analyses** of value contexts, the attitudes of social partners and other stakeholders, system designs, their functioning, output and outcomes;
- **quantitative analyses** focused on the functioning of systems in terms of their intakes, the structure of applicants, their success in the process of ARCNIL, the consequences for education, employment mobility and wages, the attitudes and views of participants, etc.;

If you would like  
to submit an article,  
the editor

Éric Fries Guggenheim  
can be contacted  
by e-mail on:

efg@cedefop.europa.eu,  
or by telephone on

(30) 23 10 49 01 11  
or fax on

(30) 23 10 49 1 17.

- **evaluation and case studies** focused on the national, branch, organisational and other levels;
- **discourses based on the literature** or on empirical research that raises critical issues and argues for certain solutions, etc.

We would especially like to encourage articles that take a **comparative approach** to ARCNIL, e.g. those which compare national systems, sectoral solutions or cases found in different EU Member States, and those which compare EU countries' solutions with those outside EU. Priority will be given to **contributions focusing on VET**. ■

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MAY-AUGUST 2006/2

## **RESEARCH**

**Skills for the knowledge and service society**  
**Trends determining future pre-service and**  
**in-service VET needs**

Arthur Schneeberger

**Understanding e-learning: an opportunity for Europe?**

Gabi Reinmann

## **VOCATIONAL TRAINING POLICY ANALYSIS**

**Traineeship as vocational training in Catalonia:**  
**between the law, the actors and the market**

Josep F. Mària i Serrano

**Young people of low educational level:**  
**promoting innovative projects**

Francesca Salvà Mut, Miquel F. Oliver Trobat,  
Ana María Calvo Sastre

## **CASE STUDIES**

**EUROPASS Training Plus: Practicert**

Peter-Jörg Alexander, Michael Hahne, Manfred  
Lukas, Detlef Pohl

**Do we provide opportunities or only**  
**value productivity?**

Begoña de la Iglesia Mayol

**Launching a Syrian apprenticeship scheme:**  
**paving the way for change**

Rebecca Warden



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**Publications Office**

*Publications.europa.eu*

Price (excluding VAT) in Luxembourg

Per single copy EUR 12  
Annual subscription EUR 25