

TTnet Workshop
**‘Teachers and trainers: qualification standards, training standards – towards a
Community model of definition of competences’**
London, 12 and 13 October 2000

Final report

The London workshop is one of a series of thematic workshops that Cedefop has been promoting as part of the activities of the TTnet network since as far back as 1998. After concentrating on the development of training practice and recognising in the course of the Lisbon workshop (25 and 26 May 2000) the usefulness of promoting common reference frameworks at Community level for the validation of trainers’ competences for professionalising human resources in training systems, the London workshop had the following objectives:

1. to carry out a comparative examination of the various countries’ practices and measures relating to the setting of standards for trainers;
2. to pinpoint any obstacles towards the establishment of shared training of trainer models and reference frameworks and to discuss how these might be overcome so that joint work can also be done at Community level;
3. to consider whether national policies and practices can be translated into common outlooks and references at Community level, and how far TTnet might help in this respect.

In relation to the first objective, by analysing three national models and a number of practices describing professionalisation, it was possible to launch the debate and highlight a number of key questions.

Tony Green, of the National Training Organisation for Employment opened by presenting the British NVQ system from the point of view of its establishment. He focused especially on the process that allowed shared qualification and competence standards to be arrived at for more than 1000 occupational profiles. Its original aim was to provide a training qualification to those without any academic qualifications, but it is now expanding its role into a tool for fostering professionalisation.

Tony Green belongs to one of the 77 National Training Organisations (NTOs) in the NVQ system, 70 of which are sector NTOs and 7 ‘all-sector’. NTOs are the voices of employers on education and training issues and bring employers together to say what skills are needed in their areas and what training is needed to meet those needs. Tony Green’s contribution did not go into the merits of the individual competence standards, but looked rather at the process leading to the definition of a system and the principles on which the system is based. The system is essentially the product of ongoing cooperation between employers, unions, organisations and practitioners and is based on the following principles:

- development of standards based on competence
- certification based on outcomes
- standards drawn up on the basis of collaboration with players
- competence defined by three factors: knowledge, experience and understanding.

Ismene Tramontano from Isfol presented the national reference scenario, which has evolved considerably in recent years. Whereas, up until three years ago there was a total absence of institutional references for trainers' competence standards, and anyone could enter the training system as a trainer while school teachers had to follow a formalised entry route via competitive examination, today awareness of the need to introduce clear references covering the professionalism and reliability of training organisations has led to the drafting of a ministerial regulation.

The Isfol standard for trainers¹ is an attempt to rationalise the emerging functions of training occupations by defining the technical and professional skills which are common and fundamental to the occupational group of trainers and which are inherent in the specialist skills of the individual roles and functions. That model was accepted by the regions and the Ministry of Labour and was the starting point for the certification scheme for trainers' competences provided for in the regulation on the accreditation of training organisations. This work needs to be continued in greater depth and in more detail.

June 2001 is the deadline for drawing up the final measure on the certification of the competences of those employed in activities relating to needs analysis, evaluation, management, administration, guidance and teaching, on the basis of the adoption of the agreement of 18 February 2000 between the State and the regions. The institutional commitment and the demand from trainers clearly demonstrate the establishment at national level of a logic of quality and innovation within the system linked primarily to the presence of qualified and professionalised human resources.

While the NTO for Employment of which Tony Green spoke is primarily competent for the qualifications of trainers in the private sector, the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) deals with the qualifications of public sector trainers. Veronica Windmill described the system.

One of the main objectives of FENTO is to work together with the Government to produce qualifications and competence standards for teachers and lecturers in further education. From September 2001 it will be compulsory for such educators to have a FENTO qualification. The reference standards for those qualifications are the outcome of two years of consultations between teachers in further education and universities.

The contribution by Veronique Radiquet from the 'Groupement des animateurs et responsables de formation en entreprise' (GARF – association of coordinators and managers of in-company training), an association of more than 1000 training practitioners, aimed, through analysis of a case study, to present a different approach to the definition of trainers' standards - namely the situation in France. She described a model, based on self-assessment of knowledge and strategic competences, worked out by the specific *branche professionnelle*. In the light of changes in the reference scenario, the members of the Garf/Val Loire association, the authors of the work, asked what the basic contents of their work and the potential changes were. The aim of the competence assessment model created by Garf was essentially:

- to provide its target audience with a tool for positioning themselves within the system and for gaining awareness of a possible professionalisation pathway;

¹ Standard Formatori: per un modello nazionale di competenze verso l'accREDITAMENTO professionale, Isfol, 1998.

- transferability within the company: since examination of one's own professionalisation allows one to gain a better understanding of the 'occupations' of one's colleagues and to create training pathways designed to satisfy individual training needs.

The final contribution, which was intended to launch the discussion, raised the issue of typology in the definition of competence and training standards for trainers. Gerald Heidegger of the University of Flensburg and Karen Evans of the University of Surrey proposed as a form of good practice the attention that trainers should pay to 'types' of user, also highlighting the need to introduce that requirement into the definitions of trainers' competence standards. It was proposed that trainers' key competences should include specific generic competences, including social/cultural and methodological/didactic competences.

Main outcomes of the discussion

In all contexts and in all countries there is a need to define competence standards for qualifications, particularly in the case of trainers. While for teachers almost all European countries have formalised access routes to the profession linked to success in competitive examinations and the assessment of CVs, in the case of trainers no member country of the network has a formalised procedure for entering the profession. There is therefore a need for 'standard setting' beyond the procedures and organisations that become interpreters of that need: public bodies where there is a national system for the certification and recognition of qualifications, and sectoral bodies in individual sectors where there is no institutional intervention in these matters.

It is possible to synthesise two 'macro' typologies of approach to describing the professionalisation of trainers:

- (a) top-down, e.g. the United Kingdom and Italy, where the tendency is to pursue a regulatory framework at a national level, as in the United Kingdom, or at regional level, as in Italy;
- (b) bottom up, e.g. the case of France where the situation is one of initiatives by individual institutions, companies and associations rather than one of general collaboration.

Irrespective of the approach taken at national level, the professions see a need to identify shared methods of describing professionalisation.

From the point of view of pursuing quality in the training process, trainers' standards guarantee:

- transparency
- benchmarking
- operational instruments (e.g. adequate salary scales)
- greater reliability of service.

With regard to the second objective, the obstacles to the creation of systems and models of trainers' standards are mainly political and cultural; it is clearly an issue where technical and political aspects intersect. That is why standards can and must only be part of a collective desire to structure competences.

The definition of trainers' standards is fundamentally linked to three defining factors:

- the processes (linked to cooperation between various actors or to the initiative of individuals);
- the models (which fundamentally cover the methods of describing professionalisation);
- the results/products or the competence standards.

Future work

As regards the aim of identifying a possible direction for common work, the workshop was a crucial opportunity for joint discussions, although no directions for work were expressly defined.

The starting point for our discussions was the conclusion drawn from the work that the preparation of measures on trainers' competence and training standards is linked to three fundamental factors relating to the processes, models and individual competence standards that describe occupational profiles and functional roles.

The models appear to be linked to the socio-economic contexts in which they originate, to the unique characteristics of the occupational groups. The methodological models describing professionalisation are therefore closely connected to the specifically local characteristics of training practice, which is why it is cannot be assumed that they can be transferred directly into different contexts.

The discussion therefore led us to a first conclusion that transferability is possible only in relation to the first factor, i.e. the processes, and the third, i.e. the standards.

Thus, endeavouring to synthesise the contributions of the TTnet experts, on the basis of the comparison made during the London workshop and the joint discussions on the matter taking place within the network over a period of at least a year, joint work could be on:

- dissemination of the processes leading to the definition of models; as is the case with the UK model, work on standardising the basic competences of professionalisation would have to be the outcome of cooperation between various actors in the different countries: institutions, unions, employers and trainers;
- the results, i.e. the competence standards that describe professionalisation. In relation to the latter point, however, joint work could not be on describing the competences of the individual roles and/or the individual occupational profiles, but it could relate to the common and fundamental competences of the entire occupational family of trainers. This would involve identifying the competences that everyone, irrespective of their specific role, e.g. planner, adviser, tutor, etc., must possess by the virtue of belonging to the occupational group in question. The important thing is to work together on the hard core of competences that characterise all training operatives, irrespective of the specific role of each practitioner. Where, however, the skills peculiar to individual roles are linked to the specific local characteristics of training practice in the individual contexts in which they originate, the aim must still be to bring out the specifically local nature of training, even on the basis of consideration of the substantial weaknesses of models already created with the aim of defining curricula at European level.

These are also clearly very delicate questions involving not only technical issues but also political issues that call for joint discussion that will probably not be regarded as exhausted, but will be advanced by belonging to the TTnet network, which constitutes a favoured venue for work and the only Community forum bringing together experts and trainers on the theme of the training of trainers.