

CEDEFOP

No 15 September – December 1998/III

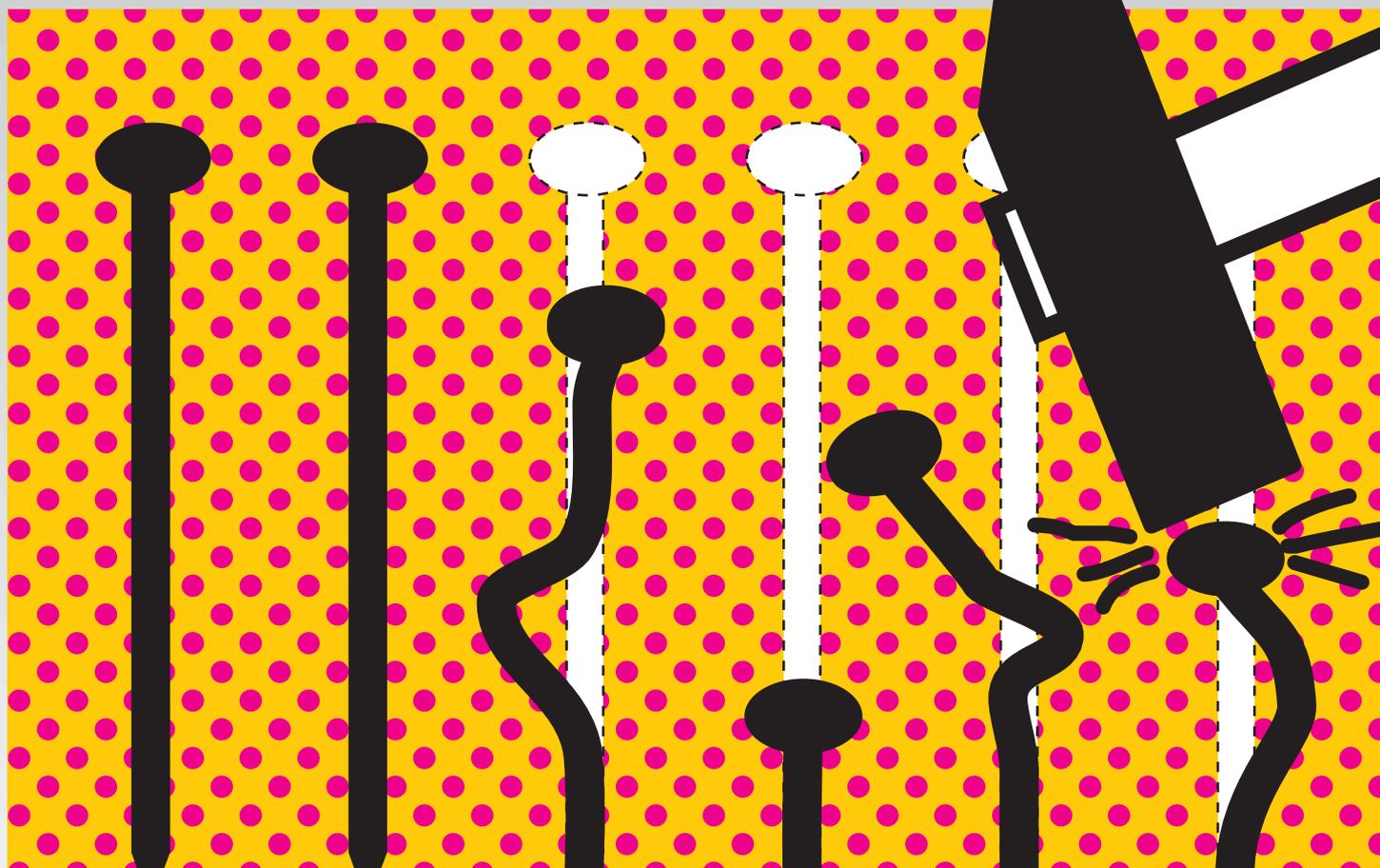
ISSN 0378-5068

# VOCATIONAL TRAINING

EUROPEAN JOURNAL



**Ensuring quality  
in vocational education  
and training**





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

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

CEDEFOP's Management Board has agreed a set of medium-term priorities for the period 1997-2000. They outline three themes that provide the focus of CEDEFOP's activities:

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- monitoring developments in vocational education and training in the Member States; and
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Published under the responsibility of:  
 Johan van Rens, Director  
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The contributions were received on or before 22.01.1999

Technical production, coordination:  
 Bernd Möhlmann

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Responsible for translation: David Crabbe

Catalogue number:  
 HX-AA-98-003-EN-C

Layout: Werbeagentur Zühlke Scholz & Partner GmbH, Berlin

Printed in Italy, 1999

Cover: Illustration by  
 Rudolf J. Schmitt, Berlin

This publication appears three times a year in Spanish, German, English and French

Technical production on DTP:  
 Axel Hunstock, Berlin

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

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# Everything you always wanted to know about ‘Quality’ but were afraid to ask...

Quality is a word with which you cannot argue. Who would be against quality or consider it irrelevant? Suppose that one day some powerful and august body proposed to help users and providers of vocational education and training in the European Union to improve training and make good choices, by providing a “Quality Guide of Vocational Education and Training”, showing where the best quality training could be obtained. After all, if tyre manufacturers can evaluate restaurants, the least a European organisation, like CEDEFOP for example, should be able to provide sound information on quality in its own domain. After a moment’s applause and surprise for this most welcome of initiatives, someone would probably suggest that to evaluate on quality you need criteria. “Yes”, might be the reply, this is a complex matter, but so is tasting food. The more sceptical discussants, perhaps anxious to protect a certain interest that they may have, might say, “Why do we not appoint a working group to establish valid criteria for quality assessment?” There would then be a sigh of relief, and an experienced individual (perhaps someone from CEDEFOP), would be asked to form this committee and invite members and comments from various national bodies who might be suitable experts.

The present issue presents some results which such an expert group itself might come up, or be confronted, with. The issue of quality turns out to be not only one of establishing criteria, but also making sure quality is obtained. As Seyfried shows, there are different criteria and methods for establishing quality by evaluation, and a fundamental difference occurs between employment effects and substantive quality of courses. Do you

want to reach many people, through training and improve their prospects of placement, or do you aim at demanding substance and methods? This may be a fundamental conflict, but it is far from being the only one. For instance, what weight should be attributed to advanced or more conventional technologies? Furthermore, with the provision of training in a regional or national context, competition may become more intense and standards of quality move up. Issues like these cause perennial problems and heated discussions.

National systems of education and training, as Koch and Reuling show, tend to load definition of quality in their institutionally particular ways. In a way, it is the method of ensuring quality that comes first and is institutionally ingrained, and this has consequences for the perception of which kind of quality matters. In Britain, individual providers and users have increasingly been enabled to define more customised quality standards. This makes general standards not only difficult to apply but less relevant. In Germany and above all France, the opposite applies. And in Germany, the quality of the output of education and training is institutionally held to be more important than control over the process of generating it. In Italy, with its regional authority over most of vocational training, one can imagine the discussion that will arise when national standards are suggested.

To some extent, to the minds of some observers, the “New Age” of ISO 9000 quality control has important implications for training. However, as Van den Berghe shows, this is so to a limited extent only. It is certainly true that taking ISO 9000 seriously may lead providers of training to think through its quality, what it is due



to, how to assure it, and how to measure it more thoroughly. On the other hand, quality conscious providers and users may arrive at similar practical conclusions without this body of norms, on the basis of sheer experience and common sense. For smaller companies, a full-blooded ISO 9000 application and certification may imply more difficulties and costs than its practical value warrants. Some are willing to pay for status and reputation even if the putative quality effect of the ISO machinery itself is questionable. Manufacturers have a history of wrangling for the status of supplying particular wares to royal courts and the emblems that go with it. Now we have ISO 9000. Times change, symbols change, but the character and function of symbols does not.

There are, to be sure, some functional commonalities of good and fashionable practice in in-company continuing training, as Stahl points out. But these should not be taken as indicating that quality is easy to determine. Over time, fashions change; to an important extent, training in separate workshops, in schools and training-centres away from the world of work were considered as showing improved quality. Nowadays, learning at work is having a renaissance as a qualitatively demanding method of learning which can never be replaced and which needs more attention than before.

One way of evaluating further training measures would be to leave this to the potential and past trainees themselves, which is discussed by Stahl in his second article. This is small wonder, for the supply of further and continuous training courses has increased considerably, so much that even localised systematic evaluation is very difficult. Naturally, in an increasingly opaque market, the customer is king, but often a potentially gullible king. Maybe this is why self-evaluation can be important, but it can only be effective if some amount of comparison between alternatives is facilitated.

A different approach is put forward by Capela, to describe evaluation and accreditation for training supported by the European Social Fund in Portugal. This is so rich in systematics, feed-back loops and weighing of different sorts of criteria and interests that it seems to describe a per-

fect world. It can be argued that this should be the norm for all EU vocational training projects. On the other hand, the question rises again, as for ISO 9000, whether formalisation will do the trick and if 'material' concern with quality is always guaranteed by a 'formal' concern. The answer is not that simple, and all those who plead for a universal and operational idea of quality control will also have to face the difficulties of avoiding superficial formalisation. Those who want equality and fairness of application also plead for formalisation. The rule of equitably applied law is necessarily bureaucratic.

Talking about the rule of law and bureaucracy, and in view of the subject of ensuring quality, many readers will not be surprised to find something like a two-thirds majority of the articles in an issue about quality coming from German authors. Themes and authors seem to have a habit of finding each other. But this conclusion is also superficial if it is thought to imply that a truly thorough and regulatory concern with quality in vocational evaluation and training is best left to the Germans. Remember that the most meticulous evaluation scheme came from Portugal. On the other hand, a fairly general and widely applicable system of quality assurance in a specific domain, training for the use of programmable controls in electrical crafts, is described by Jennewein and Kramer, comes from Germany. Note that this example is distinctive for tacit agreement on standards, rather than profound soul-searching about criteria, measures, means of instruction etc. Let us bear this in mind in order not to be deluded about the possibilities of replacing sensible pragmatism by a fundamentalism of codification and certification. What makes the training and quality assurance scheme with regard to programmable controls viable is not the scholarly rigour and sophistication that it implies. It is the fact that it is institutionally founded upon a professionally coherent and well-organised community of practitioners, and some amount of learning with regard to programmable controls has of course happened in the profession; programmable controls have been with us on a large scale for more than ten years.

Last but not least, the example from Poland presented by Wójcicka is valuable in showing that the insecurity which re-



sults from radical liberalisation of quality assurance, from unfettered operation of liberal freedom in a growing market of education and training, leads us back to some greater evaluation and certification. The difficulties are, however, not minor ones, for the danger of superficial formalism is always present.

In conclusion, there is no hard-and-fast quality assurance systematics to be found in this issue. So what can we do to work towards better quality and quality assurance? Duke Ellington was once asked to define 'swing'. His simple answer was, "If

you don't feel it, you won't know it". The most important things go without a general operational definition, and the true connoisseurs are distinctive for not needing one. We can apply this to the quality assurance of vocational education and training. Try to understand it in its different settings, listen to the tune of the articles, think about possibilities of improvement by improvisation, and then a sense of quality will grow on you. In this sense, the present issue is more practically relevant than those who think practice starts with a complex and formal scheme can ever imagine.

**Arndt Sorge**





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# Public quality control of vocational training in Germany, France and the United Kingdom

## Introduction

In the countries under review here, the development and enforcement of generally binding quality standards for the vocational training of young people is seen primarily as a public task and not left to competition between training providers. Standards to fashion the quality of training by the individual providers (schools, companies, other educational providers) may take the form of input standards for individual quality factors (training content/curricula, personnel, training aids, training organisation) and/or in output standards for learning results/examination requirements.

Public quality control in vocational training<sup>1</sup> covers three main areas:

- There must be coordination of the players who together can lay down binding quality standards.
- The standards must be institutionalised and compliance with them monitored by means of suitable procedures, in such a way that they become binding on the activities of training providers.
- In order to guarantee enough training places, it may be appropriate to support individual groups of training providers who are not able to meet the stipulated quality standards on their own.

A key function of public quality control is to establish confidence amongst all the people concerned in the quality of training provided. Young people have to be

sure that the training offered to them corresponds at least to the public quality standards. Employers should be able to rely on the validity of training certificates; this is also a major precondition for the ability of the initial employment market to function. Vocational training institutions should be able to rely on the formal entitlements linked to a leaving certificate being coupled with corresponding skills.

There are two basic positions on the scope of public intervention in training practice. They are not merely of a theoretical nature but also reflect political concepts. One position primarily sees the task of public intervention as shaping the functioning of the vocational training market in such a way that a market equilibrium can be achieved. This includes, amongst other things, improving the transparency of training courses by defining training standards. The other position assumes that market intervention alone cannot guarantee adequate training quality and that further measures are necessary in order to supplement the market control mechanisms. One example is forms of training financing geared towards quality criteria.

The public control of training quality may involve not only State institutions, but also the social partners, who negotiate binding collective agreements. Quality control tasks can also be fully delegated to non-State bodies (e.g. professional associations (Kammer) in Germany).

The forms of public control of training quality are to a large extent shaped by a country's institutionalised systems of vocational training and their specific national

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**This article describes the quality control of vocational training for young people by taking the example of three different types of initial vocational training systems and comparing their main traits.**

1) Public quality control on the systemic level must be distinguished from the internal procedures of quality control not discussed in any further detail here.



***“The forms of public control of training quality are to a large extent shaped by the institutionalised systems of vocational training and their specific national context.”***

context. This article outlines and compares the basic features of the quality control of vocational training for young people by taking the example of three initial vocational training systems<sup>2</sup>:

□ Dual vocational training in Germany - company-based training system run on corporatist lines. The social partners largely lay down the minimum quality standards for the company part of the training, which at the same time pre-determine how the standards for the school part are structured.

□ In-school vocational training in France - a State-controlled, training establishment based training system. Quality standards are laid down by the Ministry of Education. The social partners have only a consultative role in structuring training certificates.

□ Training for national vocational qualifications (NVQs in the United Kingdom) - a largely market-controlled training system. In order to improve the transparency of the courses on the training market, the State recognises the national qualification standards developed largely by the employers.

## **Establishing quality standards**

Quality standards for *dual training in Germany* aim to guarantee modern training of the highest possible standard. However, standards must not be set so high that they jeopardise the ability and willingness of companies to train and, by extension, the number of training places necessary for society. The State leaves it largely to the processes of negotiation between the social partners to find appropriate compromises. A ‘principle of consensus’ of this kind promotes acceptance of training regulations in company practice but brings with it the risk that modernisation could be blocked or at least considerably delayed by conflicts of interests between the social partners.

The training regulations lay down the minimum training content to be imparted by the company and the examination subjects. The specification of minimum standards allows companies to establish their own qualification priorities above the

stipulated quality level. At the same time, it signals a uniform minimum qualification to the labour market. The vocational schools have curricula which have been brought into line with the corresponding training regulations. The final examination is a vocational aptitude test which is conducted outside the training institutions by the examination committees of the professional bodies on which both sides of industry are represented. Guidelines on the standardisation of the examination procedure coupled and the often supra-regional setting of examinations aim to counteract any major differences in the examinations themselves.

The competent chambers base their accreditation of training companies on specific statutory criteria of suitability for both training personnel and training venue. Furthermore, the companies must prove that they can teach all the subject contents laid down in the training regulation, for which purpose they may form a training association with other companies or cooperate with inter-company training centres.

In the case of *vocational training in educational establishments in France*, the State mainly imposes requirements on itself with its quality standards. However, the regulation of training certificates (diplomas) must, because of the employment opportunities of graduates, take adequate account of the qualification requirements of industry. Training objectives must be formulated in such a way that they can also be met by the forms of training used in educational establishments. There are no general quality standards for the periods of training in companies. Training establishments are responsible for ensuring that the prescribed periods of training in companies are of an adequate quality, but they have a rather weak position in this regard.

In France high standards are imposed on the reliability of examinations. The State examination is intended to guarantee a uniform assessment of candidates which can be legally verified. It is also significant in this regard that the certificates are linked to entrance entitlements in the school system.

A fundamental aspect of quality control in the *British NVQ system* is the approach

2) For a comparison of quality control in the German dual and in the French school vocational training systems, please refer in more depth to Koch 1998, pp. 193-276.



whereby it is not vocational learning contents but learning outcomes which are laid down as occupational skills closely related to activities. Hence, examinations play an important role in the NVQ system. There are no rules, however, stipulating the learning venue – companies, further training colleges or other training providers – or the period within which trainees must acquire the corresponding skills. The vocational standards are prepared by branch-related bodies and examined and accredited by a State institution (the Qualification and Curriculum Authority, QCA).

When vocational standards are set, compromises must be found: firstly between the goal of reflecting modern working practices in the standards without excluding traditional training providers too far; secondly, a valid internal assessment of occupational competence must be possible without examinations becoming too cost-intensive. In practice, there is a trend towards laying down the examination criteria in great detail which makes the examinations more expensive without guaranteeing adequate reliability (Wolf 1995).

One common feature of the German dual system and the French training-establishment based system is that public quality control consists of a combination of standards for learning processes (curricula, aptitude requirements for training staff) and regulations for the control of learning outcomes. This constitutes a fundamental difference to the British NVQ system, which is mainly controlled through the definition of learning outcomes.

## **Modernising training standards - problems and concepts**

In *Germany* training standards tend to be based on common occupational practices. New technology and other innovative requirements can become training contents only when a sufficient number of companies can also offer instruction in them. Training regulations for companies and school curricula tend, therefore, to lag behind the latest occupational practice. In order to ensure that training

regulations are more forward looking, training contents are increasingly geared not to the application of specific procedures and equipment but to function and are as technology- and product-neutral as possible.

In *France* occupational training standards are geared mainly to the practices of large companies and the level of technology they have achieved. Hence, to a certain degree they are formulated as ideal standards. Given that training takes place mainly in training establishments, modern technologies can be included as technical expertise in training guidelines. Furthermore, no account needs to be taken of the training ability of companies.

Since the NVQs in the *United Kingdom*, in particular the occupational standards on the lower level of difficulty, are very much orientated towards concrete work requirements, in principle constant revision is required. This is made easier by the fact that an occupational qualification is made up of individual units which each cover specific work functions. This means that adjustments can be made to new work requirements without having to change the entire qualification. When individual units are updated too frequently, candidates who take longer to obtain an occupational qualification run the risk of units successfully completed earlier becoming outdated. It is increasingly the case that besides the existing qualification, a new vocational qualification is laid down. This has led to a dramatic rise in the number of certificates (Raffe 1994).

The national or system-specific methods for updating training standards each have their inherent advantages and disadvantages. If standards are linked to concrete activities, as is the case in the *United Kingdom*, they are particularly exposed to the risk of becoming outdated. If training certificates are characterised by a high degree of general and theoretical content as in *France*, they become outdated less quickly, but run the risk of losing their relevance on the labour market. The concept of occupationally-oriented minimum standards in the German dual training system represents a compromise between the British and French approaches.

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**Overview:****Comparison of the institutional framework of quality control**

	<b>Germany (Dual system)</b>	<b>France (Training establish- ment system)</b>	<b>United Kingdom (NVQ system)</b>
<b>Guiding principle behind training</b>	Ability to pursue a qualified occupational activity	Technical preparation for an area of occupational activity	Competencies to carry out specific work functions
<b>Training standards</b>	Minimum standards for training courses, oriented towards common company practices	Ideal standards orientated towards requirements of modern large companies	Standards for assessment/examination oriented towards good practice of a sector
<b>Regulation of training certificates</b>	Negotiation of parameters between social partners, coordination by State body (BIBB), ministerial decree	Elaboration by State body (CPC), consultation of social partners, ministerial decree	Preparation by employer-dominated national training organisations, accreditation by State institution (QCA)
<b>Organisation</b>	In-company training, where appropriate including inter-company training centre, supplemented by vocational school	School training supplemented by in-company training phases (alternance scolaire)	Not regulated
<b>Proportion of general subjects</b>	Roughly one-third of instruction in vocational schools	Roughly half of instruction in vocational schools	Only if required for occupational activities
<b>Length of in-company training</b>	Approx. 75% of training time (on average 34 weeks out of approximately 46 weeks per year)	Approx. 25% of training time (4-10 weeks out of approximately 35 weeks per year)	Venue and length of training not regulated
<b>Regulation of in-company training</b>	Training regulations with enforceable minimum contents	Recommendation of training contents	Not regulated
<b>Examination</b>	Examination committee of the professional bodies	State examination	Internal training provider assessment/examination
<b>Quality control</b>	Professional bodies (company), school supervision (school)	School supervision (training school and company)	Internal and external control of quality management, State inspection of colleges

**Control and assurance of training quality**

In *Germany* responsibility for guaranteeing the quality of training in companies has been handed over to professional associations as a public task. If there is an increased incidence of poor examination results amongst the trainees of a training body, this may lead to a re-examination of that body's compliance with quality standards. Controlling the quality of in-company training is mainly done by the

employers themselves and this is viewed critically by the trade unions. The school directors and the school inspectors are responsible for guaranteeing the quality of instruction in vocational schools.

In *France* control of the quality of vocational training in training establishments is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and its regional offices. The evaluation of individual quality factors in training establishments (e.g. teacher qualifications, teaching aids) on the national level is undertaken by the general inspec-



tors (inspecteurs généraux). Inspectors from the school administration districts (inspecteurs académiques) are responsible for direct control of the individual vocational schools including practical training in companies. Failure percentages in examinations provide an indication of the training shortcomings of individual schools.

In the *United Kingdom* examinations of competencies are undertaken by the training providers internally on the basis of detailed procedures. The suitability of training providers as NVQ centres, therefore, takes on central importance because this is the only way of guaranteeing the uniform validity of competence certificates. In order to obtain accreditation as NVQ centres, which is undertaken by commercial certification bodies, they must prove that they can carry out assessment procedures, that the members of staff entrusted with these tasks hold the stipulated aptitude certificates and that they have an internal quality control system. The certification bodies in turn are accredited by QCA according to the criteria laid down for this purpose. This system of quality control is not just highly cost intensive but also unreliable. Another important factor is that the funding of training providers depends on the number of successful examination candidates. In the case of training programmes which are financed from public funds, quality is also controlled by means of input criteria (e.g. facilities of the training venue).

In the training systems under consideration, the assessment of examination results continues to be a main foundation for quality control. In Germany and France the external control of training bodies plays a major role. In the *United Kingdom*, by contrast, the quality of training is mainly controlled by means of internal systems. Training institutions are subject to greater control, however, when they receive public funds.

## State support measures for training providers

Despite generally valid quality standards and public quality control, empirical results seem to indicate that there are sig-

nificant differences in practice in the quality of vocational training (Damm-Rüger et al. 1998, Pascaud, Simonin 1997). Training policy may withdraw or refuse to grant training providers accreditation if they fail to observe or comply with standards. Another possible measure is (subsidiary) support for those providers who cannot meet standards through their own efforts.

In the *German dual training system* the promotion of inter-company training centres is the most important contribution by the State to maintaining quality. These training centres mainly aim to help overcome the deficits of training in small and medium-sized enterprises. A second focus is on the continuing training of in-company training staff and vocational school teachers.

The *French training establishment system* faces a fundamental problem of public quality control when it comes to reconciling training practice with the ideal standards of the training provisions. Since training quality is mainly influenced by the competencies of the teachers and the available training aids, they are the focus of State promotion measures. Without access to additional in-company resources, particularly via the training tax (taxe d'apprentissage), training establishments cannot guarantee sufficient updating of their facilities, equipment and appliances. Differing levels of contact between training establishments and local companies lead to differing chances of obtaining additional funding. The State can at least partially compensate for these differences by means of priority fund allocation.

In the *United Kingdom* training providers compete on training markets for State funds whereby a specific sum is laid down per trainee. Any additional financial promotion of investment to raise standards in individual groups of training providers would lead to a distortion of competition. In order to improve their training quality and their ability to compete, training providers can form training alliances and, furthermore, specialise in offering examination units in line with their resources.

If at all possible in Germany, the goal of high quality training is not to be achieved at the expense of what are already scarce

***“In Germany and France the external control of training bodies plays a major role. In the United Kingdom, by contrast, the quality of training is mainly controlled by means of internal systems.”***

***“If at all possible in Germany, the goal of high quality training is not to be achieved at the expense of what are already scarce in-company training places. (...) The French training system based on training establishments is best able to tackle its structural adaptation problems to rapid change in occupational practice by means of a suitable definition of training standards oriented towards the performance capability of training establishments. In the United Kingdom subsidiary State support measures for individual groups of providers would be in violation of the system.”***



***“Generally speaking, a philosophy of decentralised innovation culture amongst providers seems to be more widespread in Germany and the United Kingdom than in France. By means of trial projects in Germany, the State takes up initiatives for innovation on the level of individual companies and vocational schools. In France, trial projects are used rather to test central innovation. In the United Kingdom, by contrast, the promotion of innovation is left to competition between the training providers which is actively encouraged by the State.”***

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in-company training places. Hence, State support measures above all for small and medium sized enterprises are of major importance. The French training system based on training establishments is best able to tackle its structural adaptation problems to rapid change in occupational practice by means of a suitable definition of training standards oriented towards the performance capability of training establishments. In the United Kingdom subsidiary State support measures for individual groups of providers would be in violation of the system.

### Public promotion of innovative training practice

In the *German dual system* major incentives for innovations in training quality mainly stem from those companies in which expert staff are an important factor of competitiveness. The development activities of companies of this kind frequently receive State support in the form of trial projects which are then disseminated. Trial projects of this kind are also conducted in vocational schools.

In the *French training establishment-based system* pressure for innovation arises above all from harmonisation problems with the qualification requirements of industry and the changes in educational demand. Innovation requirements are centrally assessed by the Ministry of Education and innovative training concepts are as a rule developed, tested and disseminated from the ‘top down’.

In the *United Kingdom* the linking of funding for training providers to training success (output-related funding) is a certain incentive for innovation. The same applies to published rankings of providers according to the success rate of their candidates in the acquisition of NVQs, and to awards which are presented for special innovation. In order to give targeted stimulus for innovations in specific areas, there are

calls for tender for the development of innovative concepts.

Generally speaking, a philosophy of decentralised innovation culture amongst providers seems to be more widespread in Germany and the United Kingdom than in France. By means of trial projects in Germany, the State takes up initiatives for innovation on the level of individual companies and vocational schools. In France, trial projects are used rather to test central innovation. In the United Kingdom, by contrast, the promotion of innovation is left to competition between the training providers which is actively encouraged by the State.

### New orientation in public quality control?

The fundamental concepts behind the public control of training quality all have their specific constraints. In Germany and France control of training quality is mainly exerted by means of standards for input factors. This means complex rules which impede rapid adjustment to changing requirements. Control by means of output standards as practised in the United Kingdom involves considerable operationalisation problems and cost-intensive assessment and quality control procedures.

In future, it may be necessary to find new combinations of both input and output control and of public and internal provider quality control. A re-orientation of public quality control could be triggered in particular through the trend observed in many EU Member States towards a pluralisation of training paths and promotion of competition amongst various suppliers on the training markets. Furthermore, the importance of internal quality control systems is likely to continue to grow even if State training establishments and in-company training departments are increasingly emerging as providers of services.



# Evaluation of quality aspects in vocational training programmes

## Introduction

This article is based on the results of a study commissioned by CEDEFOP carried out in five European countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Greece and Portugal) which analyzed evaluation studies of vocational training programmes. The central question was the importance, methods and practices of examining quality in vocational training programmes. The evaluation studies that were analyzed were primarily concerned with programmes for unemployed people and, to a lesser degree, for the further training of employed workers. Most of the programmes were (co)-financed by public funds.

## Increasing significance of vocational training programme evaluations?

Initial results showed that in all the countries covered by the analysis there was a clear trend towards an increased number of evaluation studies on vocational training programmes. This was due not least to the impetus provided by European programmes. Increasingly, evaluation appears to be becoming an integral part of newly implemented programmes. Thus in Portugal for example the evaluation of state-funded further training measures has become an obligatory requirement. This is however carried out from a primarily administrative point of view, with the main emphasis on the examination of financial and material indicators and hardly any competent evaluation of the vocational qualifications acquired and their usefulness on the labour market.

In the context of our meta-analysis a number of studies - particularly from Portugal and Greece - were only partially open to more detailed methodological analysis, as the methods used were regarded as private know-how and hence were not published. Generally speaking it should also be noted that some studies, particularly those with critical or controversial results, were often deemed inappropriate or unsuitable for publication.

From a quantitative point of view the significance of evaluations of vocational training programmes has undoubtedly increased, although they do not always fulfill their intended function. The qualitative significance of such evaluations is characterized by their being an instrument for the appraisal of specific objectives, the demonstration of relations of cause and effect and hence for the optimisation of procedures, processes or products. In Europe there exists little in the way of a culture of transparent communication and open debate about the methods and results of the evaluation of vocational training programmes. The process of unrestricted examination and use of results of evaluations for the further development of programme practice can be said to function only to a limited extent. Critical discourse between scientists and evaluators on the one hand and the politicians and administrators responsible for the programmes on the other still needs to be developed further. Programme evaluation must not be allowed to be reduced to an affirmative function for politics and administration as it can only fulfill its task by maintaining a critical distance. Otherwise only inadequate use will be made of the practical potential of evaluations for the improvement of the quality of vocational training programmes.

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**From a quantitative point of view the significance of evaluations of vocational training programmes has undoubtedly increased, although they do not always fulfill their intended function. In Europe there exists little in the way of a culture of transparent communication and open debate about the methods and results of the evaluation of vocational training programmes. Critical discourse between scientists and evaluators on the one hand and the politicians and administrators responsible for the programmes on the other still needs to be developed further. There needs to be greater convergence between the debates on training policy and labour market policy, as well as greater effort on both sides in coordinating coherent research approaches which take both process-oriented and product-oriented indicators of quality into account.**



***“Programme evaluation must not be allowed to be reduced to an affirmative function for politics and administration as it can only fulfill its task by maintaining a critical distance.”***

***“(...) we can differentiate between two distinct, even opposed types of vocational training programme evaluation. The first type, with its roots in the university tradition (...) sees itself as applied social science, coupled with high ambitions regarding adherence to scientific standards in proving relations of cause and effect. (...) The second type of evaluation has its roots in management and the enactment of programmes, with its main emphasis on the formative function accompanying the programme. Evaluation (...) is (...) directed less towards generally valid results than to direct practical improvements to the programme.”***

## **Vocational training programme evaluations and their methods**

If we follow Scriven's (1994) definition, the evaluation of vocational training programmes can be regarded as a procedure intended to determine the merit, worth or value these programmes. In theory this definition is uncontroversial (Cronbach, 1980; Guba, Lincoln, 1990; Patton, 1989). Yet according both to the dominant school of thought and from an empirical point of view there is a general consensus that the adherence to certain standards and the achievement of certain pre-established objectives, results and outcomes following the implementation of a programme, are to be used as criteria for an assessment of the merits, worth or values of that programme (Fernández-Ballesteros et al, 1998).

Methodologically speaking the analyzed evaluation studies displayed a high degree of variance, and are a long way from using comparable methods. This is due on the one hand to the subject under examination and the large number of variables influencing the course and results of vocational training programmes. On the other hand it is also due to the fact that we are only now starting to see the emergence of a generally accepted, uniform set of methodological tools for the evaluation of vocational training programmes.

At first glance we can differentiate between two distinct, even opposed types of vocational training programme evaluation. The first type, with its roots in the university tradition and frequently carried out in this environment, sees itself as applied social science, coupled with high ambitions regarding adherence to scientific standards in proving relations of cause and effect. Whilst evaluations of this type may claim to make scientifically founded statements on effects, they are frequently reproached with being too distant from everyday practice. The second type of evaluation has its roots in management and the enactment of programmes, with its main emphasis on the formative function accompanying the programme. Evaluation is regarded as an inherent component of the management of training programmes and is hence directed

less towards generally valid results than to direct practical improvements to the programme.

Moreover the question as to why certain evaluation methods are used in specific instances depends on the programme objectives, the evaluation objectives, cost considerations, the relevance of certain questions and thus ultimately on conditions specific to the individual countries. In order to systematically classify the wide variety of methodological approaches in the vocational training programme evaluation studies analyzed, we took recourse to Stufflebeam and Skinfield's CIPP model (1988). Using this model we were able to differentiate between product-oriented, evaluations, process-oriented and context-oriented.

Product-oriented evaluations are designed to assess the difference between objectives and the results or products actually achieved by a programme. The difference between the intended objectives and the actual achievements is established by means of objective/achievement comparisons. In these evaluations a high degree of goal attainment is synonymous with a high measure of quality. Ideally, the objectives are operationalized from a quantitative point of view before the programme begins, thus making it possible to measure precisely the degree of objective attainment afterwards. Operationalized objectives of this type can consist of the number of trainees from specific target groups (e.g. the respective percentages of men and women) which the vocational training programme intends to reach, or can describe the skills and formal qualifications to be attained by trainees in the course of a programme, or they can anticipate the employment rates which trainees are to achieve on completion of the programme. Accordingly with regard to vocational training programme products it is possible to differentiate between output (number and type of persons reached by the programme), results (number and type of qualifications acquired by the trainees) and outcome (the programme's direct employment effects).

Process-oriented evaluations are concerned with the enactment of the programme itself, with the procedures, modes, agreements, conflicts, negotia-



tions, arrangements and relationships occurring during the training and between the actors and agencies involved. Hence process-oriented evaluations deal with the organisation and procedures of the programme. They traditionally tend to be more formative in design, which makes it difficult to compare their methods and results. Yet with the increasing introduction of quality criteria such as the ISO standard, the methods of process evaluation will presumably also be placed on a more unified footing, at least to the extent that adherence to specific organisational and procedural standards acts as a guarantee of the quality of a training programme.

Context-evaluations relate to the framework conditions within which vocational training programmes take place. This refers as much to economic, legal and social aspects on the societal macro-level as to institutional and organisational aspects on the meso and micro-levels of the promoter organisation. More or less extensive analyses on the context of vocational training programmes are almost inevitably a necessary component of every evaluation, whether process or product-oriented. There are however also context-evaluations which are independent of product and process. An example could be a prospective analysis of the regional development of labour force requirements or the need for specific vocational qualifications in certain branches and sectors of the economy (agriculture, shipbuilding, textiles, etc.). An analyses to determine the qualification requirements and training needs of specific target groups such as disadvantaged youth or migrants also belong to this type of evaluation study.

## **Results of the analysis of vocational training programme evaluations**

The analysis of vocational training programme evaluation studies in five European countries clearly illustrated that there is a lack of relevant research in relation to the overall vocational training programme cycle. Hardly any studies are available which consider the context, processes and products of vocational

training programmes in relation to each other. Many studies focus on single elements of this cycle: some, for example, focus on training needs, whilst others are concerned with the organisation of vocational training measures, with a third group dealing with the integration of trainees into employment. Yet only a few of them covered the whole programme cycle with its different stages as a whole.

The context-evaluations examined within the framework of the present study demonstrate that only rarely is it possible to successfully consider "objective" training requirements, as established for specific sectors or regions together with the subjective training needs of the potential trainees. As a result of context evaluations at macro-level training requirements are often defined exclusively by (future) labour market demand. These economically-oriented evaluations often remain relatively theoretical, they fail to provide enough detail to allow conclusions to be drawn for the perspectives and design of vocational training programmes (Fierens et al, 1993). By contrast, context evaluations which take an interest in the social preconditions and the subjective training of specific target groups more often neglect the objective trends on the labour market. As a result the vocational training programmes are then analysed primarily from the point of view of their adequacy for specific target groups (Dulbea, 1994).

As far as process-oriented approaches are concerned, there are hardly any variables, whether influenced by the type of the promoter organisation, the composition of the participants, dependent on the process of the training courses, or the qualifications of the training personnel, which have not been examined in the vocational training programmes-evaluations (Aubégnny, 1989; Figari, 1994). However, many of these important process-variables have not been analysed in a systematic way, which has a negative influence on the reliability and general validity of studies of this kind. In process-oriented evaluations there is a certain trend towards the inclusion of the participants' own subjective perspectives in the evaluation of the process and this indeed can provide important pointers towards qualitative modifications of voca-

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***“As an overall finding of our analysis it must be stated that the fields of vocational training research and labour market policy research remain distinctly isolated from each other, something which has to do with the fact that both favour different evaluation approaches.”***

***“For labour market policy research the employment rate is the dominant indicator of quality (...). This indicator is so dominant that the learning achievements of the trainees are sometimes ignored in the context of labour market policy research (...).”***

tional training programmes. This trend should not, however, hide the fact that analyses on the subjective needs and motives of the participants still receive too little attention in the planning of vocational training programmes.

Product-oriented evaluations are to be found primarily in the field of research into the effects of labour market policies. Traditionally their main question is whether the implemented policies fulfill their purpose. The Anglo-American and Scandinavian approaches in particular are distinguished by the fact that they work with elaborate methodological standards studies (cf Riddel, 1991; Björklund, 1991). Most evaluations of this type carry out a counter-factual assessment of the programme impacts: it is not deemed sufficient to know whether participation in a programme led to positive employment effects for the trainees; research is also carried out into whether such effects would also have occurred without the programme. With the aid of experimental or quasi-experimental designs the researchers test what the outcome would have been for the programme participants if the trainees had not participated in the programme, thus investigating the counter-factual, as compared to the observed, outcome. To this end the employment situation for a control or comparable group of non-participants is observed over the period under examination (Calmfors, 1994). The particular strength of these approaches to the evaluation of labour market policies is that they lead to not necessarily perfect but nevertheless relatively precise estimates of the actual effects and impacts of the examined programmes.

### **Evaluations of training programmes and labour market policy - a structural gap**

As an overall finding of our analysis it must be stated that the fields of vocational training research and labour market policy research remain distinctly isolated from each other, something which has to do with the fact that both favour different evaluation approaches. The former is pri-

marily oriented towards the evaluation of the training process and its internal quality criteria, whereas products such as the employment rate of the trainees are ignored if not intentionally rejected as indicators of quality. Training research is primarily interested in the process, yet attaches almost no significance to the product. By contrast, labour market policy research affords pride of place to integration into employment. In terms of labour market policy discourse, the documentation of the employment situation of participants following a vocational training programme is both a common practice and an uncontested criterion for evaluating the outcome of vocational training programmes. For labour market policy research the employment rate is the dominant indicator of quality (cf. for a summary: OECD, 1991). This indicator is so dominant that the learning achievements of the trainees are sometimes ignored in the context of labour market policy research, although they represent a further, clearly product-oriented quality indicator. Research into the (quality of the) training process is largely excluded from labour market policy ex-post evaluations. Labour market policy evaluation tends to say which type of training programmes worked and which did not, but not usually why (Fay, 1996).

With regard to the CIPP-model the dynamic relationship between process and product has yet to be adequately researched. In product-orientated labour market policy evaluations it is not only the situative conditions of the training process which have remained ignored in their effects on the employment situation. The ‘participants’ own subjective assessments are also often not taken into consideration in the evaluation of the job placement rates. This is in spite of the fact that they are becoming increasingly significant in training process research and quality management and have already proven their worth.

An exception to this rule are the evaluations of the in-house further education programmes of large companies which make systematic efforts, both in the design of the training programme and in the evaluation of the results, to consider not only the objective requirements of the company’s work processes, but also the



subjective interests and experiences of the employees in relation to each other. In addition, these studies are also remarkable in that they are highly interested in the question of the transfer and usefulness of the qualifications achieved for the work processes in the company and introduce a quality indicator into the evaluation of the training measures which is designed to examine the achievement of specific objectives beyond the training process itself (Götz 1993). Unfortunately the insights gained by transfer research receive far too little attention both in the field of training process research and in the labour market policy debate.

Process-orientated evaluations are focused on the internal quality dimension of vocational training, which can be analysed against different criteria (Dupouey, 1991). The current debate on questions of quality in vocational training has led to a real surge in evaluation methods and criteria for the training process (Van den Berghe, 1996). Increasingly, promoters are evaluating their own programmes on the basis of published checklists and criteria. It has also become common practice at the end of a training measure to ask the trainees for an assessment of the course, the trainer, the teaching materials, didactic methods and equipment by means of written questionnaires. Whilst assessments of this kind can provide the promoter with useful hints for the improvement of training provision, from the point of view of scientific comparison, they do not represent reliable criteria for the evaluation of programme quality. Although there are still only a few generally recognized quality indicators in existence, the recent debate on questions of quality and TQM approaches has led to a discernible trend in Europe towards the establishment of specific and adequate quality indicators for the education and training system (loc. cit). Such criteria could consist of a set of pre-formulated standards concerning the training process (such as the ISO norms). They could include the demands of different target groups as well as the demands of business enterprises. They could also include indicators of the subjective satisfaction of the trainees, as well as indicators examining the trainees' subsequent employment. As a result the quality indicators define the procedures to be followed and, following the logic of this

evaluation approach, these quality elements also contribute towards attainment of objectives.

Whatever indicators are used, the linking of training quality with subsequent employment will be a central question. An evaluation of vocational training programmes which is not interested in the placement rates of the trainees will be simply unsatisfactory. Otherwise it would be possible to characterize the quality of a programme as excellent even if just one single trainee had afterwards found a job.

Information on the whereabouts of former programme-participants increasingly has to include qualitative employment criteria in relation to the personal variables of the participants. The advantage of the employment rate as an indicator of quality is that it is both measurable and general enough so that it can be used to measure very different training policies. However, the placement rate is sometimes attributed mechanically to the training programme, even though there might be no causal link at all between the completed training course and the subsequent job. It is the specific weakness of product-oriented labour market research, that its main indicator for quality, the placement rate, cannot help us discern which variables might have an influence on access to employment and to what extent this might be so.

A high job placement rate is not in itself an indicator of quality, any more than a low placement rate. The famous statement by Tanguy (1986) which considers the relationship between vocational training and employment to be "introuvable" has proven to be too superficial. The relationship between training and employment is not necessarily causal in the individual case. This is because it is not a question of a simple relation of cause and effect, but rather, as in every supply and demand relationship, of a very complex interrelationship of a large number of variables. This interrelationship has also empirically been shown to be distinctly "trouvable" in many studies (cf. for an overview: Reutersward, 1995).

Thus it is, for instance common practice in labour market-oriented evaluation research to compare the results of different

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***“Although the findings of the reviewed evaluation studies stress the importance of process-oriented evaluations, the existence of quality criteria in the training process cannot be seen as an expression of quality in itself.”***

training courses with the employment indicator to build up a hierarchy between more and less effective training measures. Tanas et al (1995) was, for example, able to show that a change in the subject and content of a training course led to changes in effects with regard to the rate of employment in the following cohorts of trainees. In addition the reviewed evaluation studies also undertook comparisons between the employment rates of various target groups in relation to the general trends in the labour market. In the context of such comparative analyses it was possible to demonstrate the disadvantage faced by women in integration into employment after leaving vocational training programmes, for example (cf. Seyfried, Bühler, 1995). To this extent placement rates can be used as indicators pointing to necessary adjustments to policies and the design of programmes, to the needs of certain target groups as well as to developments in the labour markets.

In spite of such useful conclusions which can be drawn from placement data, certain weaknesses remain with regard to the problem of causality. Placement rates in particular do not depend solely on the design and quality of the vocational training programmes, but are also influenced by a wide range of other variables located outside of the training and education sector (Blaschke et al, 1992). If, for example, the macro-economic situation is characterized by a demand for labour which is far too low, then our expectations of vocational training programmes placement rates will be limited from the very start. In this kind of situation successful integration into employment does not primarily depend on the quality of the training but is decisively influenced by general developments and the situation in individual economic sectors. These weaknesses concerning the causality problem mean that it is completely unsatisfactory to use the placement rate as the sole indicator for effectiveness or for concluding that different training measures were more, or less, successful.

## Conclusions

Although the findings of the reviewed evaluation studies stress the importance of process-oriented evaluations, the existence of quality criteria in the training process cannot be seen as an expression of quality in itself. Only if these quality aspects are intended to improve the objectives of the training programme concerned can they be taken into consideration in the evaluations. In the course of the current debate on quality in vocational training, there is a trend towards establishing generally recognized quality indicators. This trend could make a decisive contribution towards linking process-relevant quality characteristics with the question of the labour market relevance of the programmes and the subsequent employment of the trainees. This is all the more important in view of the fact that outcome-oriented evaluations have hitherto been associated with the disadvantage of only rarely allowing well-founded conclusions to be drawn regarding the effect of certain quality characteristics of training programmes. However, there is a growing trend in the scientific debate on evaluation approaches of labour market policies to attribute more attention to these issues (Fay, 1996).

The greater the emphasis placed on the examination of the quality aspects of vocational training programmes, the less process-oriented and product-oriented evaluations should be seen as alternatives but as necessarily complementary approaches. A coherent approach to vocational training programmes evaluation must overcome the diagnosed gaps between “process” and “product”. For the future there needs to be greater convergence between the debates on training policy and labour market policy, as well as greater effort on both sides in coordinating coherent research approaches which take both process-oriented and product-oriented indicators of quality into account.



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# Application of ISO 9000 standards to education and training

**Although ISO 9000 certification is still a marginal phenomenon in the education and training world, the numbers of certified institutions and departments are increasing, particularly amongst continuing, and vocational education and training providers.**

**But many practitioners in the education and training world wonder whether this development is the best way to improve quality within education and training institutions. For many, the real added value of such a certification process remains doubtful – not to mention costly**

## Introduction

Over the last decade “Quality” has become a central preoccupation of companies, public services and non-profit organisations in Europe. One of the more visible features of this “quality wave” has been, particularly in Europe, the certification of the quality assurance mechanisms of organisations on the basis of the so-called ISO 9000 standards. This form of certification is becoming the de facto basic quality standard in many industrial sectors of Europe.

The ISO 9000 standards were originally conceived for companies in the manufacturing industry. Since the early 1990s, however, the application of the norms has quickly spread to other sectors of the economy. The developments over the last years have resulted in a broad recognition of the value of an ISO 9000 certificate and its function as a quality label.

Quality is, of course, not a new phenomenon in education and training, but the interest for ISO 9000 is of relatively recent origin. Since the early ‘90s a number of education and training institutions in Europe have obtained an ISO 9001 or ISO 9002 certificate<sup>1</sup>. Although ISO 9000 certification is still a marginal phenomenon in the education and training world, the numbers of certified institutions and departments are increasing, particularly amongst continuing, and vocational education and training providers.

But many practitioners in the education and training world wonder whether this development is the best way to improve quality within education and training institutions. For many, the real added value

of such a certification process remains doubtful – not to mention costly.

This article aims to shed some light on these and related issues. It is based mainly on a study I conducted, published in 1997 as a Cedefop Report<sup>2</sup>. The reader will find more information in that publication, in particular on interpretation and implementation issues.

## What is ISO 9000 ?

“ISO 9000” is the commonly used name to label a series of international standards for quality assurance within organisations: ISO 9001, ISO 9002, ISO 9003, ISO 9004 (and their subsets). The most important norms to be considered in the context of this contribution are ISO 9001 and ISO 9002. The official title for ISO 9001 is “Quality systems. Model for quality assurance in design, development, production, installation and servicing”. ISO 9002 is similar to ISO 9001, except that design is not included. Unlike some other documents and ‘standards’ of the ISO 9000 series, these two norms allow certification of organisations by a third party.

In the definition of ISO 9001 and 9002, the term “quality assurance” is the key concept. The official international definition of quality assurance, according to ISO 8402, is: “All the planned and systematic activities implemented within the quality system, and demonstrated as needed, to provide adequate confidence that an entity will fulfil requirements for quality”.

Such a definition is, in my view, not very practical. A more operational view is to

1) The difference between ISO 9001 and ISO 9002 is explained later in this article.

2) The full title of the report is “Application of ISO 9000 Standards in Education and Training. Interpretation and Guidelines in a European Perspective”.



describe the requirements of quality assurance as follows:

- ❑ defined quality criteria for all activities to which quality assurance applies;
- ❑ procedures to ensure that quality standards are met;
- ❑ procedures that are systematically monitored for conformance;
- ❑ identification and analysis of causes non-conformance;
- ❑ elimination of the causes of problems through appropriate corrective action;

The principles of quality assurance can be applied to a particular activity, or to all processes in the organisation. If the quality assurance is applied throughout an organisation for all its activities, a “quality system” is in place. Such a quality system may also be called a “quality control system” or alternatively a “quality management system” (more modern usage).

Essentially, ISO 9001 and ISO 9002 contain a number of requirements which should be met by such a quality system. Some of these requirements are put in fairly general terms; others are more detailed. The English version of the norms contain about 8 pages, most of which consist of the requirements of Section 4, arranged into 20 “*clauses*” or “*criteria*”. (see table 1).

The requirements of the standards can be grouped into three sets:

- ❑ general requirements of a quality system (management responsibility, quality manual and procedures, appointment of a quality manager, availability of qualified resources and staff, ...);
- ❑ the need to maintain documented procedures on the key processes of the organisation (design, development, purchase, delivery, etc.) - and implement activities according to the procedures;
- ❑ specific quality assurance mechanisms, including test and inspection, keeping quality records, dealing with non-conformance, keeping documents up-to-date,

**Table 1:**  
**ISO 9001 ISO 9002 Quality System Requirements:**  
**“Clauses” or “Criteria”**

4.1	Management responsibility
4.2	Quality system
4.3	Contract review
4.4	Design control
4.5	Document and data control
4.6	Purchasing
4.7	Control of customer-supplied product
4.8	Product identification and traceability
4.9	Process control
4.11	Control of inspection, measuring and test equipment
4.12	Inspection and test status
4.13	Control of nonconforming product
4.14	Corrective and preventive action
4.15	Handling, storage, packaging, preservation and delivery
4.16	Control of quality records
4.17	Internal quality audits
4.18	Training
4.19	Servicing
4.20	Statistical techniques

conducting internal audits and holding regular management reviews.

Meeting most of these requirements is not a serious obstacle in a well-run organisation. In an effective, high performance organisation, often the only thing required is to write down, in a formalised manner, the way one is currently operating. Meeting some of the more specific quality assurance requirements, however, almost inevitably requires extra work. This includes the introduction of new activities and processes, particularly document control, internal audits and systematic corrective action.

It is important to recall that ISO 9001 and ISO 9002 are system standards. The certificates awarded indicate that the organisation is well able to meet the needs and demands of its customers in a planned and controlled way. But the label does not guarantee that the products or outputs of the organisation are of the highest possible quality level (although this is often suggested for publicity purposes). This system of process approach to quality may sometimes be in a conflict with a more “absolute” product approach to quality. For instance, an ISO

***“(...) ISO 9001 and ISO 9002 are system standards. The certificates awarded indicate that the organisation is well able to meet the needs and demands of its customers in a planned and controlled way. But the label does not guarantee that the products or outputs of the organisation are of the highest possible quality level (although this is often suggested for publicity purposes). (...) ISO 9000 certificate for an education or training organisation provides “assurance” that it is well organised and that the outcomes of programmes and courses meet the intended goals and needs of the users; however, it does not necessarily guarantee that the content of these courses and programmes meet a particular educational standard.***



***“Thus, the terms ‘norms’ and ‘standards’, as used within the ISO 9000 context, differ from traditional education and training concepts.”***

9000 certificate for an education or training organisation provides “assurance” that it is well organised and that the outcomes of programmes and courses meet the intended goals and needs of the users; however, it does not necessarily guarantee that the content of these courses and programmes meet a particular educational standard.

Thus, the terms “norms” and “standards”, as used within the ISO 9000 context, differ from traditional education and training concepts. Official “standards” for education and training in general refer to required “inputs” (e.g. qualifications of teachers, contents of programmes, ...) or sometimes “outputs” (documents, diplomas, ...). ISO 9000 looks at quality in a different way, by requiring general principles to be followed for controlling the processes within the institutes (“process” or “system” standards).

Another important difference is that traditional education and training standards are often very specific and linked to a particular context. This feature makes such norms more relevant and verifiable, but also more time dependent (risk of rapid obsolescence) and less transferable. On the other hand, ISO 9001 and 9002 are much more general, which implies that considerable interpretation is always necessary (a sensitive issue for educationalists!) and certain issues may not be explicitly considered.

## **How certification works**

One of the interesting features of ISO 9001 and 9002 is that compliance with the requirements of the standard can be certified by an independent third party. Certification is essentially organised at national level. Most developed countries have now a national organisation that is entitled to “accredit” national certification bodies. Following a successful accreditation process, the certification body is then allowed to award “recognised” ISO 9001 or 9002 certificates. This accreditation process requires the fulfilment of very tough criteria for the certifying body, both in terms of the qualifications of the auditors employed and its internal organisation. Moreover, accreditation

is often limited in scope to certain industrial sectors, and has to be renewed regularly.

When an organisation is interested in obtaining an ISO 9000 certificate, in general the following stages will occur:

- development by the organisation of a quality system which is compliant with the requirements of the norm (ISO 9001 or ISO 9002);
- selection of an accredited certification body;
- (optional) pre-audit of the quality system by the certification body, followed by corrective measures (if needed);
- full compliance audit by the certification body, and award of the certificate (if successful);
- several interim audits with a more limited scope over a period of three years (typically every 6-8 months, but at least once a year);
- A certificate is only valid for a period of three years.

It should be clear that the certifying body has to be paid for its services. This may involve a considerable cost (for an education and training institute it will typically vary between 2500 and 10 000 ECU). However, this expenditure is only a small part of the overall cost of certification: the lions share is represented by the salaries of the staff members involved with the implementation of the quality system (possibly assisted by external consulting).

The relatively general formulation of the ISO 9000 standards, the “national” accreditation structure, and the “competition” between certifying bodies have all contributed to slightly different practices in relation to the award of ISO 9000 certificates. There is little “hard evidence”, but most experts would agree that not all certificates have the same value. Certification processes are said to be “easier” within certain countries or with certain certification bodies. In my experience, this “problem” certainly exists and should be taken seriously. On the other hand, the issue should not be exaggerated. Because



of the process nature of an ISO 9000 based quality system, with all its feedback loops and corrective actions, it is very difficult to run a “poor” ISO 9000 system. Actually, very few cases of “falsification” of systems or certificates have emerged so far – at least in an accredited environment. A useful analogy is the differences between the value and quality of similar looking degrees of universities across Europe: these differences are much more important than those between ISO 9000 certificates.

## Advantages and disadvantages of ISO 9000 certification

Before we look at the appropriateness of ISO 9000 in education and training, it is useful to examine the advantages and disadvantages as they are perceived in companies. Both at national and international level, a growing number of studies have been conducted which examine the benefits and drawbacks of ISO 9000 certification.

An in-depth UK survey “ISO 9000 - Does it work?” conducted in 1995 by the Manchester Business School on behalf of SGS, found eight reasons for seeking certification which were each listed by at least half of the respondents to the survey (in decreasing order of importance):

- future customers likely demand for ISO 9000;
- to increase consistency of operations;
- to maintain/improve market share;
- to improve service quality;
- customer pressure;
- a good promotional tool;
- to make operations more efficient;
- to improve product quality.

The survey also found that,

*“small companies principally sought the standard to improve market share and for promotional purposes. (...) The larger the organisation, the more likely it was to cite customer pressure as a reason for certification. The service sector emphasised the importance of increasing market share and the need to improve consistency of operations and quality of service (...).”*

These results, when interpreted in an education and training context, are consistent with my findings and experience regarding education and training providers.

But the same study also identified a number of important hurdles and problems in relation to ISO 9000 certification:

- the time required to write the manual
- the high volume of paperwork
- the high cost of implementation
- the time required to complete implementation
- the high cost of maintaining the standard
- the lack of free advice
- the lack of consistency between auditors
- the time spent checking paperwork prior to audits

Only the first of these drawbacks was mentioned by over 30% of the respondents; the last item by 16%. The survey concluded on this point that,

*“The high cost of implementation - in terms of time, volume of paperwork and money - were seen as the major problems related to ISO 9000 across all groups. Small organisations generally considered drawbacks to be more significant, when compared to the benefits, than did large organisations. The same pattern was seen in concerns with ongoing maintenance of the standard (...).”*

The above arguments for and against ISO 9000 summarise, in my view, much of the debate about the benefits and drawbacks which companies associate with it. It also highlights that the relevance and cost-effectiveness of certification will depend highly on the specific context: both the external demands and opportunities, as well as the internal needs and possibilities.

It should therefore be no surprise that there are still many successful and high quality companies which are not ISO 9000 certified. Indeed, “going for ISO” is only one way to develop and maintain a quality system, to drive the quality assurance process and to engage in a spiral of continuous improvement. But it is an approach which is highly visible to the outside world (unlike other quality ap-

***“(...) the relevance and cost-effectiveness of certification will depend highly on the specific context: both the external demands and opportunities, as well as the internal needs and possibilities.”***



***“It remains an open question, however, whether ISO 9000 will ever deeply penetrate the public and non-profit sector (including the education world). This is linked to questions of appropriateness, interpretation and cost, as well as to the quality culture of such organisations.”***

***“Overall, it would appear that the reasons for seeking certification in the education and training world do not differ fundamentally from those elsewhere.”***

proaches) and which sets a clear perspective for the employees.

I feel that we are gradually evolving into a situation – more rapidly in some European countries than in others – where ISO 9001 or 9002 will be considered as a “minimum” quality requirement for manufacturing firms. This is already the case for certain industrial sectors in some European regions. This idea is also penetrating the commercial service sector, albeit at a lower pace and in a less uniform way (in general because the relevance of the certificate is not obvious, or because there may be more interesting alternatives, i.e. sector-specific standards). It remains an open question, however, whether ISO 9000 will ever deeply penetrate the public and non-profit sector (including the education world). This is linked to questions of appropriateness, interpretation and cost, as well as to the quality culture of such organisations.

### **Appropriateness of the standard for education and training**

The late 1980s saw the introduction of “industrial” quality concepts (such as Total Quality Management – TQM) in a few education and training institutes; in the early 1990s, some pioneers embraced ISO 9000. Since then, there has been increasing evidence that the adoption of TQM principles and methods – including those embedded in the ISO 9000 requirements – could be relevant and useful for education and training organisations.

There are a number of arguments which underpin the move towards ISO 9000 certification. Not surprisingly, education and training organisations seek in this way to improve or maintain the quality of their education or training provision. But often there are other arguments put forward, in particular the following:

- the promotion of a high quality image, with high visibility and credibility;
- a way of responding to external factors, in particular pressures from customers (directly or indirectly), governments or funding bodies;

a method for developing a full quality assurance system which covers the whole organisation;

the need to improve a number of specific activities of the organisation, which are currently badly organised.

In each of these areas, several factors may play a role. The importance of these arguments is likely to vary strongly depending on the nature of the organisation and its external environment. Overall, it would appear that the reasons for seeking certification in the education and training world do not differ fundamentally from those elsewhere.

Arguments in favour of certification should, of course, be balanced against the counter-arguments and disadvantages. These are numerous and – in the light of the limited number of certified education or training institutes – still outweigh the positive arguments. There are several possible disadvantages:

interpretation problems (the standard was initially designed and written for the manufacturing industry);

insufficient relevance of certain components of the norm (and lack of specific mention of some issues which are considered critical to education and training);

inappropriate standardisation in use and application;

time consumption and cost;

risk of increased bureaucracy;

specific problems linked to particular types of education and training institutes.

It must thus be recognised that the ISO 9000 approach has some inherent weaknesses for education and training, which require skill and creativity to address. The cost and time implications are a real hurdle, and there is a serious risk of a bureaucracy.

Overall differences by type of education and training provider are:

compared to schools and higher education institutions, the providers of



continuing education and training are more likely candidates for ISO 9000 (market pressure; more similarity with other industrial services);

□ vocational education and training providers are more suitable candidates for ISO 9000 than general education institutes (closer linkage to the employment market with its quality ethos and culture);

□ ISO 9000 is more likely to be appropriate for “larger” than for “small” institutes (economies of scale, and need for more formalised process control in larger institutes);

□ the more varied and customised the provision of education and training is, the more time it will take (and the more costly it will be) to obtain an ISO 9000 certificate.

## Interpretation issues

A particular feature of the ISO 9000 standards is the need for interpretation. Many of the specifications laid down in the standards need careful analysis and adequate interpretation before they can be applied in a particular education or training context. This relates to both the terminology and to the processes concerned. This feature is both an advantage (it allows considerable flexibility and customising, over time) and a drawback (it may lead to insecurity and be the source of controversy and resistance).

A critical point in the interpretation for education and training is the definition of the “product”: is it the “learning output”, the “learning process”, or rather the education or training programme which is offered? This is not just an academic problem, but one which has implications throughout the standard. In my view, based on comparisons with other service sectors, given the real difficulty of controlling the learning process, and the choices made by many certified education and training organisations across Europe, the most operational way to define the “product” in an ISO 9000 context is as,

*“the education and training services offered by the organisation, including associated products, tools and services”.*

This choice has many implications when interpreting a number of clauses of ISO 9001/9002. For instance, when “learning” is taken as the “product”, then the “testing and inspection” requirements concern assessment and evaluation of students and trainees. However, when “the course (programme)” or “training” is considered as the product then the “testing and inspection” requirements refer to the evaluation of a course or training session by students, trainees and/or their employers. Interestingly, however, even when “learning” is taken as the definition of the product, in practice it might lead to a similar implementation of the quality system. This is related to the somewhat redundant nature of the ISO 9000 requirements, and the fact that the systematic application of the principles of quality assurance is almost independent of the definition of the product. In particular the general clauses 4.2 (Quality system) and 4.9 (Process control) are formulated in such a way that quality assurance arrangements must be in place for *all* critical processes, whether these are covered by a specific clause of the norm or not.

There is a second, more challenging set of interpretation problems. These concern the assessment of how the requirements can be addressed effectively with minimum overheads. Indeed, in many situations it is often not straightforward to say whether or not a particular requirement is entirely fulfilled. Consider, for instance, the need to define and analyse “design input factors” during the design process (Clause 4.4 in ISO 9001). It will be a matter of judgement by the institution and the auditor of the certifying body to decide whether all critical input factors are being considered.

How such issues are dealt with has major consequences for the implementation and maintenance of the quality system. The ISO 9000 standards contain many parts which need subjective assessment for a particular education or training provider. This is, actually, both a strength and a weakness of ISO 9000.

A third, related type of interpretation difficulty concerns the rigour and extent to which the requirements have to be followed, such as:

***“A critical point in the interpretation for education and training is the definition of the ‘product’: is it the ‘learning output’, the ‘learning process’, or rather the education or training programme which is offered? (...) based on comparisons with other service sectors, given the real difficulty of controlling the learning process, and the choices made by many certified education and training organisations across Europe, the most operational way to define the ‘product’ in an ISO 9000 context is as, (...)”***



***“The whole process from decision to certification for a typical organisation is typically in the range of 12 to 18 months. Thus, the relevance of adopting ISO 9000 should not only be considered in terms of the advantages and drawbacks of the quality system, but also in the light of the complexity and risks of implementation.”***

- ❑ the level of detail needed for documents (particularly procedures and work instructions) – which has considerable implications for document control
- ❑ the nature and quantity of quality records – often the biggest stumbling block in the effective maintenance of the quality system, and the seeds for a bureaucratic, paper-based system
- ❑ the specificity of the quality policy and objectives
- ❑ the frequency of internal audits and management reviews
- ❑ the scientific validity of the evaluation and assessment methods used.

No authoritative guidance exists on such issues. What needs to be done in practice depends on the complexity of the organisation, the demands from customers, and the educational attainment of the staff. It is safe to check in advance that the certifying body agrees with the interpretation adopted.

### **Implementation of an ISO 9000 based quality system**

The whole process from decision to certification for a typical organisation is typically in the range of 12 to 18 months. Thus, the relevance of adopting ISO 9000 should not only be considered in terms of the advantages and drawbacks of the quality system, but also in the light of the complexity and risks of implementation. After all, establishing a quality system is not merely adding a few bells and whistles to an existing organisation, but is an important “change process” which will have an impact on the whole organisation. It is well known from management consulting practice that the implementation of change processes is always difficult and risky, and that resources are often underestimated. This also applies to the whole certification process.

Although it is dangerous to generalise about the “ideal” starting requirements for ISO 9000, my personal “top ten” are the following initial conditions that:

- ❑ the organisation is already well organised;

- ❑ there is already a quality policy (at least implicitly), with standards which are taken seriously;
- ❑ the organisation has been, and is likely to remain, fairly stable in terms of activities and personnel (no other important change, expansion or streamlining operations are going on);
- ❑ there is a good understanding of all internal processes;
- ❑ many standardised documents exist already;
- ❑ the organisation is financially sound;
- ❑ a qualified, motivated and credible (highly regarded) person is available to co-ordinate the implementation;
- ❑ the senior management believes in the value of certification and is committed to it;
- ❑ the number of significantly different types of customers, products and services is limited;
- ❑ the organisation is small with only a few departments and maximum of a few dozen staff members.

If most of these conditions are met, the organisation can safely engage in an ISO 9000 exercise. But if none or only a few apply, then it is likely that the journey towards certification will be long and paved with obstacles. A bonus in all cases would be the easy access to professional advice and to the experience of similar organisations who have already implemented the requirements.

### **Conclusions**

Although experience with ISO 9000 in the education and training world is still limited (a few dozen institutions in each of the larger or more advanced European countries), first lessons can already be drawn.

The tangible and often compulsory requirements of ISO 9001 and 9002 standards (quality policy, quality manual and procedures, regular audits, ...) provide an overall, measurable framework for quality efforts, which can be used by an education and training organisation. Experience so far indicates that ISO 9000 based



quality systems contribute to improved customer service, high levels of quality assurance and a dynamic of continuous quality improvements. ISO 9000 is not in contradiction with any sound educational standards or practice, and can easily complement other quality approaches (in particular those focussing on input- or output-factors). Obtaining a certificate enhances the organisation's quality image and underpins its quality claims in an increasingly competitive environment. It may enable an education or training provider to fulfil or exceed externally imposed quality criteria.

But even education and training organisations who are generally very positive about ISO 9000, recognise a number of problems and drawbacks in the operation of the system. The problems most frequently reported are: the continuous volume of paperwork involved, the cost of certification and the ongoing cost of maintenance, the risk of evolving towards a bureaucracy focused on procedures and registrations, and the difficulty of implementing changes fast.

It should be recognised that the ISO 9000 norms are not the best imaginable qual-

ity standards for education and training. Ideally, they should be complemented by content-related criteria. What remains unresolved as yet is the question of the cost-effectiveness of the certification process and the maintenance of the quality system. More research is needed on the impact of ISO 9000 certification, its relevance, its cost-effectiveness, and the coherence with traditional quality concepts and mechanisms used in education and training. More studies over a sufficient time scale will also be required to examine whether the benefits reported continue to outweigh the drawbacks, and under what assumptions the experience of implementing an ISO 9000 based quality system may be transferable to other education and training organisations.

In conclusion, even the increasing number of ISO 9000 certificates is unlikely to put an end to the vivid debate about quality assurance and quality management in education and training institutions. Eventually, it will be the market which will decide whether the cost of certification is worthwhile, whether its benefits will outweigh the drawbacks, and whether any other national or international quality scheme is more appropriate.

***“ISO 9000 is not in contradiction with any sound educational standards or practice, and can easily complement other quality approaches (in particular those focussing on input- or output-factors).”***

***“(...) ISO 9000 norms are not the best imaginable quality standards for education and training. Ideally, they should be complemented by content-related criteria. What remains unresolved as yet is the question of the cost-effectiveness of the certification process and the maintenance of the quality system.”***

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# In-company continuing training: Trends in European enterprises

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## Introduction

The perspective has changed in European enterprises. The continuing training of employees is no longer viewed as ad hoc adaptation to new generations of technology. Today, people tend to smile at the idea that continuing training is funded as a reward and incentive for industrious employees. The oft-cited challenges to European enterprises in the 1980s and 1990s are usually grouped into two major categories: the employment of computer-aided techniques and the globalisation of markets undergoing qualitative change. These challenges have led - and continue to lead - to profound modernisation processes in companies.

Worldwide competition focuses on the inherent ability of enterprises to anticipate outside trends and to adapt flexibly and cheaply to every conceivable market change.<sup>1</sup>

In principle, enterprises currently achieve the required flexibility by adjusting two related inputs.

□ New forms of business and work organisation, characterised by flat hierarchies, horizontal networking, team work, functional integration at the workplace and inter-enterprise networking.

□ Employees with hybrid qualifications, good communication skills and sound methodology constantly encourage innovation in enterprises.

These trends can be found in all industries and in companies of all sizes throughout the EU.<sup>2</sup>

## Company personnel development and continuing training as an investment

Whatever the new forms of organisation and associated management models are called (learning enterprise, fractal enterprise, lean management, anthropocentric work organisation, etc.), they all rely on extensive jobs enlargement in vertical, horizontal and social terms with corresponding skills requirements for all employees. All staff are also expected to play an active role in initiating and implementing projects to develop the enterprise. Staudt's verdict that the personnel potential of an enterprise is its limiting factor in competition<sup>3</sup> becomes apparent in 'new' enterprises which not only require competent specialists for the various functions, but also systematically uses employee creativity as a source of innovation.

Now enterprises throughout Europe are discovering that this new breed of employee for the 'Learning Company' must still be created. They do not occur naturally either in enterprises or on the labour-market. Even with suitably adapted initial vocational training systems, the necessary skills must be constantly relearned, adapted and improved throughout working life.

Continuing vocational training is becoming a matter of survival for companies, and since every enterprise undergoes specific developments, the continuing training must be essentially in-company continuing training.<sup>4</sup> This makes continuing in-company training a strategic factor that must be planned and financed

**The challenges of globalisation and industrial change prompt enterprises in all EU Member States to adopt modernisation strategies which focus on flexibilisation of structures and employees and on systematic promotion of innovativeness. In this context in-company continuing training becomes a strategic factor in corporate policy; continuing training costs are seen as investment; financial control of training and quality assurance are expected to optimise programmes and the overall process of personnel development. The necessary integration of organisational development and personnel development in new corporate cultures manifests itself at programme level in forms of integration of in-house learning and working. European enterprises are increasingly expanding and exploiting this interface of two reference systems (working and learning) as a source of innovations.**



***“Continuing vocational training is becoming a matter of survival for companies, and since every enterprise undergoes specific developments, the continuing training must be essentially in-company continuing training.<sup>4</sup> This makes continuing in-company training a strategic factor that must be planned and financed in the same way as production technology and logistics.”***

1) Almeida Silva, J.L., Les 'flexibilités dans l'entreprise', in: Fernandez, A. et al. (Eds.), Flexibilité. Le nouveau paradigme de la production et les réponses flexibles de la formation dans une organisation qualifiante, Caldas da Rainha, 1995, p. 29ff; Stahl, T., Vocational training, employment and the labor market, in: Bergeron, P.-O., GaiFFE, M.A., Croissance, Compétitivité, Emploi, Brussels 1994, p. 245ff

2) Tomassini, M. (Ed.), Training and Continuous Learning, Milan 1997. cf. Severing, E., Stahl, T., Qualitätssicherung in der betrieblichen Weiterbildung, Luxembourg 1996; Andersen, L.E. et al., Europe's next step. Organisational Innovation, Competition and Employment, Ilford 1995

3) Staudt, E., Unternehmensplanung und Personalentwicklung - Defizite, Widersprüche und Lösungsansätze, in: MittAB 22 (1989) 3, p. 374ff

4) cf. Bertini, G., Three approaches to learning in enterprises, in: Tomassini, M., 1997, p 102ff. This also holds in cases where external continuing training providers are involved. Their programmes must be tailored to the contents, methods and organization of each enterprise individually. (Stahl, T., Stölzl, M., Bildungsmarketing im Spannungsfeld von Organisationsentwicklung und Personalentwicklung, Berlin 1994)

5) cf. die Fälle Dragados y Construcciones / Telefonica / G. INI-TENEO, in: Severing, Stahl 1995, p. 45f

in the same way as production technology and logistics. Spending on continuing training becomes a business investment to such an extent that it must be subject to economic evaluation. The increasing importance of in-company continuing training as a strategic business development factor necessarily raises to the question of the adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency of continuing training programmes. New forms of assessment, quality assurance and quality management are finding their way into continuing vocational training.

### **The difficulties in the financial control of training**

If in-company continuing training is seen as an investment, business logic dictates that the programmes and financial outlay be subject to financial control mechanisms. As with other business investments, an attempt is made to establish what contribution continuing training makes to the success of the undertaking and then to compare that to the costs involved.<sup>5</sup>

Of course it is practically impossible to determine the quantitative contribution of continuing training in isolation from the numerous other factors contributing to the success of an enterprise. This leads to unfortunate strategies in the financial control of training.

□ Financial controllers concentrate on measurable variables, and primarily the costs of continuing training. However, if the only measure of the optimisation of continuing education is its cost, there is a risk that cheaper solutions will be adopted and so the full potential of appropriate training will not be achieved.

□ For lack of other evidence 'trainers' fall back on quantifiable indicators of performance (absenteeism falls, suggestions for improvement increase, job satisfaction improves, etc.), which are all very fine, but are of only marginal importance in relation to the real goals of continuing training.

□ In any event, the short-term prospects of success prevail over a longer-term view

of company development processes, which are precisely what new ways of integrating organisational development and continuing training are striving for.

The 'financial control' approach may be understandable from the business calculation standpoint, but in the experience of European enterprises it has done little to optimise in-company continuing training. Nevertheless, this approach has injected cost awareness into continuing training, efficiency considerations have been introduced, and the question of a measure for assessing continuing training performance is being discussed in earnest. Most enterprises in Europe are exploring other approaches to these unresolved issues.

### **Optimisation of forms of integration of personnel and organisational development**

Flexibility and innovativeness as crucial characteristics of successful European enterprises are the result of, firstly, the targeted receptiveness of work and company organisations to bottom-up impetuses and, secondly, the selective fostering of worker potential. Continuing training is thus both a cause and an effect of organisational development. Causality analysis and corresponding methods of assessment fail to account for these interdependencies. The introduction of team production makes no more contribution to an enterprise's improved market adaptation than does targeted teaching of social skills to participating workers. Only the combination of both these factors, which constantly change each other in symbiosis, achieve the result produced. Any attempt at an isolated attribution of cause and effect, and any attempt to base optimisation on such an analysis, is doomed from the outset.

A reminder that all aspects of enterprise modernisation are inter-related is naturally not very satisfactory when it comes to drawing practical conclusions on optimising the correlation, or to making a contribution to the optimisation of individual elements of the correlation.



A few years ago high hopes were attached to the idea of quality assurance for optimisation processes in in-company continuing training.<sup>6</sup> 'Process evaluation', borrowed from industrial production, seems well-suited for constantly improving continuing education and for taking more accurate account of the dovetailing of in-company training activities with other development processes. Application of appropriate quality standards (ISO 9000) and of quality management methods to in-company continuing training has gained some ground despite controversy among experts.<sup>7</sup>

## Quality assurance in in-company training

The initial ISO euphoria has since given way to by a realistic view of quality standards. In continuing training as elsewhere, differentiated and adapted forms of quality management, tend to use norms and standards as heuristic aids, whose function cannot be the optimisation of continuing training, but only to serve as reminders for all those involved in the process.

No quality criteria are prescribed for in-company training. They depend on the particular development goals of the enterprise and its employees. It is therefore only logical for DuPont Luxembourg to report that it is placing the optimisation of continuing training largely in the hands of the workers themselves after having worked with top-down job descriptions in the field of quality.<sup>8</sup>

This idea of workers being responsible for or participating in evaluating and improving their own learning within the company is only logical in enterprises which rely increasingly on employees with their own sense of responsibility in production or service provision. One of the purposes of continuing training goals is to develop this ability to act on one's own responsibility in the company's interest. It is therefore essential to make employees experts on the subject of their own continuing training.<sup>9</sup>

There is another reason. Workers constitute the interface in the above-mentioned

integration of learning and working, of organisational development and personnel development. They are expected to act competently within existing forms of working and to optimise them. They are also expected to develop new, improved forms of working and to look at overall company operating processes. It is the workers themselves who know their own shortcomings better than anyone else from daily practice. They are the people who are in the best position to take a critical look at continuing training programmes that will help to boost their own performance.

Such self-evaluation approaches, coupled with opportunities and encouragement to optimise learning are a recognisable trend towards quality management in in-company continuing training in Europe.

## Working and learning as a source of innovativeness

A result of the new management culture in European enterprises is the attempt to bring continuing training closer to the workplace and to integrate learning and work.<sup>10</sup>

Particularly in Germany, there are a variety of models<sup>11</sup> based on new vocational training approaches and on 'action regulation' theory (Handlungsregulations-theorie).<sup>12</sup>

For company practitioners, the decisive argument in favour of learning of this kind is its cost and the elimination of learning-transfer problems.

The reality of integrating learning and work promises an abundance of exciting results in the future. Recent research on the genesis of innovations suggest the importance of interfaces between different systems of reference in the evolution of innovations. Learning and working are different reference systems which until now have only been associated unidimensionally through narrowly defined channels. Job skills, and the associated knowledge and skill profiles always served as learning process specifications. Defining integration of learning and working as an open interface for the coproduction of innovation results in multifaceted recip-

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6) Feuchthofen, J.E., Severing, E. (Eds.), Qualitätsmanagement und Qualitätssicherung in der Weiterbildung, Neuwied 1995

7) cf. die Fälle Atea, Dragados y Construciones, Sollac, Renault, Arbed and DuPont, in: Severing, E., Stahl, T., 1996, p. 91ff

8) cf. Severing, E., Stahl, T., 1996, p. 41f

9) Stahl, T., Selbstevaluation. Ein Königsweg zur Qualitätssicherung in der Weiterbildung, in: Feuchthofen, J.E., Severing, E. (Eds.), 1995, p. 88ff

10) cf. Dankbaar, B., Learning to meet the global challenge, Maastricht 1995, p. 39ff and p. 61ff (New methods and approaches for learning-while-working)  
Den Hertog, J.F., Entrepreneurship on the shop floor: Nationale Nederlanden, in: Andreasen, L.E. et al., 1995, p. 196ff.  
Severing, E., Stahl, T., 1996, p. 47ff

11) Dehnbostel, P., Holz, H. u. Novak, H., Lernen für die Zukunft durch verstärktes Lernen am Arbeitsplatz, Berlin 1992; Dehnbostel, P. and Walter-Lezius, H.-J., Didaktik moderner Berufsbildung, Berlin 1995

12) Hacker, W. and Skell, W., Lernen in der Arbeit, Berlin 1993



***“Optimisation of in-company continuing training for enterprises in Europe must mean: creation of new sources of innovation through the integration of learning and working.”***

rocal challenges, cross-fertilization and interrelated developments. Learning will burst the bars of traditional schoolroom didactics and become an adventure. Entirely new methods, media and concepts will not only optimise but also redefine in-company continuing education. Conversely, work will be constantly rethought in response to learning processes. It will be systematically revamped and its forms,

methods and organisation will be adapted to changing market requirements. New product ideas and new forms of production will be generated.

Optimisation of in-company continuing training for enterprises in Europe must mean: creation of new sources of innovation through the integration of learning and working.

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# Self-assessment A royal road to quality assurance for continu- ing training?

## Introduction

Firms' growing acceptance of continuing training for employees as a human resource investment coupled with employees' growing realisation that continuing training is essential to a successful career has in recent years stimulated the interest of all concerned in effectively assessing and controlling continuing training and in measures to assure the quality of the training given. The article reflects this trend.

In view of the financial, organisational and personal investment by firms and their employees which continuing training involves it is only logical that these 'prosumers' - producers and consumers combined - of training should be keen to determine its effectiveness and efficiency and the concepts and philosophy that underlies it. At the same time, a brief perusal of the literature on the evaluation of training<sup>1</sup> makes clear the difficulties involved in definitely determining what are its effects.

This is one reason prompting the use of self-assessment as part of the process of quality assurance for continuing training.

It is, after all, people who directly experience training in practice whether as teachers or learners who are best able to assess its effectiveness in terms of expectations, needs and practical use and it is their criticism of themselves and others and proposals for improvement that can be directly built into modern training programmes. Quality **assurance** could then replace post facto quality control at little additional cost.

On the other hand, doubt exists as to whether those involved in continuing training possess the necessary specialist and pedagogical knowledge and ability needed to conduct self-assessment and whether teachers or trainees are capable of achieving the detachment required by self-criticism.

This article attempts to address the subject in more detail.

## Self-assessment during training is not new

Educational scientists use the words 'reflection' and 'self-reflection' to denote the fundamental processes whereby people relate to their learning experiences and which constitute the theoretical and practical bases for self-assessment.

Gerl (1983)<sup>2</sup> deals mainly with the ability of learners and teachers to reflect on what they have experienced. By constantly considering the learning processes in terms of their objectives and expectations, teachers and learners become the real evaluators of continuing training.

According to Gerl:

*'Evaluation should be used to denote all those actions which serve to enhance the degree of reflection before or during the learning situation'*<sup>3</sup>.

Altrichter<sup>4</sup>, who is particularly concerned with systematic self-assessment by training instructors, defines evaluation as the practical reflection on one's own teach-

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1) Cf. for example W.W. Wittmann: Evaluationsforschung: Aufgaben, Probleme und Anwendungen, Berlin 1985, or P.H. Rossi and H.E. Freeman: Evaluation. A systematic approach, Beverly Hills 1982.

2) H. Gerl: Evaluation in Lernsituationen - Ein Beitrag zu reflexivem Lernen, in H. Gerl and K. Pehl: Evaluation in der Erwachsenenbildung, Bad Heilbrunn, 1983

3) loc cit. p.19

4) Altrichter, H.; Ist das noch Wissenschaft? Darstellung und wissenschaftstheoretische Diskussion einer von Lehrern betriebenen Aktionsforschung, München 1990.



***“Stiefel stresses the practical value of linking self-assessment with external assessment in any evaluation of continuing training (...) he also makes clear that this requires a cooperative attitude on the part of all concerned if each is to be able to reflect without inhibitions on his own and others’ performance.”***

***“Self-assessment as a practical procedure for purposes of quality assurance in continuing training is the product of a person’s unity of objectives, interests and critical detachment.”***

ing practice or on changes in activity designed to achieve a desired overall situation. Altrichter, who views the instructor as the person responsible for carrying out practical research, regards him as the subject of critical self-reflection and the driver of the resulting situational change.

At the same time he draws attention to the main problem involved in this procedure when he describes the personal involvement of teachers or trainers in the process of research and intervention as a potential impediment to achieving what he calls the necessary ‘reflective distance’:

*‘As a result they are unable to break out of the vicious circle of defining a situation, action and evaluation.’<sup>5</sup>*

However, according to Altrichter the doubt attaching to the method is of little significance compared with the potential for innovative change inherent in a teacher’s evaluation of his own activity.

Stiefel<sup>6</sup> stresses the practical value of linking self-assessment with external assessment in any evaluation of continuing training with trainees, instructors and administrators all participating. He discusses the possibilities of providing systematic support for such self- and external assessment, but he also makes clear that this requires a cooperative attitude on the part of all concerned if each is to be able to reflect without inhibitions on his own and others’ performance.

We shall not go too deeply into the literature on the subject but merely follow up a few points.

1. Reflection and self-reflection as essential conditions for assessing one’s own performance in continuing training are themselves skills that need to be acquired and systematically developed.

2. Self-assessment as a practical procedure for purposes of quality assurance in continuing training is the product of a person’s unity of objectives, interests and critical detachment. For this set of contradictory elements to bear fruit calls for the abilities already referred to plus an open and cooperative relationship within the training institution or firm.

## **Self-organisation and external control: a central problem for quality assurance of continuing training in modern firms**

Both local and world markets have evolved from mass markets to customer-oriented markets characterised by rapidly changing requirements, demand for a broad range of products, customer service and fluctuating cost structures.

To remain competitive in such a changing environment, firms have had to react flexibly to diverse, altered demand structures. Flexibility in production and sales management is necessary if firms are to respond rapidly to their customers’ wishes yet at the same time supply quality products at minimum cost and with the shortest lead times. Attaching a wide range of services to what were previously pure product sales has also been necessary to keep abreast of customer requirements.

The use of computer-assisted technology and company-wide networking marked the first attempt to meet the challenge. CIM and CIB became the order of the day. However, these technologically focused attempts by industry soon showed that firms could not achieve the desired flexibility and dynamism coupled with a reduction in overheads with just-in-time production and streamlined logistics simply by factory computerisation. Apart from the enormous cost involved, CIM systems with their top-down approach create a new kind of rigidity by the very nature of their programmes, hindering rather than contributing to the dynamisation of a company’s operations rendered desirable by the growing complexity of the market environment.

The next innovative step, therefore, was a radical rethinking of the design of organisational structures and processes - moving away from long-term strategic top-down planning and switching competences and responsibilities to lower operating levels.

Making the company as a whole more flexible by encouraging greater autonomy at actual production level combined with

5) H. Altrichter, loc. cit. p.159

6) R.Th. Stiefel: Grundfragen der Evaluierung in der Management-Schulung. Lernen und Leistung. Frankfurt/Main 1974



horizontal networking between the various units are typical of these promising approaches. Slogans used in the context of such efforts include 'lean management', 'the fractal company' and 'the learning organisation'.<sup>7</sup>

These innovations designed to enhance companies' competitiveness have led to a radical change in management paradigms whilst at the same time generating considerable demand for skills and competences at all levels, though especially at that of skilled manual or specialist office worker. Companies' human resource potential, always an important source of added value at production level, has now suddenly also become a limiting factor in the company's success as a source of creativity and innovation in the face of market requirements.

In other words, it is no longer the acquisition of new production and administrative techniques that enables a company to gain a competitive edge over its rivals, since such techniques are now equally available to all. The decisive competitive factors now are the intelligent use of technology, and new product ideas, the provision of services and efficient working procedures, all of which calls for a skilled and motivated workforce.

Organisational development means constant personal development, which in turn gives rise to new forms of work organisation and corporate structure. Autonomy and responsibility for one's own activities are the new bywords of decentralised, flexible company management.

This renders the acquisition and development of key competences such as the ability of both management and employees to take decisions and assume responsibility for their own activity, to create and to innovate even more important for the design and execution of in-company training.

The latest vocational training techniques provide for the acquisition of such skills holistically in specialist or more general training sessions, often in the context of day-to-day working.

Modern firms' objectives for training and development make it logical that employ-

ees able to assume responsibility for their own work also give evidence of skills when it comes to matters of quality control in connection with their own continuing training. The ability already referred to to reflect on one's own and others' progress is a sine qua non for a member of a partly autonomous working group responsible for far-reaching decisions in matters of scheduling, materials planning and production.

From this point of view it would seem paradoxical for external control to be given preference over the opinions of such employees when it comes to judging their own learning progress and the advantages and disadvantages of continuing training arrangements and possible improvements.

In more recent discussions on quality assurance for continuing training there is unanimity on one point, namely that the situation in which the new knowledge and skills are to be applied must always be the yardstick for continuing training. The trainee himself is **constantly** in this situation. It is his everyday working context with which he has to cope and in which he must make innovatory changes. Who but the trainee himself would be in a position constantly to apply this particular yardstick to training, thus actually effecting quality assurance?

All this similarly applies to self-assessment by a training instructor.

Firms nowadays are increasingly demanding that training be incorporated into the actual work processes of their various departments. This has consequences for the organisation of continuing training and for the personnel concerned. Management becomes instructional activity and vice versa. No longer do those responsible for continuing training perform their task in isolation from productive activities. Moderators, trainers, multipliers etc. are involved in the everyday working process, just as are trainees and have similar opportunities to reflect on and assess their own teaching bearing in mind the application context and to make adjustments where necessary.

Moreover, their previous teacher training equips these self-assessors accurately to

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<sup>7</sup> Cf inter alia B. Wornack: The machines that changed the world, MIT Press 1991, P. Wobbe: Anthropocentric production systems, Brussels 1991; P. Senge: The Fifth Discipline, The art and practice of the learning organisation, London 1992; T. Stahl, B. Nyhan and P. D'Aloja: Die lernende Organisation, Brussels 1993; M.J. Warnecke: Revolution der Unternehmenskultur. Das fraktale Unternehmen, Berlin, Heidelberg 1993.



*“(...)the situation in which the new knowledge and skills are to be applied must always be the yardstick for continuing training. The trainee himself is constantly in this situation. It is his everyday working context with which he has to cope and in which he must make innovatory changes. Who but the trainee himself would be in a position constantly to apply this particular yardstick to training, thus actually effecting quality assurance?”*

*“External control of continuing training tends to inhibit innovation because it has to adhere for a certain period to prescriptions and assumptions once made, even though the application context has long ceased to exist.”*

diagnose any shortcomings and to make the appropriate calculated changes to the training process.

Compared with such self-evaluative processes resulting in immediate quality assurance by those concerned, external controls look expensive and less effective.

Moreover, the type of controlling employed for specific types of training misses its aim in the learning organisation. It is not the individual measure but the sum total of integrated learning and organisational processes that gives rise to corporate innovation and market success. External control of continuing training tends to inhibit innovation because it has to adhere for a certain period to prescriptions and assumptions once made, even though the application context has long ceased to exist.

### **Simplifying evaluation and quality assurance through self-assessment**

A major difficulty in carrying out quality assurance for continuing training is that of measuring the outcomes in the context in which acquired knowledge and skills have to be applied.

Classical methods of learning-objective-related testing on completion of training are at best designed to check individual learning gains in relation to curricular objectives.

For a trainee, as for the firm wishing to give its employees continuing training, this is at best an initial indicator of success. What really counts is whether what an employee has learnt enables him to cope better with the demands of his job than hitherto. The yardstick for successful training is the transfer of what has been learnt to the working environment **and** a measurable effect in working terms.

In the new working structures involving a greater degree of autonomy - such as partly autonomous units, flexible production cells and fractal companies, the effects of learning on practical day-to-day working are themselves complex and manifold.

The impact of training undoubtedly first manifests itself in **an improved mastery of a given technology** - such as CNC machine tool programming. Appropriate continuing training will focus on this and be measurable in these terms.

The successful use of a given technology, however, in turn depends on the existence of an adequate work organisation and corporate structure, the innovative solving of logistical problems and the like. Successful training in the field of CNC machine tool programming cannot therefore be confined solely to the purely technical side. Some **knowledge of factory operations**, time scheduling, logistics etc. which make workshop programming truly effective **may also be necessary**.

To apply such knowledge responsibly at production level **employees must be willing and able to take decisions in the interests of the firm**. This ability, again, needs to be learnt during the continuing training to which we have referred.

CNC machine tool programming is embedded in an overall work process which is carried out with similar autonomy by other employees. The delayering of hierarchical organisation structures must go hand in hand with horizontal networking constantly renewed by **effective communication and cooperation with fellow-workers**.

Again, the necessary skills have to be acquired; they too are decisive for the success of continuing training in practice.

To summarise: The success of continuing training is ultimately measured by economic operating parameters. The multiplicity of effective factors always makes any clear attribution of learning effects doubtful. The effects of training on work in practice provides an intermediate measurement value, but even then the various facets of the competences acquired are so interwoven that subtler results can at best be expected from research projects - and even this leaves the inevitable control group problems unsolved.

A satisfactory, more nuanced assessment of the success of training by external evaluators would seem impossible in day-



to-day operations. The task is additionally complicated by the **expectations** modern industrial concerns have **regarding the creative abilities of their employees**.

Corporate cultures which view employees as the new limitational factor look to them for active structural change, creativity and innovation. They also expect continuing training to generate such skills and abilities.

External evaluators encounter almost insoluble problems because such effects of continuing training may only emerge in the longer term, are always difficult to measure and yet are possibly the most significant for a company's development.

As far as the effects of learning are concerned the focal point of all the complex factors at work in a firm is the individual employee, who has to cope with the various demands made on him that we have described. All continuing training efforts are directed to equipping these employees with the necessary specialist and general competences.

Viewed from this standpoint it would seem logical to cease regarding employees as a kind of black box whose input and output factors can be related by means of complicated measuring procedures in order to assess the success or otherwise of continuing training. If an employee is to be given responsibility for machines whose value runs into millions he should also be trusted to express a judgement as to the usefulness of training related to his job.

An employee who can be presumed intelligent is better placed than anyone else

- to determine training needs in the various fields of activity
- to pronounce as to the direct usefulness of training given to him for coping with his work in practice
- to relate this practical usefulness back to the learning situation (curriculum, instructors, materials)
- to identify skill shortcomings that still exist and initiate new learning processes.

This would greatly simplify all measures aimed at quality assurance for continuing training. Substantial investment in terms of time and personnel could be replaced by simple, continuous communication between trainees, administrators and training instructors.

The idea of self-assessment during continuing training need not be restricted to the trainees themselves. Instructors, too, can contribute to simplifying quality assurance and improving its focus by their own process of self-assessment. Instructors rapidly become aware of deficiencies in the knowledge transmission process and would frequently be able to correct them on their own account or make them known to the firm or training organisation. Despite the obvious advantages of self-assessment by trainees and instructors involved in continuing training, self-assessment has so far been accorded only a peripheral role in quality assurance.

Since one cannot simply assume all those concerned to be ignoramuses, we must look at the problems that have given rise to this situation.

### **Successful self-assessment calls for certain qualities in the subject and his environment**

Scepticism regarding the use of self-assessment as a central factor in quality assurance for continuing training is based in the main on an underlying lack of confidence in the ability and willingness of employees and training instructors to judge themselves properly.

And indeed there are grounds for considering that this is justified.

Employees do in fact hesitate to reveal their own shortcomings, specialist or otherwise, and often do what they can to conceal them, finding other causes for problems connected with their work.

This, incidentally, also applies to training instructors, who tend to make the so-called ignorance of their trainees responsible for lack of training success rather

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***“Companies or training organisations keen to develop self-assessment as a means of quality assurance first need to break this automatic link between lack of skills and negative judgement. If an employee is to admit to such deficiencies he must be assured that the admission will be seen as a reason for making good the lack and will not work to his disadvantage.”***

***“Subjects undertaking self-assessment have to learn that admitting to one’s own weaknesses does not detract from one’s own worth but that on the contrary a constructive approach to weaknesses is part of a positive self-awareness.”***

than admit to their own weaknesses in either preparation or teaching.

In summary, therefore, the ability of these groups to adopt the critical attitude to their own work and competence necessary for the process of self-assessment would not seem all that great.

However, simply to exclude the possibility for this reason would be wrong. The very unwillingness of subjects to accept their shortcomings and their attempts to conceal them are evidence that they are quite aware that deficiencies do exist but simply do not want to confess to them.

This opens up a wide field of psychology relating to questions of self-awareness and people’s ability to adopt a detached attitude and to reflect on their own performance. But first it would seem useful to draw attention to certain environmental factors which impede the disclosure of failings.

It is a principle of the German school system to use pupils’ inability to learn as a negative selection factor rather than as a reason for further instruction. Children and young people learn early on to conceal their lack of knowledge or ability instead of admitting to them.

The situation in the world of work is little different. A perceived lack of competence does not automatically entail further training but is marked down as a negative in the employee’s personnel record and may slow down his promotion within the firm. In an extreme case it could even become a ground for dismissal.

Given this situation both an employee undergoing training and a training instructor have good reason to refuse to provide a realistic self-assessment.

Companies or training organisations keen to develop self-assessment as a means of quality assurance first need to break this automatic link between lack of skills and negative judgement. If an employee is to admit to such deficiencies he must be assured that the admission will be seen as a reason for making good the lack and will not work to his disadvantage. The same is true for teachers, trainers and coaches involved in continuing training.

More recent trends in the corporate culture of many firms offer a sound basis for ensuring that this is so, since openness on the part of employees is in any case a prerequisite for the organisation’s development and a climate of mutual confidence needs to replace the old system of control and sanctions.

The effects of the negatively oriented selection process used in the German school system are observable in the distrust with which many employees regard school-like forms of continuing training. Since such courses are in any case gradually being abandoned and replaced by more practice-related training, even those employees more damaged by their school experience should demonstrate a growing acceptance of training.

It is, however, undeniable that even when firms do adopt a positive attitude when faced with their employees’ lack of knowledge and skills not all the obstacles in the way of an adequate and nuanced self-assessment by employees are done away with.

We are left with subjective obstacles that fall under two main headings:

□ Subjects undertaking self-assessment have to learn that admitting to one’s own weaknesses does not detract from one’s own worth but that on the contrary a constructive approach to weaknesses is part of a positive self-awareness.

□ Subjects undertaking self-assessment also have to learn to distinguish which of the various different job requirements can be met by the acquisition of which skills, as also which methods of learning are more or less effective in their individual case. In other words, they have to become experts in their own learning behaviour.

This makes it clear that self-assessment during continuing training is also a subject for such training, whether of employees or training instructors. In order to avoid misunderstandings we would stress that we are not recommending actual courses in self-assessment. On the contrary, the ability to undertake self-assessment is the result of a suitable choice of method for specialist continuing training



and of certain forms of firms' organisational development. The constant call for self-reflection during the learning process and while working, the method-related support provided and not least the integration of these exercises in feedback from fellow-workers, superiors and trainers will gradually help the individual to improve his ability as regards self-assessment.

The very procedure whereby people's self-assessment can be improved shows that this means of quality assurance is not a substitute for the external evaluation of continuing training.

### The complementary roles of self-assessment and external evaluation

While qualifying self-assessment as a royal road in the title of the article might seem provocative, as soon as one begins to discuss the various subjective problems involved in a well-directed, realistic self-assessment, if not before, it becomes clear that elements of external evaluation are indispensable for coping with them.

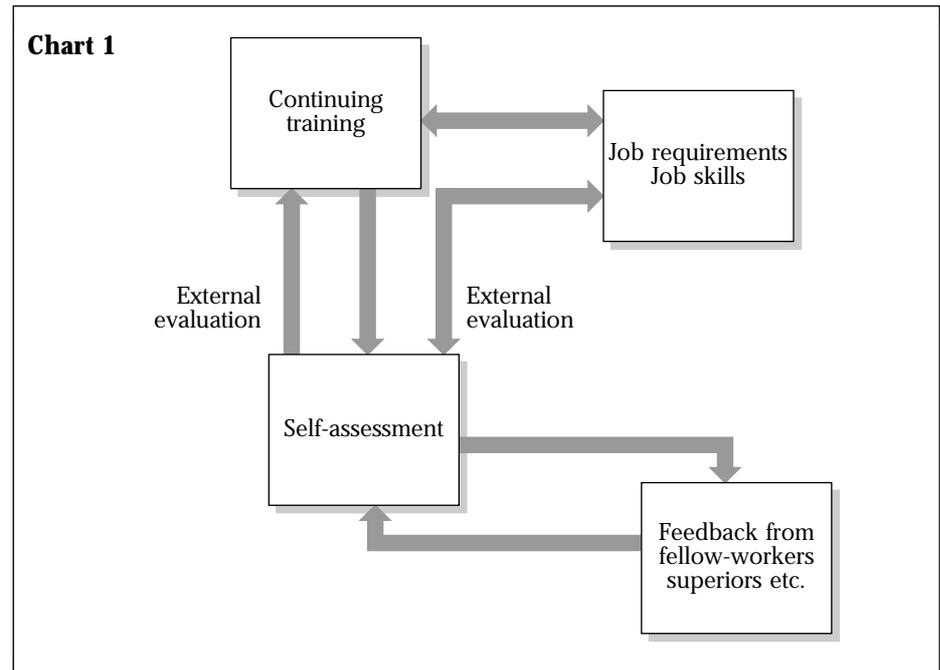
Only when ones own assessments are compared with those of authoritative third parties does self-assessment acquire the necessary degree of objectiveness and the sureness of judgement necessary to generate further measures.

The opposite, of course, is also true. Every external evaluation as regards the skills or work of employees, those undergoing training and training instructors must allow for the possibility of correction by the person concerned. In many companies this has long been done by means of the pre-reporting interview. Superiors recognise the value of such interviews, particularly for the opportunities it gives them to revise their own assessment.

Self-assessment and external evaluation are merely two sides of the same coin.

Of course any judgement of self contains elements of an external evaluation and only has value as such.

If a person who has been given training in CNC machine tool programming iden-



tifies shortcomings in his daily work, this, initially, is self-assessment. However, it can only generate useful practical consequences if he is able to attribute the causes for his failure to the content of training, training methods or work organisation. This is no longer self-assessment but external evaluation. When self-assessment thus becomes an integral part of external evaluation it can indeed render quality assurance for training simpler, more efficient and especially more effective in its consequences and the aimed-for constant improvement in training practice.

1. Nowadays the individual employee is a focal point of complex job requirements as well as of the relevant training efforts. He thus becomes a prime source of information as regards the mismatch of his skills with the firm's requirements and the various ways of using training to make good skills deficits.

2. In modern corporate cultures which increasingly rely on employees as the basis for and source of innovation and competitiveness employees become the subjects of their personal development at work. Only they are in a position to deal in an informed and responsible manner with their own training requirements.

3. For self-assessment to become the real source of improvements in training calls for a new climate of openness in firms so

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***“When self-assessment thus becomes an integral part of external evaluation it can indeed render quality assurance for training simpler, more efficient and especially more effective in its consequences and the aimed-for constant improvement in training practice.”***



***“There is a growing realisation that quality assurance is only possible with the committed cooperation of all employees.”***

as to allow people to take a detached view of their own shortcomings and admit to learning difficulties without fear of negative consequences for their careers. A person identifying a lack of knowledge or skill in himself must be given the chance to make good the deficiency without being looked down on.

4. Self-assessment makes for certainty and generates useful practical consequences only through a permanent process of feedback from external evaluators. Judgements concerning ones own performance potential, shortcomings and limitations need clarification from feedback in discussions with fellow-workers or superiors in a climate of trust. Only then can people acquire the necessary detachment and self-confidence that permits them to criticise their own performance.

5. Self-assessment is always the starting point for any external evaluation of continuing training measures, instructors, learning processes, materials etc. For this external evaluation to achieve its aim those undertaking self-assessment need knowledge of continuing training processes. This they obtain from their own reactions to increasingly open, non-school-like training concepts in which trainees and teachers work in partnership to design the learning process in their common interest.

6. Instructors employed by training organisations or in companies are similarly subjects of self-assessment and external evaluation as a result of these joint learning processes and are consequently in a position to take immediate steps to correct deficiencies and hence make quality assurance an integral part of the continuing training process.

While it is undoubtedly premature and possibly even mistaken to talk of self-assessment as the royal road to quality assurance for continuing training, it is quite clear that quality assurance can only be carried out simply, properly and promptly in this complex field on the basis of mature self-assessment by trainees and teachers alike.

The growing importance to firms of employees working autonomously and learning by doing presupposes that they are

able to judge their own skills or shortcomings and make these the starting point for their personal development.

Finally it should be stressed that a self-assessment project can only hope to succeed if it is embedded in the appropriate feedback from accepted external evaluators.

## **Elements of self-assessment in company practice**

Let it be said right at the outset that as yet the author knows of no firm that places responsibility for continuing training entirely in the hands of its employees.

The picture becomes quite different, however, if we look at the efforts being made by firms in Europe to enhance the quality of the personal development and further training of their employees. In almost all approaches to quality assurance or quality management of which we are aware elements of employee involvement are central to their success.

A comparative study of in-company training in nine member states based on 45 case studies concluded:

*“There is a growing realisation that quality assurance is only possible with the committed cooperation of all employees. In continuing training as elsewhere, quality assurance can only achieve its optimising and innovative potential if it ceases to be a management tool and becomes a grass-roots employee initiative.*

*The function of constant, joint reflection on possible ways of improving further training that makes quality assurance a factor for corporate innovation requires scope for self-determination and responsibility for ones own actions in a working context. This includes opening up corporate culture to allow all employees to become more involved and to share responsibility.*

*As the quality assurance process itself gathers pace elements of self-assessment, self-monitoring and automatic improvement will increasingly replace external*



*control mechanisms and commands from above.*

*Clearly impetus for quality assurance will steadily grow. Employees can only fulfil the additional tasks of process optimisation in continuing training if they acquire the appropriate skills through further training, thereby opening up still further possibilities.*

*Since, however, firms are not training organisations or institutes of personal development it is also worth stressing that the processes of equipping employees to optimise continuing training described here are also needed for optimising firms' actual production processes.*

*Given present market and technological developments, corporate structures and forms of work organisation that give importance to developing employees' planning and organisational skills would seem promising for European firms.<sup>8</sup>*

We shall quote a few examples from the many case studies:

#### **Du Pont de Nemours (Luxembourg)<sup>9</sup>**

##### **Quality assurance procedures**

The quality assurance procedures used have been considerably reduced to reflect Du Pont's new philosophy of replacing discipline imposed from above with one emerging at individual grassroots level.

Thus the procedure in the case being studied as set out in the quality handbook calls for use of a checklist that must be signed by the different heads of department but only at the level of orientation training. However, the person undergoing training is himself responsible for ensuring that he is given all the kinds of training provided for in the orientation training programme.

The logic of allocating responsibility in this manner is to be found in the yearly assessment interview. It is up to the workers themselves to ask for this assessment which is given by their direct superior. To this end they have to conduct a self-assessment and obtain assessments from a certain number of fel-

low-workers. The direct superior must compare this information with his own. The worker either accepts his assessment or can appeal to a committee appointed for the purpose. Once agreement is reached, the direct superior and the worker draw up a plan of training for the following year which is held at central level by the person responsible for training.

The different types of training given to each worker and all other training-related data are, of course, stored in a suitable database.

This change in corporate culture has not yet been entirely completed and it should be borne in mind that until fairly recently Du Pont was a company that attached great importance to systems. A certain number of tools from this period are still in use today. For a large number of problems workers are faced with the contradiction of assuming responsibility themselves and being directly supervised. This situation undoubtedly gives rise to conflicts.

#### **Renault Portuguesa Sociedade Industrial e Commercial SA (Portugal)<sup>10</sup>**

The methods of quality assurance used in this case are as follows:

- Monitoring performance at the workplace by hierarchical superiors and technical supervisors using the procedures referred to.
- Conducting interviews with participants either before training begins or in order to gather information and suggestions after training has been completed.
- Surveys are sometimes conducted to provide feedback on the application of skills acquired. These are carried out by departments within the company or, where there are difficulties, by the specialist departments of training companies. This procedure is additional to the monitoring done by company supervisors.
- The information gained results in adjustments which may be made immediately when a disparity between the actual and hoped-for result is noted, or

8) E. Severing and T. Stahl: *Qualitätssicherung in der betrieblichen Weiterbildung. Fallstudien aus Europa*, Brussels 1996, p. 150f.

9) P. Jung: *Assurance Qualité en Formation Professionnelle Continue, Inventaire Nationale Grande Duché Luxembourg*, Luxembourg 1994, p.29

10) M-J Figueiras: *Etude: La Garantie de Qualité dans la FPC*, Lisbon 1994, p.10



postponed to enable training objectives and content to be revised.

□ No final assessment tests or examination are usually carried out in the case of continuing vocational training unless this is a longer course of training leading to a qualification, such as a retraining course.

□ Self-assessment is carried out with the hierarchical superior or with the help of consultants and may take place either individually or in a group.

### **Cleveland Ambulance National Health Service Trust (NHS) (UK)<sup>11</sup>**

#### Quality-assuring the training

Training for the first two modules is conducted by ambulance instructors. At the end of the training candidates are examined by appropriate hospital medical consultants using verbal and written tests and simulation activities. The examination of trainees by external parties ensures that the objectives and standards set for the training are being met.

During the third module trainees are assessed on their competence through observation in a hospital environment by hospital staff in conjunction with ambulance instructors. The use of hospital staff in assessing a trainee's competence in the working environment ensures that training objectives are being met.

The fourth module uses work-based training and assessment to demonstrate the trainee's competency. At the beginning of this module trainees are assigned to work with a qualified paramedic who is also qualified, through achieving the Training Development Lead Body standards, as a skills trainer/assessor.

At the beginning of the module the trainee undertakes a self-assessment, examining the outcomes required to perform his job role and to grade himself against each element.

The trainee and trainer/assessor discuss the outcomes of the self-assessment and agree on an action plan which sets out how the identified training needs will be met, target dates for completion and the people who will be involved in the train-

ing. A record of training activity is maintained and reviewed. Documentary evidence recording details of a particular incident in which the trainee wishes to claim evidence of achievement and which the trainer/assessor has verified is also kept.

The trainee and trainee assessor work with each other until such time that both feel that the trainee can provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate competency to an independent internal verifier.

When trainees have completed the competence-based training programme and have been assessed and found competent they are licensed by the Cleveland Ambulance Paramedic Advisory Panel to practise as paramedics. Once the NVQ has been accredited these staff will submit portfolios of evidence for the award of NVQ level IV in Paramedic Skills.

### **ATEA N.V. (Belgium)<sup>12</sup>**

Three major shifts in training strategy can be identified:

Because of the increasing complexity/diversity of training needs it becomes more and more difficult for the training department to build up an 'expert team' with trainers attached to the training department. More and more 'expert' employees are made responsible for the development of training modules used by 'non-expert' employees (these experts remain in the 'operational' departments). The co-ordination of the development and the monitoring of the usage of the training modules is done by the training department. This shift in strategy calls for some new approaches/insights into how training is developed (you have to 'use' an expert because of his skills, not because of his 'didactic' qualities) and how training is made available.

Because of the speed of change and the 'individualisation' of training it becomes more and more impossible to plan training for large groups of employees. Every employee has to be trained at 'his' right time with a training programme adjusted to his needs. This means a 'complete' rethinking of the organisation of training (not possible any more with 'year programmes' consisting of classical cour-

11) J.Gibbons: Quality Assurance of In-Company Training, Sheffield 1994

12) J. Decramer: Survey on Quality Assurance in Training, Brussels 1994, Case 7, pp.2ff



ses). More and more training will be done by means of training modules which can be studied individually (non-classical courses) under guidance of an 'expert' employee (coach). This demands a further integration of training responsibilities within the organisation.

To increase the company's productivity people will have to be managed better than before. This type of management will be based on 'respect' for the employee. This respect is needed to create the necessary environment to encourage 'self-development' of the employees. This shift in management behaviour will have a great impact in how managers will be trained and/or selected.

Today a large part of the training budget is spent without any result. This is because people aren't motivated enough to be responsible for their own 'self-development'. Companies who will be able to change this 'picture' will win the 'competition'. The reason for this is the increasing importance of the 'human factor' in the production process. All companies have access to the same technology, therefore it is not the element which will determine the competitiveness of a company. The 'only' variable remaining will be the people working with the available technology. It will be their knowledge and use of the technology that will make the difference. This is only possible if the management style used gives employers the necessary 'freedom' and 'space' to continuously improve the 'production' process and their skills to work with the available technology. If management doesn't allow this 'freedom' then improvement will not happen because the complexity of the work has gone beyond the technical capability of one person (the manager). This type of management calls for people with a talent to lead others based on managerial competence rather than based on power. This change in management will be fundamental because it will impact most on the 'HRM tools'. Because of the fundamental change people have introduced the term 're-engineering'... this, however does not belong to the scope of this document. As a conclusion I would make the statement that without 're-engineering', 'self-development' will be hard to get.

One of the processes that has to be re-engineered is the process of training. The training department has to make sure that the training budget is spent well. One of the methods is revoking not motivated people from courses (motivating people is not the responsibility of the training department, it is the responsibility of management, motivation has to come from within the 'job'). The method we are using to make this possible is adding study work at the beginning of courses. Not motivated people will not have the energy to complete this work and therefore will not start with the course. Motivated people, however, will have no problem with the study work because they really need the course. Adding this study work will make the courses, especially classical courses, much more effective. A typical management error is forcing power people to complete courses even if they are not motivated. This has a double negative result: the employer will be demotivated and the training budget is wasted.

### **Société Raymond Geoffroy (a small French firm)<sup>13</sup>**

#### **Internal effects of the measure**

##### *Employee involvement and impact on work*

The staff did not oppose the project (if they had the company would have had to dismiss those refusing to accept progress). On the other hand, it was necessary to motivate them and to achieve a cultural change to persuade them to take an active share in the firm's management. The company used the services of a body financed by the regional council in order to help sensitise staff to the importance of quality; this had the advantage of bringing in an outside partner to give backing to the project.

Training also had the effect of making the staff feel more responsible. In some cases it revealed abilities in people who had been thought hopeless and enabled them to take on tasks that showed what they could do.

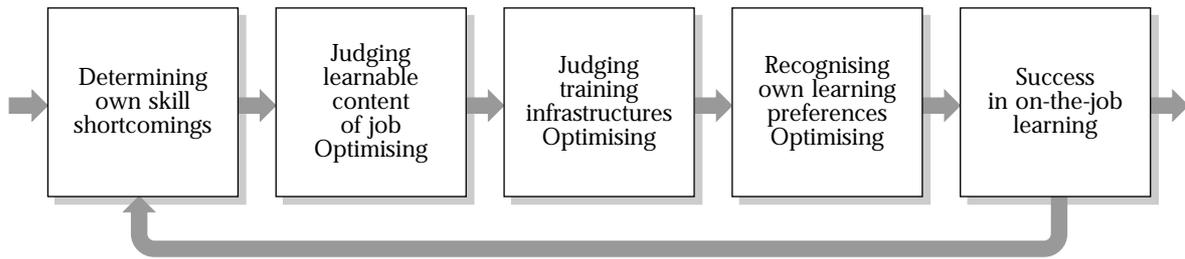
##### *Extending on-the-job training*

The quality approach tends to promote forms of training that are not commercial and not outsourceable:

13) J. Bonamy: La Qualité dans la formation continue en Europe, Rapport National Français, Ecully, 1994, pp. 25ff



Chart 2



❑ Not outsourceable: the firm carries out a large proportion of its training on the job and not on courses run by a training body.

❑ Not commercial: the firm has sought to ensure in each case that those receiving training became responsible for giving training to others. Thus when it came to training data typists it was decided that each would specialise in a certain kind of software - spreadsheet or word processor - and then train others to use it. This method made training a particular challenge.

❑ Not outsourceable nor commercial: the company regularly organises brief training sessions of 2 hours' duration 3 or 4 times a week for small groups. These are given by members of the company's staff. This exploitation of in-house skills enables people to use the competences they have acquired. It also allows individuals - whether executives or workers - to show what they can do, ensures that those who have been trained are listened to more carefully, and reinforces the culture of responsibility-sharing.

#### *Effects on training quality*

Clearly the status of training has undergone a change. It used to be considered a reward. Now it is regarded as an investment.

Training plans are still not quite on course. Some types of training have had to be postponed. Others have not been successful because the ability of the individuals concerned to learn had been

over-estimated. Generally speaking, however, the objectives set have been attained.

These examples, which are only some of many, show the need for cooperative involvement in quality assurance including elements of self-assessment.

The systematic development of self-assessment and self-reflection into major pillars of a firm's continuing training system is being undertaken in the form of a model project by the Bundesinstitut für Berufliche Bildung (bibb) which is studying inter alia the main questions of an evaluation of further training institutions using self-assessment.

*'Despite all the changes that have taken place in employers' attitude to continuing training we are still left with **the question of the usefulness of continuing training and personal development to a firm.** Management requires evidence that training has been successful, measurable in economic terms, if it is to regard investment in continuing training as an economically sensible measure. This also applies to work-based forms of training.'*

*Particularly where learning and working are successfully integrated in a learning organisation it is difficult to check the successful effects of continuing training. It is already difficult enough in such systems to distinguish investment aimed at optimising working methods from that designed to optimise learning. Both need the other and become confused. It is even more difficult to relate the continuing in-*



*cremental learning processes and the similarly continuing incremental improvements in working processes to one another in causal terms.*

*Self-assessment by employees involved in training coupled with an objective evaluation by fellow-workers and superiors would seem to be the only practical means not only of constantly reflecting the link between learning and a steady improvement and economically worthwhile change in working processes but of effecting directly the appropriate adjustments in continuing training and personal development.*

*It is the employees who carry out the work who see whether what they learn during in-company training helps to improve their work or not. Self-assessment enables them not only to do this but also to identify the reasons for success and failure and to make them the starting point for changes in training.*

*This constant process of reflecting on changes in ones own skills and the effect in terms of improved work leads in the feedback loop to all the above-mentioned elements of self-assessment and self-management in in-company training (Chart 2)<sup>14</sup>*

14) T. Stahl: Aus dem Antrag zum Modellversuch: Arbeitsplatznahe Weiterbildungsformen in der Betriebspraxis mittels Selbstevaluation messen, bewerten und optimieren, Regensburg 1997



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# Accreditation of training organisations

## Origin, objectives and methodology of the Portuguese accreditation system

**The objective of the Portuguese system for the accrediting of training bodies as set out in a published joint ministerial order is to contribute to the structuring of the vocational training system, to enhancing the professionalism of its agents and to improving the quality, usefulness, appropriateness and efficacy of training activity. It also seeks to ensure that public funds made available to aid vocational training are employed to maximum advantage. The accreditation system is not based on a concept of conforming to a standard and in this differs radically from quality certification.**

The Portuguese system for the accreditation of training bodies came into being as part of a thoroughgoing reform of the conditions qualifying for ESF funding of vocational training undertaken by the Portuguese government and closely monitored by the European Commission.

An objective of the system for the accrediting of training bodies created by a joint ministerial order published on 29 August 1997 is to contribute to the structuring of the vocational training system, to enhancing the professionalism of its agents and to improving the quality, usefulness, appropriateness and efficacy of training activity. It also seeks to ensure that public funds made available for vocational training are employed to maximum advantage.

The accreditation system is designed to be of general application, hence

- it is mandatory for all organisations wishing to benefit from national government and Community funds for assisting training activity;
- it is optional for other bodies which regard accreditation as a means of recognising superiority and thus resulting in an enhanced market value.

The context in which the accreditation system came into being naturally influences both the system's overall design and its area of application. It also decided the timing of its implementation given the role it plays for the status of candidates applying for ESF assistance.

Accreditation under the Portuguese system does not rely on conformity with a

given standard so that it differs fundamentally from quality certification.

Due to its origins in manufacturing industry, quality certification is a system that tends to focus on procedure, though as experience has shown, it can undoubtedly be adapted and applied to other contexts, such as the service sector.

However, the less tangible a product - that is the greater the weighting given to factors that cannot be codified or measured to determine its quality - the more difficult and complex it becomes to adapt the system and pinpoint and retain as standard procedures or criteria the features that really distinguish the product from others.

According to one person responsible for a training organisation writing in a supplement devoted to the subject of quality certification recently published (Seminário Expresso of 26 September 1998) 'The written procedures and the area targeted by the system which are the objects of certification may thus have little impact in terms of customer satisfaction and only when we return to the unavoidable human factor do we finally discover the real possibility of achieving a guarantee of quality'.

When what is at stake is the effectiveness of a training process in a given social or organisational context with specific aims and target groups - whether people actively employed, the long-term unemployed, young people with a low level of education and cultural or ethnic groups or minorities at risk of social exclusion - we enter upon a dimension in which the



outcome of training is frequently decided by the degree of innovation, calling for the capacity to take advantage of and improve on what we know about the engineering of training processes, the ability to design and test new methods and tools and then, often, to disregard an accepted standard where one exists and to reinvent a new one.

A great many different types of organisations have already been accredited by the system developed by INOFOR, ranging from small and larger training bodies, employers', commercial, industrial, technical, professional and scientific associations, local and regional development bodies, private bodies pursuing objectives in the field of social solidarity, social and parish centres, farming cooperatives, farmers' associations, foundations, trade unions, public bodies etc.

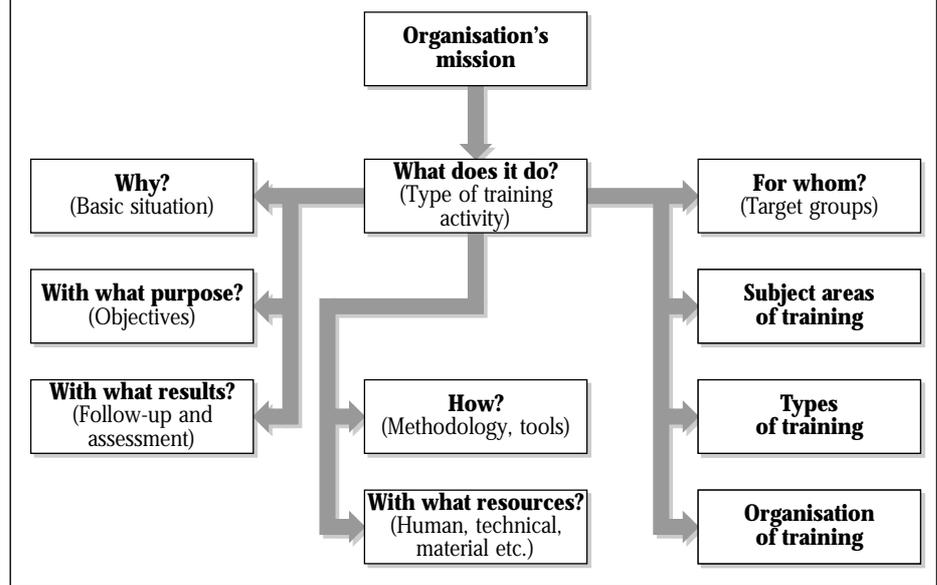
Very often the factors contributing to the success of training lie outside the technical sphere that is susceptible to definition and standardisation - the area targeted by the system of which the person quoted above was speaking - and in an area in which good practice does not alone constitute a guarantee of quality, an area in which the order of the day is not conformity with a standard but appropriateness. Appropriateness to the context, the target groups concerned and the training objectives.

In this sense, so far as validation of training activity is concerned we are closer to a clinical approach in which each training activity takes on the status of a case, with its own particular features and history and in which the success of treatment is basically measured in terms of its results.

The system developed, therefore, was intentionally one that places the emphasis on understanding the organisation and on the appropriateness of its activities, in the conviction that a system based on conformity with a standard would be in fundamental disaccord with the objectives of training body accreditation with which we are concerned.

The system of accreditation for training bodies is not, therefore, a system of quality certification but a system which, by

**Chart 1**



virtue of the methodology considered most appropriate given its context and purpose, aims to contribute to the quality and appropriateness of training activity and to the structuring of the training available to support it.

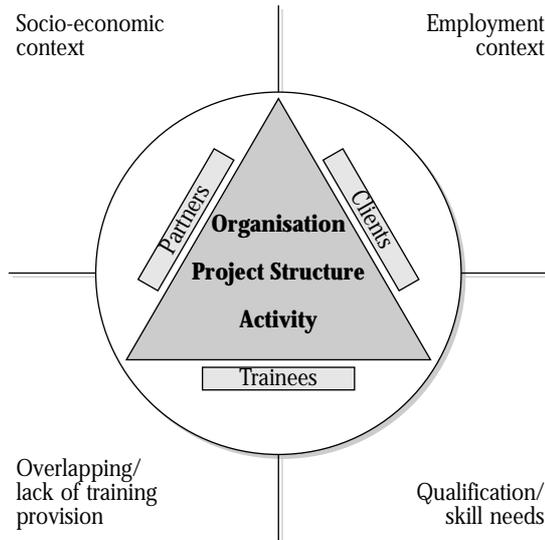
The system of accreditation for training bodies is:

- a system based on understanding that aims to comprehend the organisation as a whole, in its socio-economic context, in the context of its activity, and in its relationship with the community at large, its partners, clients and trainees;
- a system based on the principle of appropriateness whose criterion for assessment is the appropriateness of its activities to its objectives, context of activity and target groups;
- An analytical and deductive system which analyses and assesses the technical, pedagogical, organisational, and logistic conditions considered necessary to ensure the quality and appropriateness of training.
- An inductive system, in that it analyses and assesses representative samples of products and work already done by the organisations (methods, technical tools, structures and programme contents, teaching aids etc.) as indicators of its capacity.

***“When what is at stake is the effectiveness of a training process in a given social or organisational context with specific aims and target groups we enter upon a dimension in which the outcome of training is frequently decided by the degree of innovation, calling for the capacity to take advantage of and improve on what we know about the engineering of training processes, the ability to design and test new methods and tools and then, often, to disregard an accepted standard where one exists and to reinvent a new one.”***



**Chart 2**



The organisation is also invited to submit samples illustrating its work - projects, programmes, teaching aids, technical tools, studies, assessments etc. - to demonstrate its capacity and competence and serve as indicators of its future capacity.

To assist with the preparation of the application dossier INOFOR has issued a manual for applicants which describes, with examples, the various factors taken into consideration for assessment and the criteria applied (Chart 2).

The emphasis on understanding and appropriateness is reflected in the way in which the application for accreditation is handled: the applicant organisation must be analysed and understood:

- a) in a given socio-economic context;
- b) in a given employment context, in which there exist
- c) certain shortcomings in terms of qualification and skills, and
- d) a degree of training provision by both government and private bodies (often with competing overlaps and gaps),

as well as in the relationship it establishes with its partners, clients, and trainees.

This emphasis is also revealed in the follow-up of the organisation. Form cannot be separated from the substance which is the reason and justification for its existence and gives it sense. This is why the approach in the field is always preceded by a gathering of information concerning the context of the organisation's activity based on available indicators - economic, employment, job requirements, existing training provision etc.

At present organisations are accredited for given areas of activity corresponding to a model (with subsequent segmentation) of the training cycle or process and for different periods of time (one, two or three years) according to the soundness and verification of the details contained in the application dossier.

The areas of activity taken into account by the system are:

- The diagnosis of training needs;
- The planning of training activity;

***“Accreditation basically consists of an overall global technical validation of the training capacity of the body concerned as the prerequisite for quality training operations.”***

Finally, to close the methodological circle, the system includes an empirical component - follow-up - whose objective is not only validation in the field of the data and conclusions of documentary analysis but also a dimension of recognition and support for the organisation.

Accreditation basically consists of an overall global technical validation of the training capacity of the body concerned as the prerequisite for quality training operations.

Chart 1 summarises the information relating to the system.

Accordingly, the organisation applying for accreditation has to state in its application dossier:

- a) Its aim or mission as the promoter or a body actively involved in the training process;
- b) How it is involved in the field of vocational training, what it does, why it does it, with what purpose and for what target groups;
- c) How it operates, in other words how it views its activity and the methodological support it provides;
- d) The human, technical, teaching and material resources involved;
- e) How it assesses the result and impact of its activity.

***“To assist with the preparation of the application dossier INOFOR has issued a manual for applicants which describes, with examples, the various factors taken into consideration for assessment and the criteria applied.”***



- ❑ The design of training programmes, tools and aids;
- ❑ The organisation and promotion of training activity;
- ❑ Implementation of training;
- ❑ Follow-up and assessment of training;
- ❑ Other kinds of socio-cultural and teaching activity either preparatory or supplementary to actual training or to assist with the process of occupational and social integration (a field covering a variety of complementary activities or others not qualifiable as conventional, as is very often the case of activities carried out in the social market or with disadvantaged groups).

The first stage, therefore, is a process of developing and consolidating the accreditation system and of validating capacity, essentially focused on an analysis of both technical and teaching capacity involved in training activity, as demonstrated, credibly supported and illustrated by the organisations in their application dossiers (Chart 3).

## Follow-up

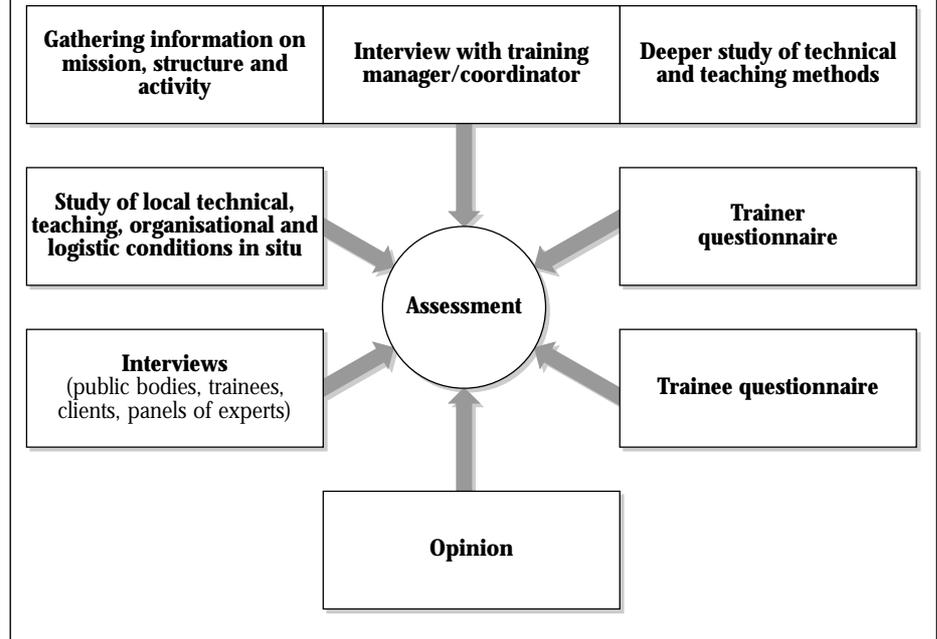
Accreditation of a training organisation is completed with a process of follow-up.

The purpose of follow-up is to validate the results of the processing of applications previously submitted but also to identify examples of good practice, successes and innovative experiments and to encourage and assist the organisations in continually improving the quality and appropriateness of their training activity.

The follow-up system links and combines a number of components whose synthesis results in an assessment which either corroborates, corrects, temporarily negates, or renews the prior accreditation decision whether as regards the scope of the organisation's activity or its period of accreditation.

The follow-up of accredited organisations will also make it possible to identify possibilities and models for joint action by ministries or other competent bodies

**Chart 3**



which in partnership supplement and foster the developments in areas of greatest need.

The fact that a large number of applications were received within a very short period, the inevitable consequence of the system's start-up phase and of the importance of accreditation for those organisations planning to apply for ESF assistance, meant that the follow-up procedure had to be postponed until after a decision on accreditation had been taken, so that it had the effect of either confirming or correcting the original decision.

In future, however, now that the initial phase has been completed and the system established, steps will be taken to ensure that follow-up takes place before the final accreditation decision is given.

## Results

Between September 1997 and September 1998 INOFOR received some 1750 applications for accreditation.

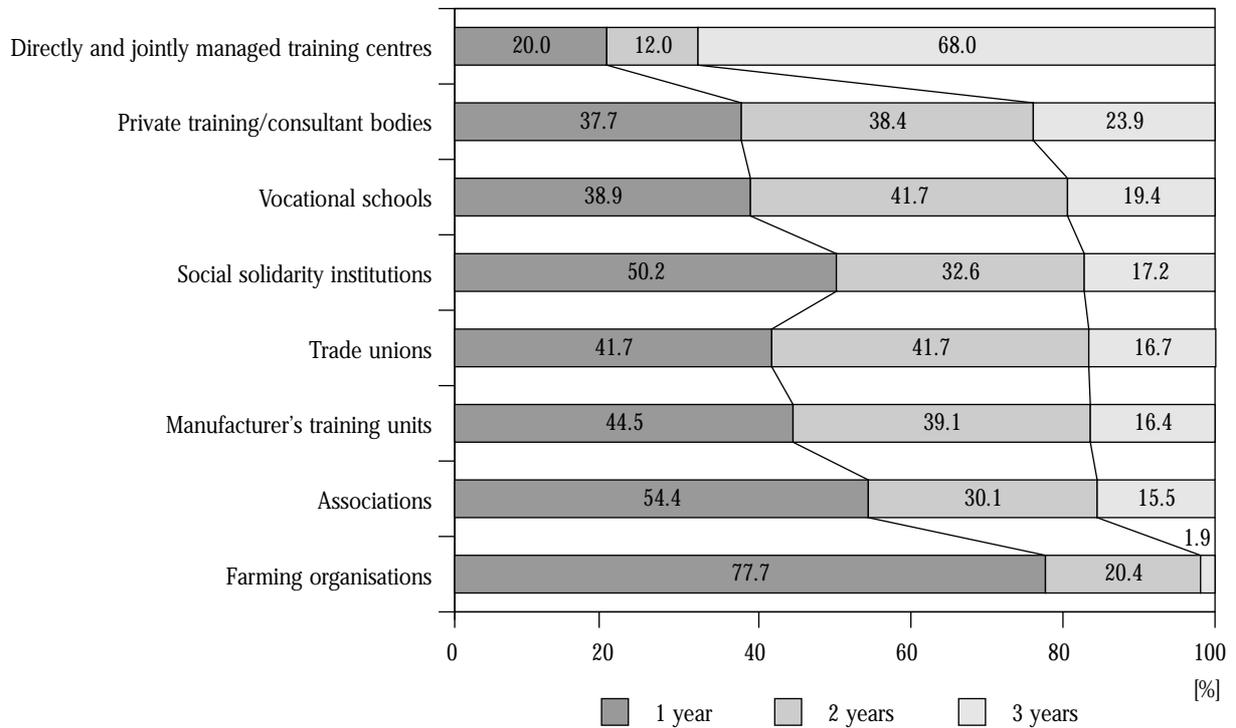
To date 1393 bodies have been accredited for different fields of activity and for different periods. This represents about 80% of total applications. Of the other 20% about half have failed to fulfil the condi-

***“Accreditation of a training organisation is completed with a process of follow-up.”***

***“To date 1393 bodies have been accredited for different fields of activity and for different periods. This represents about 80% of total applications. Of the other 20% about half have failed to fulfil the conditions for accreditation and the other half are still being scrutinised.”***



**Chart 4**  
**Breakdown of accreditation periods by type of organisation**



tions for accreditation and the other half are still being scrutinised.

A breakdown of total approvals by period of accreditation clearly reflects the weaknesses of the Portuguese training system:

- 47% of the total have received accreditation for one year;
- 33% have been accredited for two years;
- 20% have been accredited for three years.

This breakdown of accreditation periods is not replicated in every segment analysed. Those who come off best are the directly and jointly managed training centres, technological training centres, vocational schools etc. and the private training/consultative bodies, testifying to the relative soundness and consistency of the resources and training structures at their disposal. Those who do less well, on the other hand, are organisations in the agri-

cultural sector (farmers' associations, farming cooperatives, etc.) employers', commercial, industrial, technical and professional associations, local and regional development bodies and similar organisations and bodies pursuing objectives in the field of social solidarity - segments, in other words, which suffer from a serious lack of funds and often, too, of teaching know-how (Chart 4).

Besides identifying training organisations and projects with clear shortcomings in terms of technical and teaching capacity, the survey already carried out helped to highlight cases of excellence, examples of good practice and innovations contributing to the success of training which it is important to encourage and promote.

### Development of the system

The development of the system of accreditation provides for the gradual incorpo-

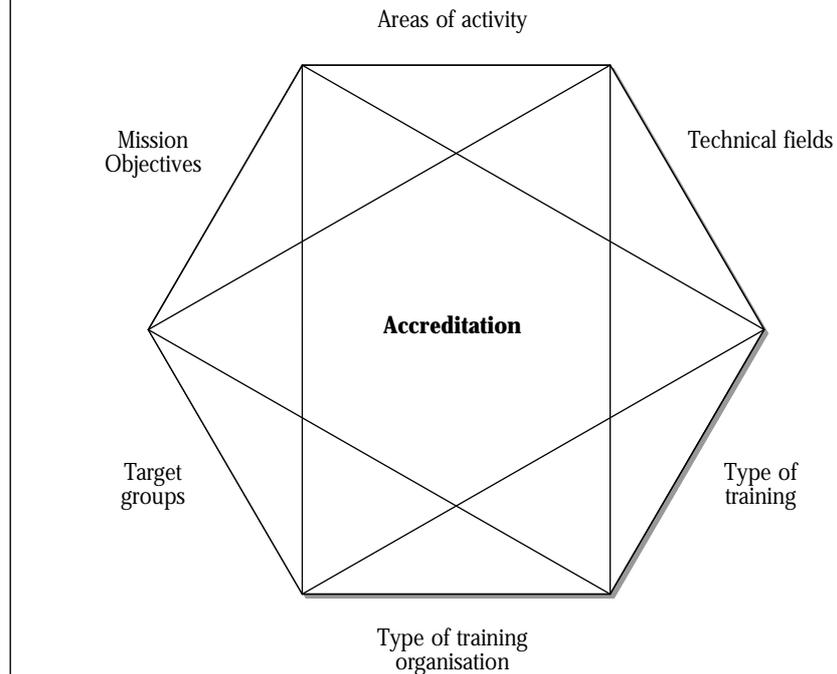


ration of parameters such as the mission and objectives of the body concerned, the areas of activity, specific subject areas (quality, marketing, computer science, electronics, farming, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, social work etc.), types of training (initial, continuing, re-training etc.), organisation of training (classes, distance learning, on-the-job, work-based etc.) and the target groups (active employees, first-time job-seekers, SME managers, women entrepreneurs, technical supervisors and executives, groups with a low educational level at risk of social exclusion etc.) so as gradually to define as clearly and factually as possible the scope or focus of accreditation (Chart 5).

Accreditation: signifies to give credence to, to trust, to put confidence in - this is essentially the purpose of the accreditation of training bodies which technically has been defined as an operation of general validation, qualified scrutiny and recognition of the training ability of an organisation.

In this first year of the accreditation system's operation, which has been one of adaptation and familiarisation, it was intended that teaching objectives should take precedence over a rigid application of accreditation criteria with the aim of gradual, sustained structuring of the training fabric.

**Chart 5**



Credence: the word stems from the Latin *creditus* - a thing borrowed, and by extension something owed. It is our wish that the credence placed in organisations by their accreditation should be matched by a doubling of efforts to ensure the quality and appropriateness of the training they provide.

***“In this first year of the accreditation system’s operation, which has been one of adaptation and familiarisation, it was intended that teaching objectives should take precedence over a rigid application of accreditation criteria with the aim of gradual, sustained structuring of the training fabric.”***



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Continuing Training in the  
Craft Sector, Düsseldorf.*

# Quality assurance in continuing vocational training for small and medium-sized enterprises in the German craft sector - the training activities of the Central Office for Continuing Training in the Crafts Sector (ZWH)

**The Central Office for Continuing Training in the Crafts Sector (Zentralstelle für die Weiterbildung im Handwerk - ZWH) was founded more than 10 years ago in North Rhine-Westphalia in order to ensure that the quality of continuing training is effectively geared to the real needs of the economy. At the beginning of 1997 it was transformed into a nation-wide association financed by the Chambers of Commerce, their associations and the Central Association of German Crafts (Zentralverband des deutschen Handwerks). The Zentralverband's following article presents the underlying concept and the work of the ZWH on quality assurance of continuing training in the crafts sector.**

## **1. Continuing vocational training in the German vocational training system**

In Germany the in-firm professional and career paths of skilled staff with non-university education is based on a certificate from the dual system of vocational training. A distinctive feature of the German vocational training system is the multiplicity of training courses in the continuing vocational training system. They range from short seminars on subjects of current interest to refresher courses and to complex and extensive courses of advanced further training with more than 1,500 hours of instruction. In the craft sector, preparatory courses for the 'Meister' (master craftsman) certificate play a predominant role in advanced further training, as passing the Meister examination is a pre-requisite for anyone wishing to run a craft business independently.

A large number of the continuing training courses for workers in small and medium-sized enterprises are offered by the

crafts associations. The training centres of the 56 Chambers of Crafts and the more than 360 District Crafts Associations with their member guilds offer a nation-wide spectrum of continuing training facilities. The Central Association of German Crafts (Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks), as the Bonn-based umbrella organisation of the craft associations, establishes the policy framework for crafts and crafts training.

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## 2. The continuing training situation of employees in small and medium-sized enterprises

The small and medium-sized enterprises in the craft sector are a significant economic factor in Germany. In 1996 some 7 million workers in about 800,000 craft businesses produced a turnover of DM 1,000 billion (see Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks, 1997, p. 13). However, the continuing training situation of the skilled workers employed in these enterprises is subject to specific conditions, some of which are quite different to those applying in large companies.

Surveys of the continuing training situation arrive at the following assessment of the continuing training problems of small and medium-sized enterprises (see. Cramer & Kramer, 1990, p. 85 ff., Ernst et al., 1995, p. 102 f.):

- The continuing training of workers in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is clearly much less intensive than that of workers in large companies - particularly with respect to participation in refresher training.
- The selectivity of participation in continuing training, i.e. the empirically observed and relatively marked trend for continuing vocational training to be taken advantage of primarily by skilled staff with an academic education, rarely by journeymen or skilled workers and hardly ever by unskilled workers.
- The great dependence on continuing training courses outside the company is a crucial problem for small and medium-sized enterprises. Craft businesses employ an average of 8 workers. That is why in these enterprises separate departments for staff development are generally neither practicable nor economically useful or feasible.
- The release of employees for continuing training is another vital problem particularly affecting small enterprises. For such enterprises it is often virtually impossible to find a replacement for the

skilled workers it needs for its normal daily operations.

Thus, it is the task of the craft organizations to offer attractive regional continuing training facilities which will help to promote the qualifications required in enterprises and which are geared to the time constraints of employees in craft enterprises. This creates a vital foundation for the enterprises to enable them to respond effectively to new technological, economic and ecological demands and - also in the context of the imminent steps towards European integration - to open up new areas of economic activity.

## 3. Levels of action for quality assurance in continuing vocational training in the craft sector

The key to acceptance of the qualifications acquired in continuing vocational training is for continuing training measures to be specifically needs-orientated and subject to comprehensive quality assurance. The standardisation of continuing training, often advocated, is seen differently by the different target groups. While enterprises want refresher training geared to their actual qualification needs, the skilled workers concerned are interested not only in job-related qualifications but also in general recognition for their acquired qualifications so that they can be used for a change of job or career advancement.

In the relevant literature there is a consensus that ensuring the quality of continuing vocational training must be subject to the precautionary principle. In the current discussion of Total Quality Management (TQM) in the education and training sector, however, there is no uniform definition of what is meant, in concrete terms, by the 'quality of continuing vocational training measures'. ISO 9000 ff. covers mainly the planning and design a training centre's structures and operations, but ignores central aspects of the contents and methods of continuing training.

In this context, the work of the ZWH is based on the following factors:

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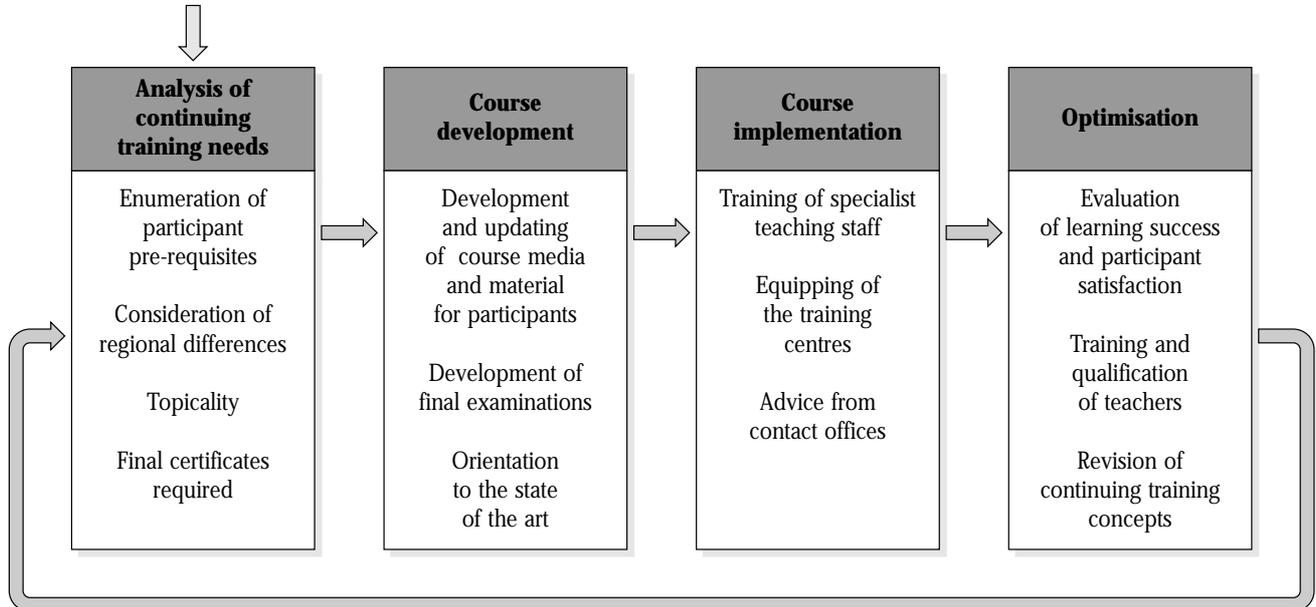
- ***The continuing training of workers in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is clearly much less intensive than that of workers in large companies (...).***
- ***The (...) marked trend for continuing vocational training to be taken advantage of primarily by skilled staff with an academic education (...).***
- ***The great dependence on continuing training courses outside the company is a crucial problem for small and medium-sized enterprises. (...)***
- ***The release of employees for continuing training is another vital problem particularly affecting small enterprises."***

***"Thus, it is the task of the craft organizations to offer attractive regional continuing training facilities which will help to promote the qualifications required in enterprises and which are geared to the time constraints of employees in craft enterprises."***



**Figure 1:**  
**Operational cycle for quality assurance in the continuing training concept of the ZWH**

Objective: continuing training which is needs-orientated and geared to the target group.



*"(...) the work of the ZWH is based on the following factors:*

- *Quality is produced through the collaboration of all those involved in the continuing training process. (...)*
- *Quality assurance must be a holistic approach (...).*
- *The definition of quality must be based on a global concept for ensuring the didactic and methodological quality of continuing training measures."*

□ Quality is produced through the collaboration of all those involved in the continuing training process. Neither the quality awareness of the teachers nor the motivation of the participants can be imposed 'from above'; it depends instead on those involved being responsible for themselves and having the possibility to manage themselves.

□ Quality assurance must be a holistic approach, i.e. it must cover all steps from the initial survey of continuing training needs to the planning and implementation of the courses and the monitoring of activities in actual practice.

□ The definition of quality must be based on a global concept for ensuring the didactic and methodological quality of continuing training measures. The didactic design of courses should be oriented to the demand for the development of a professional capacity to act (see Erz, Jenewein & Kramer 1997, p. 19 ff.). This demand implies the need to design teaching and training processes which are action oriented, and thus to link systematic structures with suitable practice-related action situations.

## 4. Quality assurance in the development and implementation of continuing training measures

### 4.1 Basic conception of the ZWH

The ZWH's work on quality assurance in continuing training in the craft sector focuses on two key areas: firstly, the development of continuing training concepts for the training centres in the craft sector, taking account of the requirements of craft businesses and including examples of action-oriented design; and secondly, the training of teachers so that they can transfer the examples to the specific situations in which the participants have to act.

The operational cycle presented in Figure 1 for quality assurance demonstrates the approach used in the development of training concepts.

The points of departure for the development of course concepts which can be used nation-wide are firstly, quantitative analyses, in particular, the analysis of sta-



tistics on changes in company numbers in the different sectors. Secondly, qualitative surveys, mainly based on expert discussions of discernible development trends in the craft sector concerned, contacts with innovative enterprises and research institutes, analyses of research findings and specialist journals, and consulting training centres about regional changes in needs. This is the background against which the decisions are taken on the sectors which require the new development of qualification components.

On the basis of this assessment of the continuing training needs of the economy, the ZWH organises, coordinates and supervises teams of experts from training centres, associations, enterprises and research establishments in the development of course material for the teaching staff and the participants.

The principal quality aspects taken into consideration by the ZWH in **course development** are:

- Securing the standard of continuing training contents and keeping the courses open so that the training centres can orient the actual contents to the different regional demands of enterprises and their workers;
- Relevance of the training provision and a close link to practices in craft businesses;
- Development of action-oriented examples and the necessary media as a prerequisite for enhancing the participants' professional capacity to act;
- Development of proposals for exercises which will enable the participants to check their performance and also prepare them for the final examination.

Important quality aspects of the ZWH's work on **course implementation** are:

- Preparing recommendations on qualification requirements for technical teaching staff in training centres;
- Preparing recommendations on the equipment of training centres;
- Preparing recommendations on the organisation and implementation of final examinations and giving examples of ex-

amination tasks in order to achieve a uniform examination standard.

So far the ZWH has developed course manuals for teachers and participants in the following areas:

- 30 technical fields in continuing training (e.g. CAD, SPC, electronic office automation, quality management, etc.) with a total volume of more than 6,000 hours of instruction;
- 16 preparatory courses for the Meister examination (e.g. hairdresser, electrical fitter, painter/varnisher, metal worker) with a total volume of more than 10,000 hours of instruction;
- 8 subjects in inter-company vocational training (e.g. in the occupational areas of metal technology, electrical engineering, economics and administration) with a total volume of about 700 hours of instruction.

#### **4.2 Example: Stored programme control (SPC)**

SPC will be used below as an example of how quality assurance is included in the development and implementation of the ZWH's qualification concept. The continuing training modules for this subject were developed from 1988 to 1992 and introduced into training centres. This subject is thus one of the first in which the ZWH started work 10 years ago. These modules have been updated several times since the initial introduction (see Chap. 5).

The **development of the course concept** was undertaken in several steps:

##### **□ Development of binding reference data.**

A group of experts from throughout Germany discussed experiences regarding qualification needs in the field of SPC in the different regions. In addition, representatives of leading companies presented the recent technological developments in this area and reported on expected future developments. On that basis, the module structure was defined and the target groups, the conditions of participation, the technical equipment required by training centres, the key content and ma-

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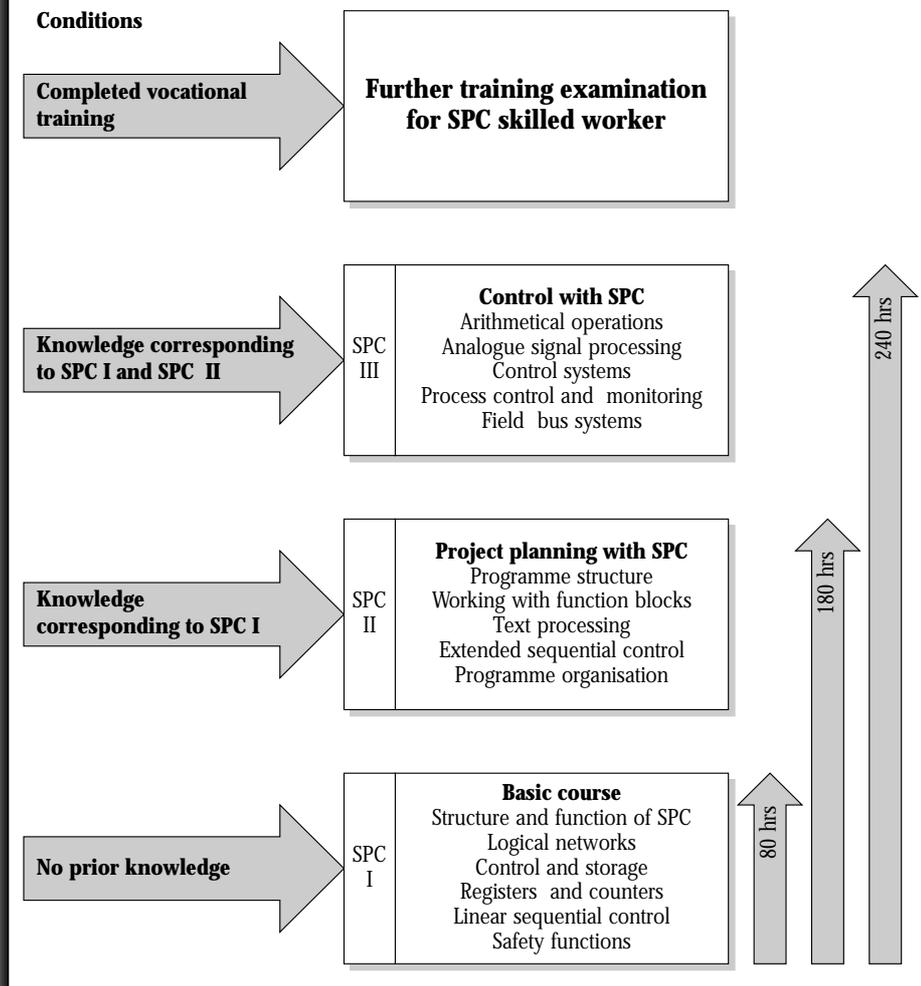
- ***Securing the standard of continuing training contents and keeping the courses open (...);***
- ***Relevance of the training provision and a close link to practices in craft businesses;***
- ***Development of action-oriented examples and the necessary media (...);***
- ***Development of proposals for exercises (...).***

***Important quality aspects of the ZWH's work on course implementation are:***

- ***Preparing recommendations on qualification requirements (...);***
- ***Preparing recommendations on the equipment (...);***
- ***Preparing recommendations on the organisation and implementation of final examinations (...).***



**Figure 2:**  
**Course concept for 'Stored program control' (SPC)**



examples. The course material for teaching staff was then, as a rule, evaluated by two teachers and, if necessary, developed further. The material was then sent by the ZWH to all interested training centres in the craft sector.

#### □ **Development of course material for participants.**

The course material for participants was compiled on the basis of the tested material for teaching staff. This material for participants was made available - in the form of participant manuals - to the teachers in the training centres so that they could have coordinated learning media at their disposal.

The **implementation of this course concept** in the training centres was also supported by the ZWH at different levels.

#### □ **Advice to training centres.**

On request, training centres which adopted this concept were given advice on the necessary equipment and the introduction of the course concept by the experts who had participated in its development.

#### □ **Didactic seminars on SPC.**

Didactic seminars were organised to show teachers how to implement this concept, problems were discussed and the possibilities of an action-oriented course programme were examined.

For objectives for each module were determined in concrete terms. This reference data was evaluated and optimised by teachers from a number of training centres.

Figure 2 shows the module structure for SPC which resulted from this process with the conditions of participation, key areas of the module and indicative time-scales for the individual modules.

#### □ **Development of course material for teaching staff.**

Recommendations for methods to be used in key areas of the outlined concept were also developed by individual experts; they dealt with implementation examples, overhead transparencies, overviews and specific exercises. The experts were assisted by the ZWH so that they could devise action-oriented recommendations and

Furthermore, the course manual for participants contains a questionnaire prepared by the ZWH so that participants can evaluate the course and the material they received and thus make suggestions for improvements. This questionnaire, which has the aim of helping the training centres to evaluate the courses, will be reviewed in the next chapter dealing with the ZWH's optimisation activities.

## **5. Continuous optimisation as the key to safeguarding and developing existing quality standards**

Given the rapid rate of technological development and the economic climate, con-



stant optimisation and extension of the training courses and final certificates is an important pre-condition for quality assurance. The ZWH concept envisages optimisation processes at the following levels:

□ The ZWH regularly organises working groups of experts in order to update and continuously develop concepts.

□ In the various subject-areas seminars are organised regularly for teachers so that they can exchange experiences. They can also discuss the necessary updating and further development. The ZWH thus gets regular feedback from the teaching staff, which then serves as the basis for revision and optimisation.

□ Learning achievement is continuously assessed during courses not only through final examinations, but also through an evaluation of **participant satisfaction**. To this end, participants complete written questionnaires on a voluntary basis, which are then evaluated by the ZWH. The findings which emerge are taken into consideration in the further development of the course material (on evaluation concept, see Hagge et al., 1993, p. 109 ff.).

□ The ZWH organises didactic **seminars for trainers and teachers** in the various areas of continuing vocational training. An exchange of experiences based on the course concepts and a discussion of innovations in the subject-field concerned are pre-conditions for comparable work in training centres and thus for the achievement of national quality standards and also for the further development of the concepts. Action-oriented approaches and their application in actual work situations are important issues in the seminars for teachers and trainers, highlighting the possibility of introducing modern teaching methods into courses. Since 1994 the ZWH has held about 130 seminars for trainers and teachers with almost 2,000 participants and has had a very positive response.

□ A core theme of quality assurance in continuing training is the final examination. A high examination standard generally has a positive effect on the quality of continuing training programmes. Thus, an important task for the ZWH is to provide

regular further training for examiners, and in particular to supply information on the potential for including technical developments and action-oriented tasks in the examinations. These seminars deal in particular with questions concerning the conduct of the examiner and the preparation and assessment of examination tasks. Since 1994 the ZWH has held approximately 90 seminars for examination board members with more than 1,700 participants, who have all given a positive assessment of these seminars.

## 6. Outlook

An essential aspect of quality assurance in continuing training is an appropriate reaction to the dynamics of technological change and economic conditions. The ZWH's quality concept will be judged by its success in anticipating changes in qualification needs and integrating new developments in different areas. The ZWH will take timely and forward-looking steps to:

□ update the contents and methods of existing continuing training concepts and improve the necessary coordination;

□ identify new fields of activity for craft businesses and assist them in exploiting these fields through continuing training provision;

□ step up the didactic and methodological continuing training of trainers, teachers and examiners;

□ improve the quality of continuing training by developing new media, and in particular multimedia and interactive learning systems, and thus promote self-guided learning processes;

□ review long-established forms of organising continuing training and enhance them with new more flexible forms of vocational learning;

□ provide further training for the management of vocational training centres in the important areas of customer orientation and quality assurance.

Moreover, effective and needs-oriented quality assurance also means providing training centres with reliable data on

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qualification needs, changes in needs and the training and career paths of employees in small and medium-sized enter-

prises. In future, scientific studies will be introduced as a means of reinforcing these activities.

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# Creation of an external quality assurance system for higher education - the example of Poland

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## Introduction

Until 1990 vocational education in Poland ended at the secondary level. The title of technician was, and still can be, acquired in a 5-year vocational school or in a 2-year post-secondary school. Higher education offered almost exclusively 5-year programmes leading to the master's degree.

However, the years since 1990 have seen radical change.

The almost uniform system of 5-year master's studies in higher education institutions has been replaced by a multi-level system, offering the following 3-year programmes (as well as 4-year studies in engineering):

□ vocational programmes in state and non-state higher education institutes leading to the vocational title of licentiate. These programmes appear in academic and non-academic institutions, most often in economic studies but also in the exact sciences;

□ teacher-training vocational studies offered in state and non-state higher education institutes leading to the licentiate. Programmes of this type are offered for the most part by universities and in higher teacher education schools. They also appear in higher vocational schools;

□ three-year teacher-training vocational studies offered in colleges subordinate to superintendents of education; the gradu-

ates receive the diploma of higher vocational education.

In addition, this period has seen the creation of private higher vocational schools also providing 3 year courses authorised to confer the vocational title of licentiate. Since 1997, similar state higher vocational schools have been established.

Consequently, the concept of vocational education in Poland encompasses not only secondary but also higher education. Generally, higher vocational education may be acquired in academic institutions of education, higher vocational schools and in post-secondary educational system.

The nature of this education varies. Engineering and licentiate programmes offered in academic institutions may be compared with programmes of the first university degree at the Bachelor's level. In most cases this is academic education that focuses more on theoretical knowledge and the preparation for advanced studies.

Licentiate programmes in higher vocational schools and in teachers' colleges subordinate to superintendents of education have a more practical orientation, with vocational studies geared to the needs of the market and the economy.

Thus, although in reality the licentiate has two different meanings, it is formally connected with 3-year vocational education.

A different law governs the activity of the three kinds of institutions providing vocational education programmes:

**The sudden quantitative increase in higher education started after 1989 when the establishment of new institutions was no longer dependant upon legal measures and government. This legally uncontrolled process soon gave rise to concerns about the quality of education.**

**This article looks at the main directions in the search for a solution to the problem of quality assurance in Polish higher education, with special emphasis on higher vocational education.**



***“(...) the concept of vocational education in Poland encompasses not only secondary but also higher education. Generally, higher vocational education may be acquired in academic institutions of education, higher vocational schools and in post-secondary educational system.”***

□ academic education operates under the Act of 12 September, 1990 on higher education;

□ the legal framework for higher vocational schools is set by the 1990 Act as amended by the Act of 26 June, 1997 on higher vocational schools;

□ teachers' colleges subordinate to superintendents of education operate under the Act of 7 September, 1991 on the educational system, amended many times in successive years;

These laws confer various powers on educational institutions, including the drawing up of programmes and assessment of the quality of education.

Below the attempts to create external quality assurance systems for each type of vocational education at the higher level are discussed.

## **Quality mechanisms in legal regulations**

### **Academic institutions**

Until 1989 all higher education institutions in Poland had academic status. They were authorised to conduct scientific research and to educate students at master's level. The 1990 Act on higher education confirmed this status. However, the 1997 Act on higher vocational schools introduced a dual system of higher education, making a distinction between higher vocational schools and academic institutions of education.

Under the 1990 Act and subsequent legal changes, higher education institutions have a considerable degree of autonomy and enjoy freedom of scientific research, artistic creativity, and teaching. They have legal rights to formulate their own educational policy and freedom to decide teaching programmes and curricula, the organisation of the studies (day, evening, extra-mural, extension), the conditions of recruitment and numbers of students for each course, the links with vocational training and the requirements for the diploma thesis and diploma examination.

The laws passed in Poland after 1989 make numerous provisions concerning

quality in higher education institutions. They may be found among the powers of the Minister of National Education, the Council for Higher Education<sup>1</sup>, the Committee for Scientific Research<sup>2</sup> and the Central Commission for Scientific Title and Scientific Degrees<sup>3</sup>. Many of these provisions relate to the scientific level of academic teachers and organisational units of higher education institutions.

The powers of the Minister of National Education concerning higher education institutions are limited. On fundamental questions of the educational process the Minister may act only through the Council for Higher Education. On the request of the Minister of National Education, the council, among other things:

□ lays down the conditions that a higher education institution must meet to open and teach specialised courses;

□ lays down the minimum programme requirements for certain courses;

□ lays down the conditions that a higher education must meet to offer professional (engineer) titles;

□ gives opinions on drafts of normative acts concerning scientific research, higher education and scientific degrees and title, as well as drafts of international agreements concerning equivalency of professional titles and scientific degrees and title.

The council thus has the authority to create an educational quality assurance system, and the law on higher education contains quality criteria and standards to meet licensing criteria.

In October 1993 the Council for Higher Education accepted proposals from a project it undertook on a system of quality assessment of teaching in higher schools. Education programmes were supposed to be subject to assessment (Kawecki 1994). Although it was not explicit, in the longer term it was expected - in line with the principles used by the Committee for Scientific Research to distribute research funds - to link the category assigned to the faculty with the size of the subsidy for education.

Systems of accreditation were developed further through the agreement of business

1) This is a representative body of higher education elected for 3 years. Members of the Council are chosen by electors at national meetings. The electors are chosen in groups of schools (universities, technical, medical, agricultural, economic, pedagogical, art, and physical education colleges) in proportion to the number of academic teachers employed. The election principles favour large and strong academic centres and specialisations to the detriment of small schools and some specialisations; therefore, they do not ensure representation in the Council of all schools and specialisations.

2) The Committee for Scientific Research is an organ of the state administration for scientific and scientific-technical policy. By virtue of a separate act, the Committee allocates funds for research.

3) The Central Commission is a corporation of scholars, to which the task of nation-wide supervision of the conferring of the *doctor habilitatus* degree and title of professor has been entrusted.



schools for quality of education, concluded on 4 July 1994. The agreement aimed to co-ordinate and disseminate educational quality standards and to set up an accreditation system for programmes and schools. The Association of Managerial Education FORUM<sup>4</sup> set up a system of accreditation for management studies and, at the request of the schools, various programmes went through the accreditation procedure. By 1997, accreditation had been awarded to 4 MBA programmes, 2 licentiate programmes and 3 post-graduate studies in management.<sup>5</sup>

On 31 January, 1998 the rectors of universities established an independent university accreditation system. The resolution establishing the University Accreditation Commission was signed by 15 signatory members of the Agreement of Polish Universities for Educational Quality<sup>6</sup>. Accreditation is to include programmes not necessarily taught at universities or at other institutions of higher education. The operating costs of the office are to be paid by the signatories.

### Higher vocational schools

The 1990 Act on higher education did not cover either 3-year vocational programmes or the title of licentiate. Furthermore, notwithstanding various controversies connected with the quality of education, private institutions of higher education were only required to obtain a license before starting activity, although if they acted illegally or outside their statute or license, the Minister of National Education could suspend or close them.

Consequently a number of private higher schools developed on the basis of the 1990 Act offering 3-year licentiate vocational programmes. These private high schools now form the backbone of a newly created sector of private vocational higher education.

Regulations governing higher vocational education were introduced in the Act of 26 June, 1997 on higher vocational schools, which covered private higher schools conducting programmes at the licentiate level.<sup>7</sup> The Act also provided for the creation of state higher vocational schools which are being created from the existing physical plant of superintendents'

teachers' colleges and better equipped post-secondary schools. Additional investments in these facilities are supposed to come from local sources, because the public vocational schools are to be linked to the local labour market and their activities supported by the local authorities.

The 1997 Act aims to strengthen some elements of control over the quality of vocational programmes through the establishment of the Accreditation Commission of Higher Vocational Education<sup>8</sup>, which came into being in March 1998. The commission assumed most of the powers of the Council for Higher Education for vocational education, namely to:

- determine the conditions that a vocational higher school must meet in order to start up and conduct a vocational specialisation;
- determine the staff requirements necessary for this purpose;
- determine the programmes and satisfaction of these conditions;
- assess the quality of education.

Initially, the commission concentrated on giving opinions on applications to establish new vocational schools. On account of the lack of minimum programme requirements for vocational studies, the commission sees the development of standards in this area as one of its most urgent tasks. In the future it plans to take up assessment of the quality of education.

### Teachers colleges

Teachers colleges established and run by superintendents of education operate differently. Decisions on the principles concerning the creation, transformation and liquidation of colleges, the general outline teaching plans and programmes, and supervision are the responsibility of the Minister of National Education.

The basic condition for establishing a college is that it must ensure the scientific-didactic guardianship of a higher school educating teachers in the disciplines in which they will educate students. This is done through an agreement be-

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4) The Association has been in existence since February 1993 and gathers representatives of more than 20 business schools. Accreditation activity is one of its major statutory goals (Loboda 1995).

5) FORUM, as the only supervisory organisation of this type from Central Europe, was admitted to the association of European accreditation agencies of business schools, EQUAL.

6) These are 13 universities and the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw and the Papal Theological Academy in Cracow.

7) Unless its provisions or the provisions of other acts stipulate otherwise. Dz.U. 1997, No. 96, item 590.

8) The composition of the commission, the number of its members and the procedure of their appointment and removal are determined by the Minister of National Education in consultation with the Council of Higher Education.



***“(...) there are considerable differences in the powers of educational institutions in respect of curriculum content. Academic institutions have considerable freedom to shape their programmes of studies - including vocational curricula for which thus far there are no minimum requirements. The work of the Accreditation Commission of Higher Vocational Education applies only to 3-year programmes conducted outside the sector of academic education, while the Minister of National Education, is responsible for the standards of programmes in teachers' colleges under the supervision of superintendents of education.”***

***“(...) the academic community has given a clear signal of its preferences for the voluntary concentration of universities on the problem of quality (...). Such a solution seems more acceptable to higher education institutions as it preserves their statutory guarantee of considerable autonomy.”***

9) PHARE is the European Community's economic aid programme to support economic restructuring and democratic reform in central and eastern Europe.

tween the institution of higher education and the superintendent of education. This agreement covers the principles of co-operation in deciding the organisation of entrance and diploma exams, participation in the educational process and selection of colleges' teachers, arrangements for students to obtain the diploma of higher vocational studies, and the taking up of supplementary Master's degree studies in the school by graduates of the college.

It is assumed that the main criteria for the verification of educational programmes are the teacher's practical needs. However, vocational training integrated within the course of studies is an important element of the programmes. Where the superintendent of education agrees, teacher's colleges can award the vocational title of licentiate to its graduates on the conditions laid down by themselves. In most colleges the scope of the programme suffices to receive the title. Some colleges, however, require additional credits in electives, which is a condition for taking the licentiate examination.

### **Conceptions of external quality assurance systems**

Looking at the existing legal regulations, there are considerable differences in the powers of educational institutions in respect of curriculum content. Academic institutions have considerable freedom to shape their programmes of studies - including vocational curricula for which thus far there are no minimum requirements. The work of the Accreditation Commission of Higher Vocational Education applies only to 3-year programmes conducted outside the sector of academic education, while the Minister of National Education, is responsible for the standards of programmes in teachers' colleges under the supervision of superintendents of education.

In this context it is worth pointing out that an internal system of assessment of educational outcomes and examinations dominates the Polish educational system. Work in this area by the Minister of National Education has concentrated mainly on changing the secondary-school leaving examinations. The “New Secondary-School Certificate” programme aims to

gradually transform the existing internal secondary-school leaving examinations into an external system based on uniform standards. Preparations are going on in parallel to activate national agencies whose task will be to make external reviews of the quality of education in vocational studies. Work in this area is in various stages of advancement.

Generally, there is agreement that some external quality assessment system for academic institutions of education is necessary, however, it is still not clear what type of system is needed. Given the considerable autonomy guaranteed to higher education institutions by the 1990 Act, an attempt to impose a system unacceptable to the academic community would be regarded as a violation of the law.

Also under discussion is the problem of quality in teachers' colleges subordinate to superintendents of education. Completion of a project financed under PHARE<sup>9</sup> funds proposed an accreditation system of teachers' studies (Jeffery 1993). However, the system has not yet been implemented.

We can already note several important initiatives - including legal regulations and inter-collegiate agreements - that indicate the line of thinking of the academic community about the problems of the quality of education.

With a new higher education act being drafted, the academic community has given a clear signal of its preferences for the voluntary concentration of universities on the problem of quality, irrespective of existing organisational structures. This is illustrated by inter-collegiate agreements such as the agreement of business schools for quality of education and the agreement of Polish universities for educational quality referred to above. Such a solution seems more acceptable to higher education institutions as it preserves their statutory guarantee of considerable autonomy.

### **Why accreditation?**

The extraordinary development of this concept in the entire bloc of countries of Central and Eastern Europe is not a coin-



vidence. It has been argued that accreditation institutions established in the former communist countries in the 1990s are a substitute for central control of the state over higher education (Dill, Massy, Williams and Cook, 1996).

There are many arguments to support this thesis. The rule is that accreditation agencies were established on the initiative of the governments of those countries, sometimes even taking the place of former politicised and bureaucratised state inspections. In the best case the role of the minister of education is imprecisely defined, but often the dependency on this office is clearly indicated.

Dill, Massy, Williams and Cook mention two goals assigned to accreditation agencies in the region of Central Europe:

□ to ensure minimum standards of educational quality in conditions of mass higher education, diversification of programmes and levels of the educational offer;

□ to certify the quality of education in the international perspective.

From the point of view of the internal needs of each country, the effectiveness of accreditation is determined by how standards are defined, namely the minimum requirements imposed on an institution, faculty or particular study programme. Terminology is not a significant problem here, in the international perspective the notion of accreditation has a precise meaning. However, among the quality assurance mechanisms in higher education currently applied, it is regarded as the least effective and unsatisfactory. Why?

To answer this question it is necessary to recall the most important features of the accreditation process by referring to the experiences of the country where this process feels "most at home" as it has been an integral part of post-secondary education since 1905 (Wolff 1993): the experiences of the USA.

One of the main goals of accreditation is to ensure minimum standards of quality. The accomplishment of this goal is perceived in the sense that the aim is to as-

certain whether the means and internal structures, including the administrative structure, of higher education institutions guarantee effective action. Minimum standards formulated in such a way are easily achieved by all well-organised institutions. However, the assumption that good organisation of an institution is an automatic guarantee of educational quality and effectiveness is an oversimplification,

*"If one were to define minimum standards in terms of the demonstrated educational effectiveness of the educational programmes, all institutions are equally challenged. An outsider not conditioned to American ideas with regard to resources and prestige might well define minimum quality to mean that an institution can assure that everyone graduating with a bachelor's degree will be able to write effectively, think critically, and be prepared for a professional career. Yet the accreditation process has not held colleges and universities accountable for issues such as the writing ability of graduates or the effectiveness of general-education requirements" (Wolff, 1993).*

Attempts to transfer this concept to other conditions require consideration of at least the following question: What is the attractiveness (usefulness) of this concept? Should this process be governmental or non-governmental? Should government set minimum programme requirements for all study programmes, or only for some? Should the reviews and assessments be made by peers (assessors) from other higher education institutions, or by government officials? Should the accreditation decisions be taken on the basis of performance indicators, or on the basis of a focused more subjective (qualitative) criteria?

The answer to the first question appears to be similar in the case of most, or even all, of Central and Eastern European countries. In the entire region interest in higher education has greatly increased and the educational supply has become more diversified owing to a considerable expansion of the recruitment base into higher education. The scale of the phenomenon can be illustrated by the following statistics. In Bulgaria the number of stu-

***"It has been argued that accreditation institutions established in the former communist countries in the 1990s are a substitute for central control of the state over higher education (...)."***



***“The attractiveness of accreditation (...) results from the fact that (...) it has the element of certification, and differentiates between higher education institutions that meet the standards set and those that do not. The spontaneous nature of the quantitative and qualitative changes that have taken place in higher education justifies interest in an instrument that has such characteristics.”***

***“(...) a new higher education law is passed, which will cover the entire sector of higher education, there will be obligatory accreditation for higher vocational schools, and voluntary accreditation, instituted, administered and managed by the academic community in other higher education institutions.”***

dents rose by 160% between 1991 and 1995, while the number of programmes offered by post-secondary institutions increased from 170 to nearly 570 (Quality Assurance in Bulgaria, 1997). In Romania, between 1991 and 1993 the number of state universities rose from 3 to 36, and the number of private higher education institutions from 17 to 66 (Wnuk-Lipińska 1995). It should be remembered that the sudden quantitative increase in higher education started after 1989 when the establishment of new institutions was no longer dependent upon legal measures and national and local governments. This legally uncontrolled process soon gave rise to concerns about the quality of education.

In Poland also, higher education quickly became a mass phenomenon. This process was fostered by abandoning centrally set limits on admissions and granting higher schools - through statute - the right to conduct their own policy in this area. It was also encouraged by the educational policy of the state to link the allocation of funds to the number of students enrolled. As a result, between 1990 and 1996 the number of students more than doubled from 403,800 to 927,500, almost three times the 340,700 enrolled in 1985. Today Poland has 213 higher education institutions, including 114 private ones (Statistical Yearbook, 1997). More than a dozen types of higher education institutions are subordinate to seven Ministers.

The first step higher education took to adapt to the new situation was diversification in the wide sense, not only institutionally, but also diversification of educational programmes, intra-collegiate structures, principles of admission to higher studies, etc. Each higher education institution has a range of departments that offer several specialisations. Furthermore, programmes began to be differentiated by the level of study.

It is still hard to distinguish the main directions in which the educational supply is changing. The spontaneous nature of these changes worries the authorities and an ever larger part of the academic community. The main concerns are expressed about the new type of education - licentiate programmes, in new types of private schools.

The attractiveness of accreditation in this context results from the fact that - as the only one among the external quality assurance mechanisms applied in the world - it has the element of certification, and differentiates between higher education institutions that meet the standards set and those that do not. The spontaneous nature of the quantitative and qualitative changes that have taken place in higher education justifies interest in an instrument that has such characteristics.

## Prospects

The only external agency in fact that is working for quality assurance is the Accreditation Commission of Higher Vocational Education. The other initiatives of the academic community concentrate on the quality of education in master's degree specialisations and studies. In this respect the 3-year vocational studies being conducted in various academic institutions of education are in the background, as they lie outside the direct influence of the Minister, the Council for Higher Education and the Accreditation Commission of Higher Vocational Education.

It may be surmised that until a new higher education law is passed, which will cover the entire sector of higher education<sup>10</sup>, there will be obligatory accreditation for higher vocational schools, and voluntary accreditation, instituted, administered and managed by the academic community in other higher education institutions.

However, the experiences of the initial first years of the recently established accreditation agencies will modify the original assumptions. The following scenario seems likely as it reflects both domestic needs and international experience.

It is in the interest of higher vocational schools themselves to be assessed and accredited to verify their educational programmes. This interest will increase as competition on the educational market becomes ever greater. Competition will be intensified by the newly established state sector of higher vocational schools, which are supposed to be financed from the state budget and co-financed from

10) Except for science, which will still remain separate.



regional sources and will seek to meet the specific needs of the local labour markets. This may stimulate higher education institutions - state and non-state - to become accredited to show that criteria for a given category of schools or programmes have been met. The experiences of the United States, which has the longest tradition in using accreditation as an educational quality assurance mechanism, indicate that this process is very useful for small higher education institutions entering the market.

In the opinion of the international community interested in the quality of education, accreditation is an unsatisfactory quality assurance mechanism. Proof of this is that assessment procedures and the academic audit have developed in western Europe,

*"The assessment process evaluates the quality of specific activities - such as educational or research quality -*

*within academic units. Assessment goes beyond accreditation to make graded judgements about academic quality levels rather than binary judgements relative to threshold standard... Academic audit is an externally driven peer review of internal quality-assurance, assessment, and improvement systems. Unlike assessment, audit does not evaluate quality: it focuses on the processes that are believed to produce quality and the methods by which academics assure themselves that quality has been attained"* (Dill, Massy, Williams, and Cook 1996).

It may be assumed that the complicated reality - more than 700 kinds of study programmes in departments of higher education institutions subordinate to the Minister of National Education - will turn the attention of the academic community to institutional audits, as a complement to assessment of educational quality in selected programmes.

***"It is in the interest of higher vocational schools themselves to be assessed and accredited to verify their educational programmes. This interest will increase as competition on the educational market becomes ever greater."***

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This section has been prepared by  
**Martina Ní Cheallaigh,**  
and the Documentation Service with the help of members of the national documentation network

This section lists the most important and recent publications on developments in training and qualifications at an international and European level. Giving preference to comparative works, it also lists national studies carried out as part of international and European programmes, analyses of the impact of Community action on the Member States and national studies seen from an external perspective.



# Europe International

## Information, comparative studies

### Development of vocational qualifications and competences: European vocational training conference.

Vienna: Bundesministerium für Unterricht und kulturelle Angelegenheiten, BMUK, 1998, 87 p.  
*info@berufsbildungs-konferenz-1998.vie.net*  
EN DE

This document presents the contributions to the thematic conference organised in Vienna by the Austrian presidency and the European Commission (DG22) with the co-operation of CEDEFOP on the "Development of qualifications and competences" on 3 and 4 July 1998. Four forums were organised focusing on the following subject areas: 1) key qualifications and competencies: curricular implementation, framework conditions, strategies, marketability, vocational training and general education; 2) information technologies: input and benefits for vocational qualifications, planning and harmonisation requirements at the European level, quality requirements; 3) changing qualification requirements; 4) access to continuing vocational training and collective social responsibility.

URL: <http://www.berufsbildungs-konferenz-1998.vie.net/english.htm>

### Exploring the returns to continuing vocational training in enterprises: a review of research within and outside of the European Union.

BARRETT A et al.  
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 53 p.  
(Panorama, 83)  
ISBN 92-828-4450-1, en  
CEDEFOP  
P.O.B. 27-Finikas,  
GR-55102 Thessaloniki,  
*info@cedefop.gr*  
Cat. no.: HX-09-98-001-EN-C  
EN

Inherent in the notion of lifelong learning is that enterprises should increase investment in continuing vocational training. The general lack of information, however, as to the returns of such training for the State, sectors, enterprises, and individuals means that there are a number of difficulties in evaluating current and future investment decisions. This review presents research which as attempted to estimated the returns of employer-provided training, discusses the conceptual and methodological issues which exist in this context, and suggests ways in which research in this area can be usefully expanded.

### Output-related funding in vocational education and training: a discussion paper and case studies.

FELSTEAD A  
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 64 p.  
(Panorama, 80)  
ISBN 92-828-4388-2, en  
CEDEFOP  
P.O.B. 27-Finikas,  
GR-55102 Thessaloniki,  
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Cat. no.: HX-16-98-837-EN-C  
EN

This report aims to provide information on the issues arising from and the practice of funding vocational education and training (VET) on the basis of programme outcomes rather than enrolment/attendance (i.e. switching the emphasis of funding from inputs to outputs). It outlines the policy issues which output-related funding (ORF) generates as well as a number of real-world examples of its use within and beyond the European Union (the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America). The objective of this report, therefore, is to combine, within one document, discussion and evidence concerning ORF.



**Approaches and obstacles to the evaluation of investment in continuing vocational training: discussion and case studies from six Member States of the European Union.**

GRÜNEWALD U et al.  
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP  
Thessaloniki: CEDEFOP, 1998, 170 p.  
(Panorama, 78)  
*CEDEFOP*  
*P.O.B. 27-Finikas,*  
*GR-55102 Thessaloniki,*  
*info@cedefop.gr*  
EN

The way in which the evaluation of investment in continuing vocational training is undertaken within, between and across enterprises is becoming an increasingly important topic in an era when under-investment on a macro-scale is perceived as hindering economic performance. This report summarises and draws conclusion on six case studies that were undertaken on different aspects of this issue, in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland and Italy. The studies examine a number of issues at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels including: the effects of training on enterprise productivity, some indications why enterprises choose to invest (or not) in training and some of the obstacles which exist in evaluating their investment. This report concludes with a discussion from a methodological and policy perspective on how to overcome a number of these difficulties and how future work might proceed.

**Conseil et orientation professionnelle tout au long de la vie: éléments de synthèse des expériences menées dans l'Union européenne.**

CHIOUSSE S;WERQUIN P  
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP; European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living conditions  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 83 p.  
(Panorama, 79)  
ISBN 92-828-4122-7, fr  
*CEDEFOP*  
*P.O.B. 27-Finikas,*  
*GR-55102 Thessaloniki,*  
*info@cedefop.gr*  
Cat. no.: HX-09-98-001-FR-C

This synthesis document is addressed to all decision-makers and actors and even users of guidance on occupational integration and social integration in the broad sense. It gives a response, in part, to all those who have questions on the concepts of target groups and forms of action. It clearly delineates the areas which are unequally explored and questions the idea that occupational integration is the sole and unique goal. It is certainly a central goal but should not be taken as the sole objective because of the risk of never achieving it. This document lists a number of intermediate solutions which have been experimented upon or simply advocated in some cases. It follows the European Union guidelines for promoting employment. It tries to identify recurring elements in the reference texts and also the major lines of analysis and potential debates. The intention of arriving at concrete recommendations is present throughout the text.

**AGORA-1: Raising the level of diplomas and their distribution on the labour market: the lessons of the past and prospects for the future: Thessaloniki, 30 June 1997.**

PLANAS J  
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP  
Thessaloniki: CEDEFOP, 1998, 41 p.  
(Panorama, 76)  
ISBN 92-828-4117-0, en  
*CEDEFOP*  
*P.O.B. 27-Finikas,*  
*GR-55102 Thessaloniki,*  
*info@cedefop.gr*  
Cat. no.: HX-14-98-776-EN-C  
EN FR DE ES

This document is the outcome of the discussions held during the first seminar of the CEDEFOP "Agora Thessaloniki" on the topic diplomas and the labour market in 6 countries: Germany, Spain, France, Italy, The Netherlands and the UK. It is divided into 5 parts: 1) diplomas and the labour market: results and questions stemming from European research; 2) shift in skill demand; 3) diplomas versus skills; 4) implications for the training strategy; and 5) results of the debate. It concludes that in spite of a general increase in the number of diplomas awarded over the last few decades, their distribution inside the la-



bour market has tended to be driven by what education systems have supplied rather than by what companies have demanded.

**Co-operation in research on trends in the development of occupations and qualifications in the European Union: report on the current state, results and development of the CEDEFOP Ciretoq network.**

SELLIN B

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP  
Thessaloniki: CEDEFOP, 1998, 27 p.  
(Panorama, 74)

*CEDEFOP*

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EN FR DE

The construction and development of the CEDEFOP's thematic network on "(Circle for) Research Cooperation on Trends in Occupations and Qualifications", for which the acronym Ciretoq is used, was a pilot scheme to avoid the need to foster and carry out a large number of individual projects, studies and analyses but at the same time continue working on core issues of vocational education and training in the European context. This interim (April 1997) brings together the most important and provisional findings of the two years' work done by the network so far.

**Integration of work and learning: proceedings of the 2nd workshop on curriculum innovation (September 1997, Bled/Slovenia).**

European Training Foundation, ETF  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 192 p.  
ISBN 92-828-3440-9, en

*ETF*

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Cat. no.: AF-13-98-572-EN-C

EN

This document brings together the papers presented to the three-day workshop organised by ETF on the integration of work and learning whose aim was to bring ex-

perts from the partner countries and the Member States together to discuss problems and achievements in the fields of qualification processes and curriculum development and their consequences for the partner countries. Its main outcome was that 1) the institutional difference between education and occupation has to be reduced; 2) companies have to focus their attention on restructuring working processes and work places; and 3) the traditional educational process of being taught should be turned upside down, in the sense that education should become a learner-determined process which could be well mediated through activities carried out in a context that makes sense to the learner and what matters to him.

URL: <http://www.etf.eu.int//etfweb.nsf>

**Key indicators: vocational education and training in Central and Eastern Europe.**

European Training Foundation, ETF  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 88 p.  
ISBN 92-9157-162-8, en

*ETF,*

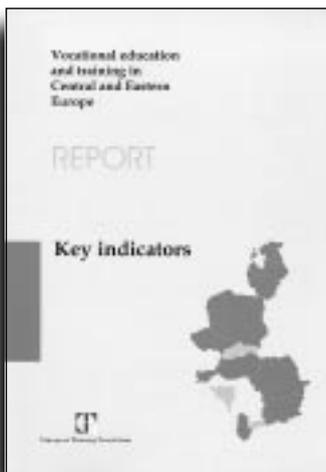
*Villa Gualino,  
Viale Settimio Severo 65,  
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Cat. no.: AF-12-98-085-EN-C

EN

This report presents statistical information on the vocational education and training systems of 10 countries in Central and Eastern Europe: Albania, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. The report is divided into two chapters: 1) educational attainment of the population and its relation to unemployment and 2) vocational education and training (VET) in the education systems: participation of young people in all education and VET; recent trends in all education and in VET at upper secondary level; drop-outs rates at upper secondary level and public expenditure on all education and on VET. This report is intended to be published on an annual basis.

URL: <http://www.etf.eu.int/>





**Combating age barriers in employment: a European portfolio for good practice.**

WALKER A; TAYLOR P (eds.)

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 220 p.

ISBN 92-828-0412-7, en

*EUR-OP,*

*L-2985 Luxembourg,*

*or from its national sales offices*

Cat. no.: SX-05-97-454-EN-C

EN

Member States and the European Union are beginning to show evidence of some rethinking of existing trends towards early retirement and early exit from employment. This report is based upon studies across the EU which aimed to document and assess initiatives in both public and private sectors, to combat age barriers in employment, particularly in recruitment and training. This portfolio presents more than 150 examples of good practice in age management. Its primary intention is to inform and stimulate positive action for an ageing workforce by providing practical examples of how different private and public organizations have sought to minimize the impact of age barriers in the workplace.

**Under one roof: The integration of schools and communities services in OECD countries.**

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD

Paris: OECD, 1998, 65 p.

(Programme on Educational Building, PEB)

ISBN 92-64-16110-4, en

*OECD Publications Service,*

*2 rue Andre-Pascal,*

*75775 Paris Cedex 16,*

*France*

EN FR

Recent years have seen a number of initiatives which seek to provide a range of community services on schools sites, including adult education and other social and welfare services. These developments aim at co-ordinating more effectively services which are usually provided separately while optimising the use of increasingly sophisticated and expensive educational buildings and equipment. This report

draws on the proceedings of a conference held in Stockholm in 1996 and presents case studies from Finland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Quebec, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

**Staying ahead: In-service training and teacher professional development.**

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD

Paris: OECD, 1998, 176 p.

ISBN 92-64-16076-0, en

*OECD,*

*2 rue André-Pascal,*

*F-75775 Paris Cedex 16,*

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EN FR

This report is about the ways in which teachers in different countries develop their knowledge, understanding, skills and techniques during the course of their careers. It looks in particular at how different types of teacher learning and development can make it possible for schools and education systems to improve and change. Eight OECD countries are reviewed: Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

**Secondary education in Europe: problems and prospects.**

Council of Europe

Council of Europe Publishing: Strasbourg,

1997, 232 p.

ISBN 92-871-3220-8, en

*Council of Europe Publishing,*

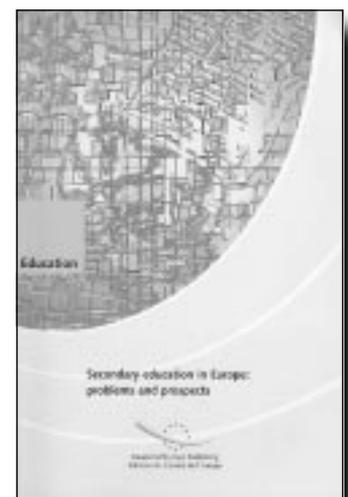
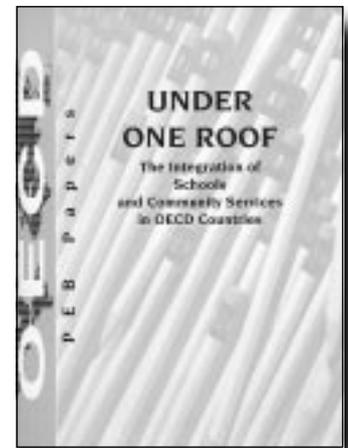
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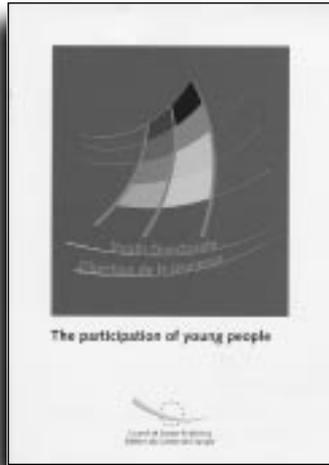
*F-67006 Strasbourg Cedex,*

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EN FR

This publication brings together the conclusions contained in the country reports that have been submitted in the framework of the general theme of the project "a secondary education for Europe". It covers the themes and issues with which secondary education is confronted in different degrees of depth and detail. One of its principal conclusions is that secondary education is more central to the educational system than ever before and that it has never been more needed than now: in fact, it is for all adolescents an obligatory stage in their educational career, the





one with the greatest consequences for their later life.

### **What secondary education for a changing Europe?: trends, challenges and prospects.**

LUISONI P

Council of Europe

Council of Europe Publishing: Strasbourg, 1997/132 p.

ISBN 92-871-3414-6, en

*Council of Europe Publishing,*

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EN FR

From 1991-96, the Council of Europe carried out an ambitious project called "a secondary education for Europe". It had two elements. The first was a review of development, trends and innovations in secondary education in the countries taking part in the Organisation's education programme. Special attention was paid to: the setting of aims and objectives; curriculum content and teaching methods; guidance and counselling; and assessment and certification. The second element was an analysis of the place of Europe in secondary school curricula and in extra-curricular activities. This is the report resulting from the final conference which took place in Strasbourg from 2-5 December 1996.

### **European Youth Trends 1998.**

Council of Europe

Council of Europe: Strasbourg,

1997, 41 p.

(CEJ/RECHERCHE (98)2, 97/3)

*Council of Europe Publishing,*

*B.P. 431 R6,*

*F-67006 Strasbourg Cedex*

EN

This report by the National Youth Research Correspondents endeavors to outline common trends in the socio-economic situation of young people in Europe. Focusing primarily on similarities among European countries, the report is meant to contribute to a better understanding of the general convergence of modern youth conditions in Europe and thus to the elaboration of policy guidelines.

### **The participation of young people.**

European Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Co-operation in the Youth Field, CDEJ; Council of Europe - Youth Directorate

Council of Europe: Strasbourg,

1997, 34 p.

ISBN 92-871-3235-6, en

*Council of Europe,*

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EN FR

In modern society, young people encounter difficulties in finding a role. Youth is often regarded as a problem rather than a resource for society. This report by the European Steering Committee of Intergovernmental Co-operation in the field of Youth proposes a series of recommendations for the promotion of youth participation especially at local level. It is divided into three parts: 1) description of the terms "participation" and "youth participation"; 2) recommendations at practical level; and 3) observations.

### **Education for all?.**

UNICEF - International Child Development Centre, ICDC

Florence: UNICEF - ICDC, 1998, 135 p.

(MONEE project regional monitoring report, 5)

ISSN 1020-6728

ISBN 88-85401-38-4

*UNICEF - ICDC,*

*Piazza Santissima Annunziata 12,*

*I-50122 Florence,*

*Tel.: 39-55-234.5258,*

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EN

Educational policy has been the subject of intense debate in recent years throughout the world. In the case of the 27 countries covered by this report, educational policy faces twin challenges. First, is the challenge to protect the positive educational achievements of past decades and second, is the need to adopt new approaches during the transformation of the economies and societies in the region in education and other areas of public policy. This report on education in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the



Baltic republics contributes to the work of UNICEF in promoting education as a fundamental right for children.

### **Industrie und Dienstleistungen im Zeitalter der Globalisierung.**

GRÖMLING M; LICHTBLAU K; WEBER A  
Köln: Deutscher Instituts-Verlag GmbH, 1998, 462 p.  
ISBN 3-602-14459-3  
*div@iwkoeln.de*  
DE

The authors give an overview of the most important developmental directions of structural change, considering German as well as international perspectives. They find that globalisation has not been accompanied by a drastic loss of jobs, on the contrary, since 1980, more than 75 million jobs have been created in the OECD. The de-industrialisation theory in also refuted, in reality the manufacturing sector in industrialised countries contributes as much to their wealth today as it did 25 years ago. Many services now place stronger demands on industry which has resulted in the two sectors growing together to the extent that they have become both inseparable and complementary. Industrial countries outside Europe, particularly the USA, seem better prepared to meet the challenges of structural change.

### **Key qualifications in work and education.**

NIJHOF W; STREUMER J  
Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998, 274 p.  
ISBN 0-7923-4864-8  
*Kluwer Academic Publisher,*  
*Postbus 17,*  
*3300 AA Dordrecht*  
EN

This publication deals with key qualifications in work and education and consists of three parts. Part 1 focuses on the concept of key qualifications and other concepts such as core skills, 'competence and competency' and generic skills. Part 2 discusses the various qualification systems and/or programmes employed in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany, respectively. Part

3 deals with key qualifications in research and practice.

### **European Union: policies, programmes, participants**

#### **Report of the Business Environment Simplification Task Force, BEST: volume 1; volume 2.**

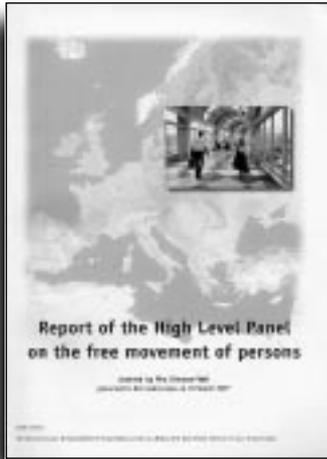
BEST task force; European Commission  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 25 p. (v.1); 73 p. (v.2)  
ISBN 92-828-3418-2 (v. 1), en  
ISBN 92-828-3431-X (v. 2), en  
*DG XXIII/A/1;*  
*Rue de la Loi 200,*  
*B-1049 Brussels,*  
*Belgium,*  
*Fax: +32 2 295 9784;*  
*seija.gross@dg23.cec.be*  
Cat. no.: CT-79-98-002-EN-C  
EN FR DE IT NL DA

This BEST task force report contains recommendations in order to improve the quality of legislation and eliminate the unnecessary burdens which restrain the development of European businesses, particularly SMEs. There are 5 areas divided into 19 key recommendations. These include: 1) better public administration; 2) new approaches in education and training; 3) employment and working conditions; 4) access to finance; and 5) access to new technologies and encouraging innovation. Volume 1 contains the detailed recommendations and volume 2 the additional recommendations made by the working groups. BEST makes some important recommendations in relation to education and training and the need for an entrepreneurial culture to begin in schools and be carried through into higher education and training systems.  
URL: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg23/smepol//best1en.pdf>

#### **Report of the high level panel on the free movement of persons: chaired by Mrs. Simone Veil: presented to the Commission on 18 March 1997.**

European Commission  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 102 p.  
ISBN 92-828-0409-7, en  
*EUR-OP,*  
*L-2985 Luxembourg,*





*or from its national sales offices*

Cat. no.: C1-05-97-349-EN-C  
EN FR DE

This panel's report contains a series of concrete measures to ensure that more people can take advantage of their rights to free movement within the EU. The main conclusion is that, apart from a few exceptions, the legislative framework to ensure free movement of people is in place, and that the majority of individual problems can be solved without changes in legislation. However, particular emphasis is put on the need for Member States to improve co-operation among themselves, notably in border regions, to ensure better training of officials and to devote more attention to the protection of individual rights. Chapter 5 looks specifically at mobility in education, training and research.

URL: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg15/en/index.htm>

**From guidelines to action: the national action plans for employment: communication from the Commission.**

European Commission  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 14 p.  
(Documents COM, (98) 316)  
ISSN 0254-1475, en  
ISBN 92-78-36319-7, en  
*EUR-OP,*

*L-2985 Luxembourg,*  
*or from its national sales offices*

Cat. no.: CB-CO-98-325-EN-C  
EN FR DE DA ES EL FI IT NL PT SV

This communication examines what the Member States have committed themselves to doing in their National Action Plans (NAPs) and whether this is in line with the content and objectives of the 1998 Employment Guidelines adopted in December 1997 by the Council in the framework of the European Employment Strategy. It demonstrates that there is now a shared commitment to making progress on employment and to a more transparent and politically-driven implementation of the commonly agreed employment policy objectives. In terms of content the following positive elements can be discerned: 1) political commitment to an active employment policy; 2) recognition of the need for a stronger local dimen-

sion in employment policy; 3) need to develop and modernise the Public Employment Service (PES); 4) recognition of the importance of improving knowledge and skill levels, especially apprenticeship and traineeship are seen as playing a major role; and 5) the enhanced involvement of the social partners.

URL: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/empl&esf/naps/naps.htm>

**Developing a European service in favour of mobility and employment: report on Eures activities 1996-97 in accordance with Regulation (EEC) no. 1612/68, Article 19(3) (presented by the Commission).**

European Commission  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 22 p.  
(Documents COM, (98) 413 final)  
ISSN 0254-1475, en  
ISBN 92-78-37591-8, en  
*EUR-OP,*

*L-2985 Luxembourg,*  
*or from its national sales offices*

Cat. no.: CB-CO-98-424-EN-C  
EN FR DE DA ES EL FI IT NL PT SV

EURES is a European labour market network aiming at facilitating the mobility of workers in the European Economic Area in the context of the emerging European employment strategy. This report describes the EURES network and assesses major developments and achievements during 1996-97, but also aims to look at some of the challenges EURES will face in the years ahead.

<http://europa.eu.int/jobs/eures>

**Tableau de bord 1997: follow-up to the conclusions of the Essen European Council on employment policies.**

European Commission - DG V  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 231 p.  
(Employment and labour market)  
ISBN 92-828-1893-4, en  
*IAS,*

*Institute for Applied Socio-Economics,*  
*Novalisstr. 10,*  
*D-10115 Berlin,*  
*Fax: 49-30-282.6378,*  
*eurocontact@ias-berlin.de*

EN FR DE

This is the 1997 version of the Tableau de bord (synoptic table) which was first



published in 1994. Its purpose is to present an overview of the principal employment policies and labour market measures taken by each Member State. It is an instrument to assess progress towards structural reform of the labour markets, in the framework of the follow-up to the Essen Council decision of December 1994. The thematic organisation is as follows: 1) vocational training: improving education and training systems, promotion of life-long learning, adapting to change, and recent measures; 2) increasing the employment-intensiveness of growth: more flexible organisation of work, income policies, promotion of initiatives, recent measures; 3) reduction of non-wage labour costs; 4) improving the effectiveness of the labour market policy and 5) improving measures to help groups which are particularly hard hit by unemployment.

**Dissemination and commercialisation of training products: guidelines for promoters of training projects.**

European Commission - DG XXII  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 37 p.  
ISBN 92-828-2375-X, en  
*DG XXII B7-0/31*  
European Commission,  
Rue de la Loi 200,  
B-1049 Brussels,  
Fax: 32-2-296.4259  
EN

Since the Leonardo da Vinci action programme for vocational training began, dissemination has become an increasingly important topic. Its importance is recognised in various Commission documents such as the Vademecum and the annotated application forms. These guidelines are intended to give project promoters, past, present and future, a clear idea of why dissemination is important, what it entails, how it can be done, when to plan and implement it and who to target and approach for help.

**Analysis of the results of studies on vocational training in Europe: Findings of the COMMETT, EUROTECNET, FORCE, LINGUA and PETRA programmes.**

European Commission - DG XXII  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1998, 69 p.

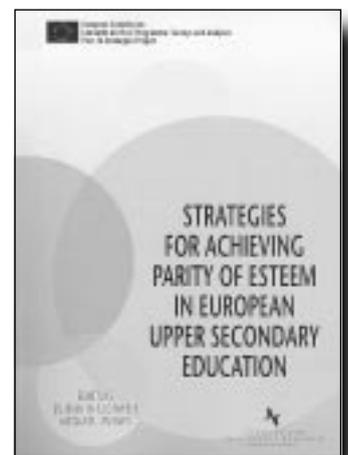
ISBN 92-828-2600-7, en  
*DG XXII B7-0/31*  
European Commission,  
Rue de la Loi 200,  
B-1049 Brussels,  
Fax: 32-2-296.4259  
Cat. no.: C2-11-97-568-EN-C  
EN

This publication provides an overview of the results of all the studies undertaken during the former programmes. It treats each of the former programmes under similar headings. The first part of each section, dealing with one of the five former programmes, presents an analysis of the results of studies in relation to the objectives laid down in the respective Council Decisions, while the second part explores the relevance of the findings to other key vocational training policies of the European Commission, including those outlined in the White Paper: 'teaching and learning - towards the learning society'. This is the companion volume to "Leonardo da Vinci - studies on vocational training in Europe".

**Strategies for achieving parity of esteem in European upper secondary education.**

LASONEN J; YOUNG M (ed.)  
European Commission  
Jyväskylä: Institute for Educational Research, Jyväskylä University,  
1998, 290 p.  
ISBN 951-39-0108-4  
*Institute for Educational Research,  
University of Jyväskylä,  
POB 35, FIN-40351 Jyväskylä,  
Finland*  
EN

The report considers reforms of European post-16 education and systems of vocational education and training and their response to the challenge of promoting parity of esteem between initial vocational education and general/academic education. Its conclusions have been drawn from the case studies of Austria, England, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Scotland and Sweden. This volume is the final report of the Post-16 Strategies Project. The two-year project was carried out with the financial support of the Commission of the European Communities under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme.





### **New ways of accrediting the skills and competences acquired through informal learning.**

LEONARDO DA VINCI National Co-ordination Unit

Dublin: LEONARDO NCU, 1998, 26 p.

*NCU LEONARDO,  
189-193 Parnell Street,  
IRL-Dublin 1.*

EN

The seminar which was organised by the Irish NCU in partnership with its counterparts in Denmark, France and the UK, and DG XX11 of the European Commission attracted participants from all over the EU.

It was one in a series of 8 being held on the experiences and learning which have taken place under the LEONARDO programme. The themes of this seminar were the identification of the kinds of informal learning that need to be accredited; the methodology for assessing and accrediting informal learning; the acceptance of and placing value on, informal learning; the issues of transfer at European level of assessing and accrediting informal learning. The Seminar pooled and disseminated best practice from the different experience of people associated with the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme, from training and education institutions, national accreditation authorities, large enterprises, SMEs,

sectoral associations, social partners and trading partners.

### **Current situation regarding vocational training in Latin America and the Caribbean.**

European Commission - DG XXII  
Luxembourg: EUR-OP, 1997, 78 p.  
(Studies, 9)

ISBN 92-827-4569-4, en

*EUR-OP, L-2985 Luxembourg,  
or from its national sales offices*

Cat. no.: C2-98-96-970-EN-C

EN ES

This report aims to provide a better understanding of the role of vocational training in Latin America. It is divided into two parts. Part 1 presents general ideas and trends regarding the current situation of the main vocational training systems in Latin America; identifies the roles of public and private sector; current constraints facing vocational training; the role of in-house companies and private training; non-governmental organisations; current participation in EU programmes and constraints, problems and positive effects of international assistance. Part 2 presents the regional reports for the following regions: Andean Pact, the Caribbean, Central America, Mercosur Chile and Mexico.

## From the Member States

### **AT Bildungswege: von der Schule zur Weiterbildung.**

LENZ W

Wien: Studienverlag Wien-Innsbruck,  
1998, 368 p.

ISBN 3-7065-1262-9

*Studienverlag Wien-Innsbruck,  
Postfach 104,*

*A-6010 Innsbruck*

DE

This book is a scientific work which deals with current issues in education. This transpires from the standpoint of pedagogics, pedagogical psychology social pedagogics as well as in systematic aspects. Moreover, issues in continuing education are discussed in detail. As a result, this

volume provides interesting insight into research in education for both educators and students of education, as well as scientists and practitioners.

### **D Technisch-organisatorische Innovation und Qualifikation.**

ZAREMBA J H (eds.)

Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung  
Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann Verlag,

1998, 250 p.

ISBN 3-7639-0823-46, de

*Wl Bertelsmann Verlag,  
Auf dem Esch 4,*

*33619 Bielefeld,*

*Fas: 05-21-911.0179,*

*wbv@wbv.de*



This volume of collected articles gives information on the results of the co-operation between Bremen/Lower Saxony and Portugal. Experts from science and industry present articles on vocational-training-related issues arising in CIM integration and CNC-assisted manufacture in combination with "lean" production concepts, and on holistic strategies for the development of qualifications. The authors also discuss programmatic approaches in initial and continuing training and new qualification fields, and examine questions inherent in teaching concepts. The volume closes with contributions on work in the European programmes and Community initiatives, and general conclusions for the design of transnational projects. The publication documents the proceedings of the European Technical Conference on "Networking and Qualification" in Bremen.

**DK De tekniske skolers vidunderlige verden: samarbejder om efteruddannelse.**

Teknisk Skoleforening  
Odense: Teknisk Skoleforening,  
1998, 30 p.  
ISBN 87-7881-059-0  
*Erhvervsskolernes Forlag,  
Munkehaten 28  
DK-5220 Odense SØ*  
DA

As a response to a proposal from the Danish Ministry of Education, the Association of Technical Colleges has published this report on current co-operation initiatives among vocational schools in Denmark. The Danish Ministry has proposed to establish new legal entities whose tasks would be to inform the industry and the adult population about adult education and continuing vocational training. Furthermore, these entities should be responsible for the development of local school co-operation and other tasks hitherto handled by vocational schools and local organisations. The Association of Technical Colleges fears that these new entities would only result in more bureaucracy. Instead, the Association calls on vocational schools to enter into co-operation with other schools voluntarily. In the publication, successful co-operation initiatives between vocational schools and other organisations are de-

scribed. Co-operation is shown to take place within many different fields: in relation to the private business sector, the participants in continuing training, subjects, regional counselling, etc. The aim of the publication is to inspire vocational schools in their efforts to co-operate within the field of adult education and continuing vocational training.

**F Titres et diplômes homologués.**

Commission technique d'homologation;  
Centre INFFO  
Paris La Defense: Centre INFFO,  
1998, 427 p.  
ISSN 0769-0142, fr  
ISBN 2-911577-29-9, fr  
*Centre INFFO,  
Tour Europe cedex 07,  
F-92049 Paris-la-Defense*

This directory contains all formally approved titles and diplomas from the recapitulative Official Journal of 21 August 1980 to the Official Journal of 18 April 1998. It consists of three sections and some annexes. The first documentary part presents the formal approval process (definition, key features and procedures) and reference texts. The second part lists the 4,152 titles and diplomas which have been formally approved since 1981. The third, analytical, part enables a rapid and effective search by means of indexes: index of training fields, index of levels and index of training establishments.

**Repenser l'économie du travail. De l'effet d'entreprise à l'effet sociétal.**

GAZIER B et al.  
Toulouse: Octares, 1998, 195 p.

This tribute to Jean-Jacques Sylvestre, an economist who passed away in 1995, is a good opportunity for reviewing the development of labour economics. In the 1970s the comparisons carried out in the Laboratory for Labour Economics and Sociology (LEST) between French and German enterprises showed that the social construction of categories of French and German workers, based on their training modes, led to different patterns of behaviour in work, cooperation and mobility, to which the enterprises responded with variations in work or-



ganisation and remuneration. This finding initiated a research project on what has been termed "the societal effect" conducted jointly by a sociologist and an economist, M. Maurice and F. Sellier. The texts published in this work on themes dealing with the determination of salary structures, the theory of human capital and management issues in periods of crisis, are an illustration of the numerous contributions made by Sylvestre to the revival of labour economics. The approach which he developed on the basis of societal analysis, is a significant contribution to the theory of relations between the enterprise and society and opens new paths of research.

**I La formazione professionale cofinanziata dal Fondo sociale europeo nelle aree obiettivo 1.**

BULGARELLI A

Osservatorio Isfol (Rome) 1,  
1998, p. 180-220

ISSN 0391-3775

*Isfol,*

*Via G. B. Morgagni 33,*  
*I-00161 Roma*

IT

The 'human-resource development' strategies defined in the Community Support Framework (CSF) are highly innovative compared to Italy's traditional vocational training system. In particular, the following have been envisaged: for the first time ever in public policies, continuous vocational training for the employed; the insertion of human-resource development in sectoral and enterprise-creation policies, actions addressing long-term unemployment, vulnerable segments and equal opportunities between women and men. These diversification strategies are supported by technical-assistance and training actions targeting programming units and Operational Programmes (OP) management, as well as implementing organisations.

**NL Onderwijsonderzoek in Nederland en Vlaanderen 1998: proceedings van de Onderwijs Research Dagen 1998 te Enschede.**

PIETERS J et al. (eds.)

Enschede: Twente University Press,  
1998, 304 p.

ISBN 90-36511-38-0

NL

The various presentations given during the Education Research Days [ORD] in Enschede have been collected in this publication. The following subjects were addressed: curriculum; teaching and instruction; education and society; methodology and evaluation; teacher training and teacher behavior; vocational, commercial and adult education; higher education; policy and organisation in education; tele-learning.

**Internationalisering in regionale opleidingen centra: van de rand naar de hoed.**

VAN DER VEUR D

Max Goote Kenniscentrum voor Beroeps-  
onderwijs en Volwasseneneducatie, MGK  
BVE

Amsterdam: MGK BVE, 1997, 92 p.

ISBN 90-75743-16-5

*MGK BVE,*

*Wibautstraat 4,*

*1091 GM Amsterdam*

NL

This report sheds light on the study aimed at implementation of government policy on internationalisation in vocational training and adult education. The objective of the study is to investigate whether - and if so, how - the government's increasing interest in internationalisation in the vocational training and adult education [BVE] sector influences the concrete (structural) internationalisation activities at the level of the Regional Training Centres [ROCs].

**P Sistema de acreditação de entidades formadoras.**

CARDIM M

Ministério do Trabalho e da Solidariedade,  
MTS

Lisbon: MTS, 1998, CICT

Sociedade e Trabalho (Lisbon) 2,

1998, p. 32-43

ISSN 0873-8858

*Centro de Informação Científica e  
Técnica,*

*Praça de Londres 2-s/l,*

*P-1901 Lisbon Codex*

PT





The improvement in the quality of the training supply and the judicious use of the Community and National funds for the financing of the vocational training made it necessary to institutionalise a training institutions accreditation system. This system was also to contribute to structuring the vocational training system, to the credibility of the training supply, and to the profitability of the training domain. The system's conception and development was based on the idea that training is not an end in itself, rather a means or a strategic alliance aimed at the protection of broader objectives. As such, the development of the system encompasses all the phases ranging from the needs diagnosis to the evaluation. In accordance, to the concept of quality of training others surmount; relevance of training objectives, appropriateness of resources and usefulness of the results. In this sense, the evaluation of the training institutions requires the knowledge of their core business.

## **FIN** Koulutusalan sanasto.

Opetushallitus, Oph  
Helsinki: Opetushallitus, 1998, 379 p.  
ISBN 952-13-0200-3  
*National Board of Education/ Sales,  
PL 380,  
00531 Helsinki,  
Finland*  
FI

The glossary seeks to increase consistency in the use of educational vocabulary. It contains the most essential terms in Finnish, Swedish, English, French, German and Russian. It has over 3,000 search terms. At the end there is a list of educational sectors and fields of study in different languages.

## **IVETA '97 Conference proceedings: the challenges of the 21st century for vocational education and training.**

LASONEN J (ed.)  
Institute for Educational Research  
Jyväskylä: Institute for Educational Research, Jyväskylä University, 1997, 466 p.  
ISBN 951-39-0035-5  
*Institute for Educational Research,  
Jyväskylä University,  
POB 35, FIN-40351 Jyväskylä, Finland*  
EN

The report contains the papers presented at the IVETA (International Vocational Education and Training Association 97 conference in Helsinki, Finland. The papers are grouped under four headings: 1) the challenges of the 21st century for vocational education and training from global, national and regional perspectives; 2) interrelationships between the role and responsibilities of working life and vocational education and training; 3) opportunities to enrich vocational education and skills training through applications of the philosophy and methods of adult education; 4) implementing national standards and qualifications: implications for the international labour market.

## **UK** Education and Training in the European Union.

MOSCHONAS A  
Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd,  
1998, 158 p.  
ISBN 1-84014-067-4  
EN

An examination of the EU's initiatives and actions on education and vocational training. It has a number of tables as an appendix and includes an assessment of the deficiencies and contradictions in EU activities.



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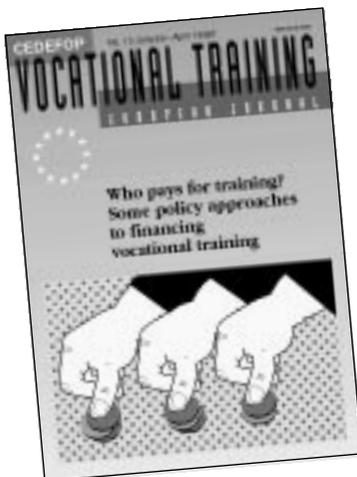
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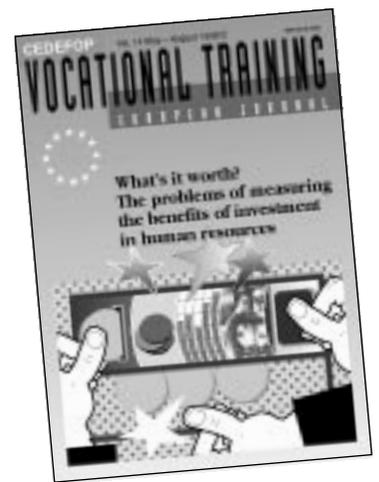
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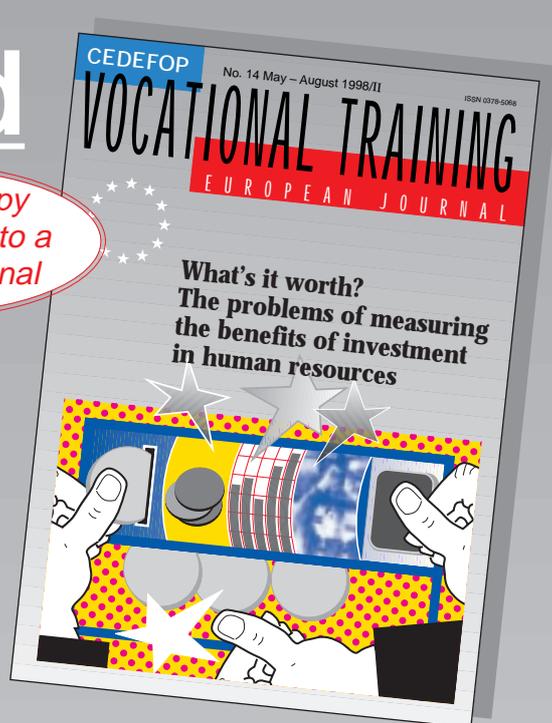
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