



EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION

# **FORUM for European Research on Vocational Education and Training**

## **Final Report**

**Project Contract no: SOE2-CT 97-2022**

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*Impressum:*

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*(Project funded by the European Community under TSER)*

Bremen, February 2002

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### **5. Acknowledgements and references**

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- I Report of TSER Forum Workshop – Evo, June 1998**
- II Report of TSER Forum Workshop – Berlin October 1998,  
„Vet and Labour Market Interactions“**
- III Report of TSER Forum Workshop – Cáceres, February 1999  
“Cultural Embeddedness of VET in Europe”**
- IV Report of TSER Forum Workshop – Vienna, June 1999,  
“Occupational Identities”**
- V Report of TSER Forum Workshop – Evora, November 1999**
- VI Report of TSER Forum Workshop – Bucharest, February 2000**
- VII Report of TSER Forum Workshop – Wales, June 2000**
- VIII Report of TSER Forum Workshop – Wageningen, September 2000**
- IX Report of TSER Forum Workshop – Rome, February 2001**

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**Project funded by the European Community under TSER**

# Report of TSER FORUM

## 1. Abstract

The Thematic Network project “Forum for European Research into Vocational Education and Training” was established as a network of research institutions to seek a new approach to transnational, European research in vocational education and training and to offer systematically rigorous definitions of different approaches to assist researchers in the pursuit of knowledge. Fourteen countries were represented in the Forum and its members included respected researchers both nationally and internationally.

The main aim of the thematic network was the establishment of the European dimension - in terms of contents and methodologies - within the sphere of vocational education and training (VET). The European dimension needs to embrace the traditional values of European societies embodied in the diversity of traditions, institutions, legislation and cultures that influence vocational education and training in the European Union. The project aimed to produce analysis with a high degree of relevance on important EU and national policy issues in the field of VET.

## 2. Executive Summary

### 2.1 Background and Objectives

The Forum for European Research into Vocational Education and Training sought to develop a research methodology which relies less on comparison and more on a collaborative approach to research. FORUM was established as a network of research institutions to seek a new approach to transnational research in vocational education and training and to offer systematically rigorous definitions of different approaches to assist researchers in the pursuit of knowledge. Fourteen countries were represented in the Forum and its members included respected researchers both nationally and internationally.

The main aim of the thematic network was the establishment of the European dimension - in terms of contents and methodologies - within the sphere of vocational education and training (VET). The European dimension needs to embrace the traditional values of European societies embodied in the diversity of traditions, institutions, legislation and cultures that influence vocational education and training in the European Union. The project aimed to produce analysis with a high degree of relevance on important EU and national policy issues in the field of VET.

The transnational reflections in the field of VET were focused on five Thematic Domains constituting the five Thematic groups of the network:

1. Learning in organisations
2. VET and the labour market
3. Changing institutions
4. Changing identities
5. VET and culture

The Thematic Domain “VET and culture” was both an distinctive domain for reflections and a cross-cutting dimension for the project as a whole, covering the “European Dimension” as the overall aim of the project.

The following executive summary highlights the outcomes of the FORUM for European Research in VET from the European perspective, i.e. the critical self-reflections of the Thematic Group “Culture, Values and Meanings” about the network as a whole and the findings of the other four Thematic Groups according to a set of established criteria.

Those criteria were:

Related to the issue of “**culture**”: 1) **Culture and the VET system**, including the aspects of 2) Social Representations of Culture, and 3) Disciplinary Approaches to Culture.

Related to “**values**”: 1) **Social Inclusion/Exclusion**, including the aspects of 2) Gender aspect; 3) Ethnic minorities; 4) Solidarity aspects.

Concerning “meanings”, established criteria give emphasis to Europe: 1) **The European project**, including the aspects of 2) The European project: the competitive perspective; 3) The European emphasis: the European or the national perspective.

## 2.2 Reflections on the European Dimension of FORUM

### 2.2.1 Culture

Education has for centuries been one of the most national fields of practice and research areas. Therefore, culture as a phenomenon of “cultural transmission” can be considered as traditionally belonging to the core of the education process.

In this context the notion of culture refers to personal and transpersonal “projects”, which only exists in plural or in multiple forms. Culture is the realm of human meaning constitution, “the state of, the making and production of and the creation and generation of meanings, interpretations, values and ethos and their objectification. These aspects of culture materialise at the levels of persons, communities/collectives, societies/nation -states, trans-national entities/globe.” (Heikkinen, 2000). From an educational perspective, the main task of cultural analysis could be seen in making the interdependency between the levels visible. Thus, the vision of the project “Europe” as a middle category between certain “globe” and certain sub-European entities can be considered as trans-personal cultural projects, which require or correspond to certain kinds of personal projects, like formation of certain personality type, ethical commitment to become a certain kind of human being.

#### *Learning in Learning Organisation*

According to the issue of Learning in Learning Organisations reflections about culture and historical contexts of culture are widely ignored as potential (transforming) frameworks for understanding and characterising organisations and organisational cultures. In the culture of learning - the only way how the issue of culture is reflected in this group - all other levels of culture are subsumed under the organisation’s priorities. By substituting other collective references of identity, the debate about Learning Organisations seems to constitute a new totalitarian entity, which demands total engagement from its members.

The strong communitarian orientation is subsumed to utilitarianism. The extreme engagement to self-development in the service of organisation implies the promotion of an authoritarian (or even totalitarian) personality, who should share its mission and adapt to the prescribed determinist “the change”. Critical, resisting or non -collaborative personality and behaviour is rejected - forms of collectivity/solidarity and (shared) responsiveness to the other are substituted by self-interest and customer-satisfaction, which are channelled through commitment to the company -organisation and its success, controlled by (impersonal) markets. People’s existential need for care, continuity and safety are mobilised

in the service of the company. As representatives of the “the other”, company and customers cannot, however, provide an ethical sense of meaning and belonging.

#### *VET and the Labour Market*

The central idea, drawn from the “VET and Labour Market” Workshop agenda, is the assumption that the VET system has the responsibility to effectively prepare the needed human resources for the labour market. This appears to mean that the central question to be analysed should be how VET can anticipate the new society needs and requirements. In fact, the need for assessing the labour market’s requirements in terms of qualifications and competencies of the human resources is stressed in this group. However, neither the linear way that this relationship is seen nor if this should be the main concern of the VET systems are sufficiently discussed. In addition, neither the social representations of culture nor disciplinary approaches to culture are clearly analysed or discussed.

#### *Changing VET institutions*

The “Changing VET Institutions” group appears to have a rather functionalist view of culture. That is, culture is seen as a social and personal context that limits and influences the labour flexibility and, as consequence, impacts the VET system. Concerning the social representation of culture, most of the reflections in this group appear to look at culture from an organizational point of view, in general, and from employers and policy makers’ perspectives, in particular. Other levels of social actors do hardly appear in the groups reflections.

#### *Changing identities*

According to the “VET Identities” group, culture and society demands constitute the main driving forces for the VET systems and VET identity formation. This is true because individual’s identity is not an exclusive result from work and work environment. That is, identity formation is not restricted to the occupation; it also involves other life activities, i.e. being a citizen, a consumer or a family person (Onstenk, 1999). In fact, occupational identity is just a small (or a sub -identity) of the individual identity as a whole made up of a variety of small identities (occupational, social, cultural, political,...) developed (to a variable degree) through his or her interaction and engagement with other different identities, communities of practice and environments.

### **2.2.2 Values: Social Inclusion/Exclusion**

Under ethical commitments and values the criteria chosen for self critical reflections FORUM's outcomes from the perspective of the cultural perspective is the issue of social exclusion and inclusion as a European wide shared ethical standpoint. The European integration and enlargement of the EU crucially depends on the possibility of finding forms of democracy, which can be agreed and accepted by people in Europe. Therefore, awareness and dealing with issues of democratic values and ethics of solidarity, integration and equality of opportunities, or of exclusion and inequities, e.g. of women or ethnic minorities, are worth of special attention.

#### *Learning in Learning Organisation*

According to this groups view, social exclusion or inequity is no issue for learning in LO's. Implicitly the exclusive norms of human beings are given, e.g. as assumptions about (properly) learning people as talented, totally engaged to the company, enterprising and competitive. Papers presented in or from this group hardly use the vocabulary of social inclusion, only through mentioning accessibility of learning or developmental activities. The major concern in "organisational inclusion", which primarily means commitment to organisational mission/vision, is sharing knowledge or knowledge creating actions. It seems as if people acting in Learning Organisations have no bodies, no sex, no age, no families or relatives, no social or ethnic characteristics.

The discourse of learning does not include self-reflections about who and how and with which social consequences the learning economy is leaving out or in the margins, what is its share in the making of increasing number of people "different" and problems groups of such economy (and society).

The persistence of the organisational perspective inhibits discussions on ethics and values of work at non-organisational platforms, at nation state level or between trans-organisational collective actors.

#### *VET and the Labour Market*

It can be said that issues related to values are marginally analysed by the "VET and Labour Market" group. Reintegration of workers with low levels of qualification is the main issue discussed in terms of social inclusion/exclusion. That analysis is made in terms of factors and realities that diminish demand of the labour market for this type of workers. There is a total absence of referencing differences among people. It appears that workers' behaviour and attitude is not influenced by the condition of being woman or man, phase of life they are in, or by social or ethnic characteristics they have.

### *Changing VET-institutions*

Like the previous group the “Changing VET Institutions” group does not give either much relevance to the social inclusion/exclusion issues. There is only one reference to the need for making the training profiles compatible for marginal areas. It appears that the VET institutions and VET system are seen as a tool for promoting excellence and innovation and does not have anything to do with social inclusion.

### *Changing Identities*

Differently from the above FORUM Thematic Groups, the “VET Identities” group have given relevance to the social in/exclusion and solidarity issues in the analysis of identity formation. In fact, most of the identity papers explicitly address the concern about social in/exclusion aspects in the process of identity formation. For instance, “cultural differences”, “organisational culture”, and “social representations”, are considered as adequate sources for relevant analysis of the social and cultural representations of vocational training. Analysis of the processes of identity formation in relation to employability reinforces the concern for the social exclusion issue.

### **2.2.3 Meanings: the project Europe**

A transnational European network to analyse, reflect and debate the patterns of the VET system in the European member states, without neglecting the frame of the social, cultural and work values, is essential to get a real European dimension of the phenomena of VET in the EU. The FORUM for European research on VET should reflect on the meanings and implications of the project “Europe” in general and of European policies in the domain of E&T in particular and should elaborate distinctions between the meanings of the project Europe at individual, local, national and trans-national or at the European level.

### *Learning in Learning Organisation*

Because of the given consensual commitment of the group to the concepts and ideas of learning organisation, the references to Europe or nation-states are marginal. The case of learning organisations debated typically come from certain “reference-countries and industries”, like Japanese, German, UK and Swedish car-industry, ICT industry or banking business. It may be indicative that there are no contributions from South or Eastern European countries.

The general discourse of the learning organisations group are hardly problematising Europe or nation-states. The ignorance is striking, whilst the most important driving force towards learning organisation is considered to be the globalising economy, which implies trans-nationalisation of business and production and emergence of global organisational, societal, information and communication networks. It seems that in this FORUM sub group nation-

states and Europe are provisory political bodies in the development towards a uniform global learning economy.

#### *VET and Labour Market and Changing VET Institutions*

Europe as a project and concept is not explicitly problematised by the “VET and Labour Market” and the “Changing VET Institutions” group, in general. The European “vision” appears to be based on the need for increasing effectiveness and competitiveness of organisations without any reference to the social component of the European Project

It appears from the “VET and Labour Market” and the “Changing VET Institutions” groups that the national level is interpreted without a complementary European vision. In fact, the European context most of time is referenced for comparing the national situations or for analysing trans-national mobility of the workers in the labour market.

#### *Changing identities*

The European project appears to be a transversal concern in the “VET Identities” group. Their main statement in relation to the project Europe is that the success of the convergence of pan-European vocational training standardisation programs should be based not only on institutional arrangements but also on the mutual recognition and understanding of the meanings and representations associated to this topic throughout Europe.

### **3. Background and objectives of the project.**

The Forum for European Research into Vocational Education and Training sought to develop a research methodology which relies less on comparison and more on a collaborative approach to research. FORUM was established as a network of research institutions to seek a new approach to transnational research in vocational education and training and to offer systematically rigorous definitions of different approaches to assist researchers in the pursuit of knowledge. Fourteen countries were represented in the Forum and its members included respected researchers both nationally and internationally. Many of the members are senior academics in institutions responsible for training VET professionals and have links with policy makers both at regional and national levels. These factors combined to make FORUM a unique thematic network in a policy area of immense importance to the future of Europe.

The main aim of the thematic network was the establishment of the European dimension - in terms of contents and methodologies - within the sphere of vocational education and training (VET). The European dimension needs to embrace the traditional values of European societies embodied in the diversity of traditions, institutions, legislation and cultures that influence vocational education and training in the European Union. Common economic pressures may result in divergent responses of various European VET systems to economic, political and social pressures. The project aimed to produce analysis with a high degree of relevance on important EU and national policy issues in the field of VET.

In particular, the network aimed to examine the pressures to increase the quality of VET, the skill levels of those in VET, quality assurance, flexibility, and transnationality, while taking into account different responses to employer involvement, individual funding and changing work organisations.

In addition, FORUM was committed to integrating the coaching and development of young researchers into the work of the network. Young researchers would work alongside more experienced colleagues to explore the European dimension in vocational education and training research. This innovation was designed to ensure that FORUM would make a lasting contribution to the research and development community, on a European scale, that outlives the timescale of the project.

The network set out to analyse how VET systems across Europe are expanding to common pressures, enabling the development of European policy, as opposed to national policy scenarios.

FORUM set a timetable of meeting formally three times each year - a total of nine times. Members of the network would be involved in a number of inter-related sub-groups to undertake the work packages. In each institution an experienced researcher was to be identified as the key representative to FORUM. In addition each institution was to nominate a young researcher to be its representative on the young researchers' network which would be organised in parallel and integrated into the main network activities.

The work content focused on the exploration of the European dimension for research into the capacity for change and adaptation of educational systems as a common thread to link the activities of the various sub groups. It was recognised by members of FORUM that an interdisciplinary approach was vital for success in its work and this was reflected in the characteristics of the network and the tasks allocated to members. FORUM aimed to identify and examine national case studies of best practice, undertake literature reviews, prepare detailed research proposals and present findings to relevant conferences, symposia and journals. The major outcome was to make recommendations to policy makers, researchers and practitioners in the field of vocational education and training.

The thematic network set out to investigate the following hypotheses.

1. That all European VET systems are responding to the pressures of economic competitiveness by attempting to:
  - 1.1 increase the quantity of VET (measured by number of trainees and number of courses).
  - 1.2 enhance the skill levels of those in VET (measured by levels of national recognised qualifications).
  - 1.3 improve the quality and standard of training (measured by the development of quality assurance systems).
  - 1.4 make VET more flexible (measured by number of bespoke and modular courses).
  - 1.5 produce internationally recognised qualifications (measured by proportion of courses qualifications to international standards).
  - 1.6 increase employer involvement for training (measured by alternance based training).
  - 1.7 promote greater individual responsibility for training (measured by funding responsibility falling on individuals).
2. That there is no consistent role for the state and the social partners, in controlling VET across Europe (indicated by participation in governing and controlling bodies for training, and responsibility for funding).
3. That there is no consistent picture centralisation or decentralisation in Europe, (indicated by responsibility for management, qualifications and funding).
4. That there is a strong relationship between level of economic development and level of vocational training across Europe (indicated by GDP/capita and numbers and levels of qualifications).

5. That the changing organisation of work is having the following effects on VET across Europe:

- 5.1 an increased demand for IT training in all categories of VET (measured by numbers).
- 4.2 an increased demand for modular training for those in employment (measured by numbers).
- 4.3 measured individual opportunities for training courses in companies (from case studies and surveys).
- 5.4 a decrease in demand for low skill routine training in comparison to employment levels (measured by numbers in both cases).

These hypotheses only formed the first stage of the analysis to be generated by the network. They were designed to enable analysis to be carried out into the nature of the interaction effects by the different work groups and the overall network.

The project established five Thematic Groups:

- 1. Learning in organisations
- 2. VET and the labour market
- 3. Changing institutions
- 4. Changing identities
- 5. VET and culture

## **4. Scientific description of the project results, methodology, conclusions and policy implications related to the five Thematic Domains**

### **4.1 Learning in Learning Organisations**

#### **4.1.1 Introduction**

In the first 85 years of the twentieth century the range of tasks and associated skills asked of employees were generally limited and often accompanied by high levels of supervision and control. From the early 1980s there has been an increasing recognition that higher levels of skills are required to cope with new technology, new forms of work organisation and the demands of quality and customer service that by the late 1990s have become commonplace. In the last decade of the century what began as a trickle of interest in the learning organisation concept has turned into a wave of theoretical research and practical implementation.

As elsewhere in Europe and across the world, the UK Government is developing policies and initiatives to create a learning society. The consultancy document for a Learning Age has become an important milestone in the progress towards these policies and strategies and lifelong learning will inevitably become a central platform for national and European initiatives for social and economic regeneration. That document states quite clearly the benefits of learning for individuals, businesses, communities and the nation. For example, benefits to businesses can be seen as elsewhere in Europe and across the world adding value and keeping them up-to-date. Learning develops the intellectual capital which is now at the centre of a nation's competitive strength (Learning Age, p. 10).

If lifelong learning is to become a reality, policies and practices are required to embed the concept into the fabric of schools, colleges, universities, workplaces, the voluntary sector and in the third age. Creating organisations that support the learning of their employees will be an important factor in a lifelong learning era. However, the concept of the learning organisation has generated a great deal of interest not simply because of its apparent focus on the individual. The key to the interest in the subject is that it offers a positive framework for organisational change that is designed to improve organisational performance through learning. In addition, the pace of change in industry has become so rapid that individuals require an adaptive capacity that can only be satisfied through learning.

There are many pressures and changes occurring in the world of work that will impact on VET and its institutions. In particular, theories and practice in the field of organisational behaviour affect the range of skills and knowledge required in the workplace. The VET system has always needed to react to any work -based task and skills changes yet has played an important role in supporting those changes. The emergence of the learning organisation concept in the late 1980s could be seen as yet another management related fad for new ideas that would become redundant once a new fashionable idea emerged to take its place. However, contrary to this usual course of events, the learning organisation concept has captured the imagination of large businesses throughout the world and theorists have both promoted the concept and also attempted to get to grips with its enormous complexity. Rather than a diminishing interest, the growth in theoretical and practical interest remains unabated.

For the first time enterprises have embraced a concept that places learning at the forefront of organisational strategies for innovation. This is not necessarily the 'learning' provided traditionally by the VET system. In fact the learning organisation debates has focussed on the differences between education & training and the concept of learning. In addition to an individual learning perspective, which differs from VET provision yet is consistent with the latter's individualistic approach, learning in learning organisations also has a collective characteristic that the VET system rarely, if ever, considers its own domain or responsibility.

The learning organisation concept makes it possible to examine and apply different perspectives to important social policy arenas. In this paper, we wish to explore how such perspectives might open up new ways of viewing the important social policy concerns of vocational education and training (VET). The VET system in any country is so closely related to the world of work that its success in producing the skills and competencies for the national economy is crucial. VET systems are under constant scrutiny to become more efficient and effective. Our concern here is to explore the potential for a debate that goes beyond routine perspectives and triggers innovative research into this important social policy issue.

This paper is based on the collective work of the authors within the FORUM network's thematic group that met on nine workshops between 1998 and 2001. Rather than undertake a review of VET from traditional education and social policy perspectives, we have focused on organisational theories that are drawn from sociology, organisational behaviour and management disciplines. More specifically, our attention has been to assess the nature and of learning in organisations and whether the learning organisation concept can offer insights into the four other perspectives investigated by colleagues in FORUM. In this way our collaboration complements the work of the other thematic groups and adds a different perspective to FORUM's overall perspectives on European vocational educational and training research.

This paper will firstly elaborate on the learning organisation concept before outlining five key learning issues for learning organisation debates: single vs. double-loop learning; formal vs. informal learning; individual vs. organisational learning; adaptive vs. developmental learning and learning networks in the workplace. In the final section we will examine the issues of VET and the labour market, culture, VET institutions and occupational identities from the perspective of the learning organisation.

#### **4.1.2 The emergence of the learning organisation concept**

The learning organisation concept has become an important landmark in organisational development and practice. Since its emergence in the late 1980s it has captured the imagination of practitioners and policy makers and organisational learning has become an important topic for academic research. The concept has emerged from roots that can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s.

Senge (1990) is amongst the most influential writers to promote the concept of the learning organisation in which, he argues, five dimensions (Senge calls them disciplines) are present: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning. Together, according to the author, these dimensions create an environment in which the organisation becomes more dynamic and its constituent parts share common goals. Despite the growing influence of the concept literature, no single definition has yet to emerge. According to Garratt (1987) learning organisations are distinct from other forms of organisational cultures in that they integrate policy, strategy and operations and provide double loop learning enabling free flows of information throughout the organisation. Other authors emphasise different aspects of the concept. Learning organisations will foster learning at all levels, develop new and innovative processes and continually reflect and transform themselves (Pedler et al, 1988; Handy, 1989; Senge, 1990; Garvin, 1993; Leitch, Harrison, Burgoyne & Blantern, 1995.). Put simply, the learning organisation concept focuses on the creation and maintenance of learning-intensive work systems.

#### **4.1.3 Learning organisation as a metaphor**

Like the managers in successful Japanese firms described by Nonaka (1990), Western practitioners interested in the learning organisation metaphor have sought ideas and models to enable senior colleagues and employees to understand intuitively that change processes necessary to meet the demands of modern environments can be positive rather than negative experiences. Metaphors can appear contradictory and the learning organisation is no exception. How can we speak about organisations learning? Surely only individuals learn? Combining the two words - and concepts - set up potential conflicts, yet as practitioners attempt to find ways to reconcile those conflicts their actions make the concept explicit.

The learning organisation debate recognises that learning is not just the province of the individual but extends to groups or teams learning and crucially to how organisations learn, solve problems evaluate solutions and create feedback (Cressey & Kelleher, 1999). These three domains of learning move the debate decisively from the province of task repetition, qualifications, training, measurement and error detection in order to focus on the real development of the individual, group and organisational practices and procedures for each that can stimulate innovation.

The concept of the learning organisation is often criticised as an idealistic model that is never realised in reality. The view that modern capitalist companies can meet their competitiveness objectives while at the same maintaining a genuinely developmental learning environment from the point of view of individuals' needs is contested. The argument goes that because widespread examples cannot be found today - based on empirical evidence illustrating all of the dimensions of the theory - the conclusion is that the theory does not have validity. This view is based on a positivistic, empirical and objectivist view of reality. A contrasting viewpoint proposes that unless we can build social systems in work organisations that support the development of individual human beings and the organisations they belong to, in the long term, society is going to lose out from an economic growth and social development perspective. It is acknowledged that it is extremely difficult to build organisations that can achieve a balance between competitiveness and social goals, and even when this balance is attained it is difficult to sustain it. All of the learning organisations that exist in a myriad of contextual forms are fragile, imperfect and partial and indeed constantly having to recreate themselves. In fact they do not exist in a static sense like a finished product at all but are constantly in a state of becoming, renewing or fading away. The different learning organisations are similar only in that they have a common overarching framework within which, and around which, working life contexts - both from internal organisational and an external environmental organisational points of view - are understood (Nyhan & Kelleher, forthcoming).

#### **4.1.4 Learning in learning organisations**

The focus of our collaboration over the last three years is to explore the multi-faceted approaches to learning as applied to the learning organisation concept. This section offers an overview of the work examined.

##### *Single vs. double-loop learning*

Much of the earlier research into the learning organisation concept (Hayes et al, 1988; Garratt, 1987, Pedler et al, 1991) has been influenced by the idea of organisational learning stemming from the work of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön in the United States (1978; 1981). Organisational learning may reflect formal structures and processes designed to learn from good or bad experiences, from other companies in the form of benchmarking, or as a result of informal processes and shared information amongst individuals.

### *Formal vs. informal learning*

The distinction between formal versus informal learning is an example of the shift in focus from education and training to learning (Bolhuis and Simons, 1999). Education and training is associated with learning that can be planned and that is predictable, learning is associated with unpredictability and something that cannot (completely) be planned. However, there is not much coherence in the definitions that are being used to characterise this shift in focus. Formal versus informal learning, on-the-job versus off-the-job learning, intentional versus incidental learning, implicit versus explicit learning, self-directed learning versus training are examples of terms that are being used in different combinations and with different meanings. Except for the question where the learning takes place (on or off the job) these terms are concerned with consciousness of learning, direction of learning, starting point for learning, the content of what is being learned and the connection to what was learned earlier (frame of reference) (Bolhuis and Simons, 1999).

From a learning organisation perspective it is important to understand that research indicates that the largest part of employees workplace expertise is acquired on the job. Formal training only has impact if it occurs at the right time (Herling, 2000, Jacobs and Jones, 1995, Zemke, 1985). The challenge for organisational learning is to raise consciousness of incidental learning processes and implicit knowledge by sharing knowledge and reflecting on it together. This may mean that incidental learning processes form the basis for more intentional or maybe even formal learning processes that are directed by learners themselves in co-operation with each other or external coaches.

### *Critical reflection: Making the implicit explicit*

The importance of making individual, implicit knowledge and work routines draws the attention to critical reflective work behaviour which is both an important form of informal on-the-job learning and an important aspect of competence (Van Woerkom, 2001). Many definitions exist of what critical reflection is. However most of these definitions are indeed not very operational, most of these definitions characterise a process instead of a visible behaviour and most of these definitions are rather focused on learning or thinking than on working in an organisation. In Van Woerkom's research the following definition of critical reflective work behaviour was made: Critical reflective work behaviour is a set of connected, individual activities, aimed at analysing, optimising or innovating work practices on individual, team, or organisational level.

If organisations do want to stimulate double-loop learning this has to be achieved via stimulating employees self-efficacy. The problem with self-efficacy however is that this is both an outcome of a significant learning experience in the workplace and a critical determinant of good performance at work (Eraut, 1999). A way to break this vicious circle could be to gradually build up the uncertainty employees have to deal with in their job. In other words, people should start to operate in a safe, non-threatening environment where they can develop their competence, and develop their own vision on the job. To build up self-efficacy it is very important that employees can trust their colleagues and managers and don't feel afraid to make mistakes. After this they should be challenged to push back

frontiers and be invited to think about policy and decision-making and innovation in the organisation.

### *Individual vs. Organisational Learning*

As used here the notion of organisational learning is defined as: changes in organisational practices (including routines and procedures, structures, technologies, systems, etc.) that are mediated through the kind of human thought, action and interaction commonly called learning, knowledge creation, inquiry, problem solving or the like.

This rather wide definition of organisational learning makes it necessary to comment briefly on at least three issues. First, how to understand the relation between individual and organisational learning? The notion of organisational learning logically implies individual learning, but not vice versa. Thus, individual learning is viewed as a necessary, but not sufficient condition for organisational learning to occur.

Second, the mediation of the human mind in organisational learning does not exclude that observed organisational changes are also related to external or internal factors of e.g. an economic, a social or a cultural character. The point here is that such factors can affect organisational practices only through the mediation of human minds, i.e. through mechanisms of individual learning (cf. Simon, 1991).

A third issue concerns how to understand the character of the mediating processes themselves, i.e. the processes of “human thought, action and interaction”.

### *Learning networks in the workplace*

Four theoretical types of learning network can be distinguished to describe how companies organise the work-related learning processes of their workers. These four types are labelled liberal, vertical, horizontal, and external learning networks.

In the liberal learning network, individual employees create their own sets of learning activities. Organisations that take the notion of individual employee empowerment seriously are likely to develop a liberal learning network. The notion of employability can equally be regarded as a tendency towards liberalisation.

The vertical learning network is characterised by linear planning of learning activities. This vertical learning network is common in many large organisations and, despite its growing unpopularity associated with Taylorism, still plays a dominant role in organisational reality. The way learning programs are designed in this network bears much resemblance to a rational-linear approach to curriculum planning.

In the horizontal learning network, the three learning processes are organically integrated as opposed to mechanically planned learning processes. This learning network has gained popularity through the extensive literature on learning organisations, up to the point where a total integration of learning and work in groups seems to be advocated. In practice, however, complete integration proves almost impossible and, moreover, hardly desirable as the only option.

The external learning network is co-ordinated from outside the organisation, from the professional associations to be more precise. This learning network, although common when employees have a strong orientation on their professional field, seems to be more or less under siege, nowadays. Managers find it hard to control and call it inflexible. But many professions are well organised, very much self-sustaining, and quite successful in protecting a strong position. Their popularity with employees seems hardly surprising, since professions usually offer their members more status and job security than the organisations where professionals happen to work.

It is possible to propose that the concept of the learning organisation is an attempt to move from a vertical to a horizontal learning network. In fact what is achieved in practice, if anything, is some form of liberalisation in an otherwise vertical learning network. The external learning network, by the way, is conspicuously absent from most learning organisation discussions.

#### *Adaptive vs. developmental Learning*

The definition of organisational learning given earlier says nothing about the character of the individual and/or organisational changes in beliefs, norms, values, practices, etc., that are implied by the concept of learning. It is for example important to be able to distinguish between: (a) changes that occur within a given framework, for example within a given set of norms or values or a given organisational structure, and (b) changes that represent a break with - and something that goes beyond - the given. Perhaps the most well known version of this distinction is the one made by Argyris & Schön (1978) between single-loop and double-loop learning as discussed earlier. More recently, related distinctions have been proposed by Senge (1990), and by Engeström (1987; 1999).

One of the present authors has previously made a distinction between adaptive and developmental (or innovative) learning (Ellström, 1992; 1997). The point of departure for making this distinction is the character of the work/learning situation, specifically: the tasks to be performed, the methods/procedures to be used, and the results to be achieved. More specifically, the two modes of learning are defined in terms of the control (scope of action; e.g. Frese & Zapf, 1994) of the learning subject with respect to the interpretation and definition of these three aspects of the work/learning situation

It is important to underline that the two main forms of learning distinguished here - adaptive and developmental learning - should not be seen as mutually exclusively. On the contrary, they are assumed to mutually presuppose each other. In fact, the complex character of much professional and skilled work, and the need to move between routine and non-routine work, indicate that organisational learning cannot be equated with either a reproductive, productive or creative mode of learning. What appear to be required are rather a productive balance and a kind of pendulum movement between these basic varieties of organisational learning.

#### 4.1.5 Reflections on key VET issues

##### *Occupational identities*

The perspective of the our thematic workgroup is that dealing with their own identity for several occupational groups within innovative organisations becomes first of all a matter of learning. Management and self-management of identity requires aspects such as: (i) careful up-dating of the reservoirs of explicit and tacit knowledge; (ii) frequent restructuring of meanings attached to being placed in specific organisational environments; (iii) awareness of the links and conflicts between two levels of belonging: to an organisation (and its practices) and to an occupation (and its institutions).

This way a strict conceptual link is created between the identity construction and the learning organisation. The latter appears as the one whose members are able of being involved in the innovation processes and of reflecting on the transformation of their occupational identity. Of course the “productive sphere” quoted in the question is important, but this is not really the locus of the link between occupational identity and learning organisation; this link takes place in a reflective dimension, at a certain distance from the productive sphere.

There are many different types of organisational identity. Let’s take three examples that illustrate three different possible viewpoints in relation to the learning organisation: (i) the identity established by the corporate culture according to approaches which were very successful in the Seventies and Eighties; (ii) the identity deriving from a more flexible idea of organisation assumed as a constellation of communities of practice; (iii) the identity as reproduced in a bureaucratic organisation.

In the first case occupational identity tends to be replaced by organisational identity. “First of all I am an Honda man” is a motto that represents well this tendency: the corporation provides all the material and symbolic resources for satisfying at the same time the institutional and practical requirements of identity. The institutional devices (career paths, rewards methods, training, etc.) are very strong and allow the continuous and regular strengthening of employee’s identity. The practical dimension is constantly monitored and developed by advanced forms of management that reinforce identity also through the participation to productive choices and the valorisation of certain degrees of initiative for individuals and groups at different levels. This is not totally a situation of “learning organisation” in the sense shortly mentioned before; although it functions in such a way that it can reinforce very much the learning (mostly single-loop) of its employees.

In the second case, occupational and organisational aspects are in a balance. Communities of practice are those in which people have a more or less deep sense of identity and belonging as there is (i) a common enterprise to be performed; (ii) a mutual commitment among the members of the community; (iii) a shared repertoire of stories and expressions based on cultural and technical aspects of the daily working life. But being member of a given community of practice within an organisation, and identified with it, is totally compatible with being member of another community of practice, for instance a professional community that can represent a strong source of identification.

From this viewpoint an organisation conceived and managed as a constellation of communities of practice tends to better represent the metaphor of the learning organisation as it can promote the understanding of the subtle aspects that assure the development of every community side by side the attainment of the organisation goals, possibly taking into account roots and development perspectives of different occupations within the organisation.

In the third case, the bureaucratic organisation, the occupational aspects prevail on the organisational ones. In bureaucracies the sense of belonging is strong but formal, it is in some way a “psychical prison” from which people would like to get away without being able to do it; everybody works following formal prescriptions; the rules are maybe respected but not internalised. There is no real organisational learning also because the sources of identification are external (A “conjectural” story could be of the following kind: “first of all I am a teacher. I work in this school but my basic referring point is the occupation of mathematics teacher for which I took a degree. And I belong to my union”).

#### *Culture from a LO perspective*

The issue of culture has proven to be a complex and multi-faceted area of concern. The authors have not addressed this subject in great detail. Defining culture in relation to vocational education and training has not been a central focus to our collective activities. Yet the very nature of the learning organisation debate places cultural change at its heart. The culture in question, of course, is that of any given organisation. Taking Schein (1992) three levels of culture can be identified: basic underlying assumptions, espoused values and artefacts.

The basic underlying assumptions are the psychological predispositions of organisational members that lead them to think or act in a certain way. These can function as a cognitive defence mechanism for individuals and organisations. As a result cultures can become deep seated and pervasive although it may be extremely difficult to bring these assumptions to the surface. The espoused values may well relate to, for instance, a desire to promote the organisation as a ‘learning organisation’. These values will act as justifications for the strategies and goals that will be pursued. The artefacts are often difficult to determine but may manifest themselves as visible organisational structures.

### *VET Institutions*

Are there differences between vocational training institutions and the kinds of organisations described in the literature about learning organisations? In our view these are the main differences:

- Colleges have a dual relationship with learning: apart from the learning (as a primary process) of students there is also the learning of teachers. Thus colleges deal with learning at two levels. Are these levels interconnected? Often times they seem not to be. Learning of students is separated from learning of teachers.
- Compared to other institutions, colleges have many different types of clients. Apart from the students there are the parents of students, the government, society at large, employers, other educational institutions taking in alumni of the college and professional associations. Do colleges know who their customers are? Who do they consider to be their main customers?
- The needs of the different (types of) customers tend to differ.
- A further distinguishing characteristic of colleges as compared to some other kinds of organisations might be the unclear mix of service and product outcomes. Are colleges like companies that produce diplomas and learning outcomes or are they like service companies that provide for various kinds of services?
- One remarkable characteristic of colleges has been that they tended to function with a management without influence on the primary process.
- Traditionally, teachers could decide about their teaching autonomously. Classroom doors remained closed and teachers had to deal and negotiate with their students only.
- Senge describes commitment to the organisational vision as one of the five disciplines for learning organisations. This is lacking in many colleges.
- There are practical historical blockades to change in many colleges. Resistance to change goes hand in hand with stable tenured positions that make it hard to have a human resource management and policy aiming for organisational change.
- Colleges tend more than other organisations to have separated systems of organisational learning and individual and team learning.

What are the characteristics of a “learning college”? Like other organisations they should be organisations that strive to optimise and interconnect learning and learning abilities at the three domains of learning and aim to change continuously in order to satisfy existing and possible client needs. There are, however, some specific additional characteristics that follow from the differences between colleges and some other kinds of organisations:

- a) Because of the dual relationship with learning, colleges should consider learning to be their primary process at all levels of learning and to provide the best practices of learning and learning ability at all these levels.
- b) Because of the various types of clients systems and their contradictory demands and needs, colleges should invest heavily and continuously in investigation of customer satisfaction.
- c) Learning colleges should be very open organisations: involving other schools, parents, employers, unions, governments, and other schools. Contact with these groups are necessary in order to learn from them and to find ways to deal with the opposing demands and needs
- d) Breaking the walls between school and the outside world: bringing in outsiders in the school and letting insiders go outside. In order to be able to learn from the outside world, colleges should bring in their representatives. Why could employers and employees not work as lecturers on a part-time basis? Teachers should go outside of the college in companies and other organisations to learn what has happened and is happening there.
- e) Horizontal and vertical networks between colleges and between colleges and other kinds of organisations could become influential contexts for learning, where researchers, teachers, consultants and practitioners can collaborate.
- f) Because of the professional autonomy and the lack of homogeneity, solidarity and common vision, it is especially important to create a sense of community. In developing a common vision, this feeling together could develop. Here too a combination of top-down and bottom-up steps is needed.
- g) Learning colleges need strong management with real influences on the primary processes. College management should become the leading professionals who are involved in the facilitation and organisation of learning at all levels. They should set the example for the others in the organisation and be recognised as people who are able to do the teaching job and the learning needed for it them.
- h) Personnel management of learning colleges could focus on innovation and refreshment in order to reach employability and flexibility of teachers: task-differentiation, job-rotation and exchanges with other organisations.

Colleges usually have sophisticated systems for human resource development, which include teaching resource centres, staff appraisal schemes, staff development programmes, staff development personnel (often in senior management positions) and resource allocation to these systems. There are also informal systems such as periodicals and other literature relating to educational issues in staff common rooms. However, it is extremely rare for these systems to provide opportunities for teachers or trainers to learn about learning. In the learning organisation staff development for learning about learning becomes a central if not leading characteristic of the organisation's developmental strategy.

#### 4.1.6 Labour market issues

One of the problems for discussion of social and training issues is the diversity of systems across Europe. Not only do they have very different VET systems but the varying sectoral mixes in each country can also influence these, by the forms of labour contracts and by the nature of the occupational segregation in force. All of this is a background to institutional and traditional differences in the form and style of VET, ranging as they do from highly formal and rigid occupational systems of training (for instance the German Beruf) to highly voluntaristic systems such as that found in the UK. When engaging in research at the European level there are immediate difficulties in posing universalistic trends, trajectories and concerns about VET for these reasons.

Bringing in the Learning Organisation issue further muddies the water as this essentially adds a whole new raft of issues traditionally thought of as being marginal or lying outside the VET debates. The learning organisation debate is centred upon enterprise activity and the creation of particular organisation strategies, rather than look at national or regional policy-making. It privileges the role of communities of practice and specific collaborative regimes that might increase locally needed competencies and 'employability'. In essence we have the contrast between the learning organisation that is particular, responsive to enterprise needs and dynamic in attending to corporate change and VET that is National/Regional, general and tending towards stability of competence and skill creation.

The learning organisation debate has often been seen as a highly abstract one dealing in transformational issues containing obtuse educational philosophy. The take up in enterprises has been patchy and the application of its principles highly variable undermining the possibility of common yardsticks for learning organisational practice.

The bridge between the two debates has been a difficult one to establish. In the main it has occurred in the debates about 'employability' - what are the appropriate skills for the jobs within a dynamic economy? Obviously this concept too has numerous difficulties, not the least of which is the failure of an adequate definition. It has been adopted at a European level and forms part of the core Employment strategy - being one of the four pillars alongside adaptability, entrepreneurship and improved equal opportunities. Further it informs national debates through the concept of life-long learning, is an enterprise issue dictating organisational competency policies and obviously has an individual aspect determining the command any one worker can have in terms of labour market opportunities.

Gazier (1999) shows how 'employability' as it is defined has undergone a variety of changes since its first use in the 1940s. Firstly as a dichotomous term denoting employability in terms of age, ability or family burden. Later variants - he counts seven - move on through a socio-medical one to the more recent versions that bring in a high role for learning and generic skills. So we find either 'manpower employability' that encourages use of development or training plans or the more modern 'initiative employability', emphasising individual responsibility and creative power within networks. The latter is the one that emerges in the 1990s and parallels much of the learning organisation debate. Hence here - concern for lifelong learning, flexibility, information and growth in human and

social capital. The main failing here is that most of the thinking is highly individualistic and cannot translate the employability concepts into organisational/collective mechanisms.

The lack of an organisational dimension with an analysis of the role of collective entities and extra-individual forms of learning is hardly mentioned in any of the seven definitions offered by Gazier. Obviously the introduction of extra-individual agencies and localism into labour market study compromises 'macro-economistic techniques of analysis'. Such an approach introduces more concern for case study analysis, qualitative assessment of role of learning on - individual, team and organisation - but more crucially on the importance of the interaction of learning between the three in determining outcomes. It misses the sense of the creation of value-adding collaborative regimes and their importance. This is especially so when they exist across or differentially with sectors of the economy, that is in knowledge producing sectors, but also in other enterprises that have taken up learning organisation strategies.

#### **4.1.7 Conclusions**

Our collaborative efforts over the last three years has focused on several aspects of learning in learning organisations, many of which have been discussed earlier in this chapter. From both a research and practitioner perspective the concept of the learning organisation is appealing, but it remains quite unclear how the concept can be implemented satisfactorily.

Through the multiplicity of learning approaches discussed here we have demonstrated that learning in learning organisations can focus on different aspects of both individual and organisational development. For individuals there is a consensus that space should be created to enable them to organise their own learning. This can also have a negative impact. Not all workers are able or willing to find their own learning route, especially if it means the everyday learning activities they undertake by themselves are ignored or undervalued. The literature assumes that what is good for the employing organisation will automatically translate into activities by individuals where they have a willingness to learn continuously. There are apparent pressures for individuals to conform to the need to be innovative and engaged in double loop learning on a permanent basis and this could be construed as evidently unreasonable if not impossible to realise. There is also a potential contradiction in that whereas individuals are often expected to take on the responsibility for their own development, they are also asked to develop the ability to learn together with colleagues.

The last point of criticism refers to the highly internal orientation of the concept of the learning organisation. It is all about the workers, the managers and the trainers. The external orientation is restricted to market developments and clients. External influences such as government policies, union pressure or advances in the professional field are hardly taken into consideration, even though they have considerable impact on learning issues.

An alternative concept of the learning organisation would focus on multi -faceted learning and work arrangements (not only group learning in multi -functional teams) and enabling people to handle tensions they encounter in everyday work life (not only developing shared values). Tensions arise because there are always several actors within and outside the organisation who want to impact on the way learning and work are organised. In order to create learning and work arrangements in which all of them can participate effectively, it is important:

1. to deal with the autonomy and empowerment of individual employees (deriving from the liberal learning network);
2. to provide a clear policy and direction (deriving from the vertical learning network);
3. to allow participation and learning in groups, emphasising shared understanding and reflection (deriving from the horizontal learning network);
4. to take into account the professional field where new methods and insights are developed (deriving from the external learning network).

A learning organisation should explicitly address the relationship between learning and work and provide people with possibilities to connect the two in multiple ways. There is still significant room for progress in this area.

The contributions here have drawn on a growing body of literature that is concerned with the combined concepts of learning and organisation. We have explored different issues and suggest that learning in learning organisations is more focused on double -loop rather than single-loop learning, on informal rather than formal learning, on collective learning rather than solely on individual learning; on developmental rather than adaptive learning and on the key features of learning networks in the workplace. Our emphasis on organisations as the unit of analysis is in marked contrast to the work of our learned colleagues in the rest of FORUM. Our aim has been to explore new avenues for dialogue within the field of VET research and our reflections here are a single point of reference amongst a growing body of literature on the topic of learning organisation that places the organisation of work, organisational structures and processes and the application of learning theories at the heart of debates surrounding the future of work. The challenge for the vocational training system is to engage with these issues and find a meaningful role that enhances organisational strategies for innovation.

## **4.2 Culture, Values and Meanings**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to identify and analyse the Cultural issues present in all the group themes into which the VET FORUM network has been organised and which it has been working with. The FORUM Culture Group considers that the other FORUM Groups' perspectives on the issues of Culture should become clear to (and that the Culture message should be delivered to) all European citizens, in general, and to all European VET professionals, in particular. This idea was based on the assumption that the concept of Culture has unclear limits and on the conviction that the issues of Culture are transversal to and present, but not always visible, in all other themes. For those reasons, the Culture Group has decided to organise the Culture chapter of the FORUM book based on the Culture issues present in the other FORUM Group Themes. To achieve this goal, all the FORUM papers produced and presented in the FORUM Workshops were analysed in a frame of a set of established criteria. In addition to this analysis, all the work and interventions made by the Culture Group as a whole and by the VET FORUM members concerning the theme Culture, Values & Meanings in the frame of the VET FORUM have been organised so that they will be published in a specific book.

Making all European VET researchers aware of VET issues may be helpful to provide them (individually and in partnerships) with new sources for research questions and with different perspectives on common problems and issues. The benefits and outcomes of this analysis according to the FORUM Culture, Values & Meanings Group (Work Package 2) are:

- a) A better understanding of the VET practices and values in the different European countries through a mixture of diverse “cultural eyes” giving an important contribute to overcome the problems posed by national frames;
- b) Increasing the effectiveness (and efficiency) of the research on VET which is (and will be) carried out by all FORUM members;
- c) Giving researchers some feedback on new and relevant VET research questions;
- d) Writing recommendations for European VET policies and practices without neglecting the links to Regional Development;
- e) Contributing to the possibility of making a trans-national comparison of the VET provision.

To read and analyse the Culture issues present in the other FORUM Group Themes, the Culture Group considered it necessary to develop a set of criteria around Culture, Values and Meanings. Although criteria may have a reductive effect, the FORUM Culture Group is persuaded that this reductive effect will be compensated for by the fact that the criteria will make explicit the Culture issues implicit in the other FORUM Group Themes.

Furthermore, the FORUM Culture Group is also convinced that the analysis criteria will contribute to demonstrate the complexity of the Culture concept and its relationship to the European systems of VET.

In what Culture is concerned, the established criteria were: 1) Culture and the VET system, 2) Social Representations of Culture, and 3) Disciplinary Approaches to Culture.

As far as Values is concerned, the criteria set up were the following: 1) Social Inclusion/Exclusion; 2) Gender aspect; 3) Ethnic minorities; 4) Solidarity aspects.

As to Meanings, the established criteria gave an emphasis to Europe: 1) The European project: the collaborative perspective; 2) The European project: the competitive perspective; 3) The European emphasis: the European or the National perspective.

Analysing the previously referred issues in relation to the VET practices and values of the different European countries through diverse “cultural eyes” may give an important contribution to understand problems posed by national cultural variations towards VET issues. A collaborative research approach, i.e., researchers from different European member states and different disciplinary backgrounds working from common starting points towards common aims, conducted in the frame of the FORUM network has provided all FORUM members with an outstanding experience and tool to analyse VET practices and issues. That approach has benefited from the FORUM partners’ extensive experience in VET research projects funded either by Community Initiatives or by National educational research programmes.

#### **4.2.2 Standpoints on Culture**

The success of the Development process in any Region depends essentially on the capacity for increasing and developing the qualification level of the human resources. For this reason, Vocational Education and Training (VET) plays an important role for the development of the European Union. In fact, skilled workers are far better able to manage people and to handle data and things, mainly in environments characterised by new technologies and new production techniques (Spenner, 1990). However, in the frame of the cultural tradition, the principles of solidarity and of social inclusion should be taken into consideration in the European development process (Heidegger & Kuhn, 1995). That is, the European economic development ought to be combined with social reforms and with the reduction of disparities between regions so as to increase the competitiveness of Europe (Heidegger & Kuhn, 1995). According to the White Paper of the EU, “Growth, Competitiveness and Employment”, vocational education and training (VET) has a relevant role to play in the possible and necessary mutual interaction of economic and ‘social’ competitiveness. So, in view of the increasing global competition, the European Union has to find its specific pathway, combining modernisation strategies with social reform policies (Heidegger & Kuhn, 1995).

Education has, for centuries, been one of the most national fields of practice and research areas. Therefore, culture as a phenomenon of ‘cultural transmission’ can be considered as

traditionally belonging to the core of the educational process. For instance, historically, closest to education among the explicit attempts to develop research from the cultural perspective have been the 'Kulturwissenschaften' in the German-speaking Europe and the Anglo-American movement of 'Cultural studies', which has also become popular in Nordic countries. Historical and philosophical reflections on nation building, identity formation and inter-cultural relationships are central in the German tradition. In cultural studies, the micro-sociological analysis of contemporary symbolic differentiation and identity policies is more important. (Cf. Göller 2000, Fornäs 1999). In FORUM, neither of these discourses appears to have had much influence. Closer might come the educational sub-discipline 'Comparative education', whose previous development can be seen as an attempt to overcome or do without culture in the international or trans-national issues of education. However, on the one hand, the sociological, universalising and functional voice of comparative education has increasingly started to include historical and cultural(ist) tones (Cf. Schriewer 2000). Nowadays, on the other hand, culture has become an inflated and controversial concept in social and humanist sciences and research. In the policy discourse and in non-sophisticated research discussion, there are some typical attitudes towards culture. Firstly, culture may only be of interest as a non-rational or non-explainable residual in making generalisations. Secondly, culture may be taken as a source of resistance and as an obstacle, e.g. when people are against change or adoption of some universally beneficial solution or technology. Thirdly, culture can be recognised as people's traditions and value preferences, but only as a tool or instrument for economy, like in culture-friendly manufacturing. All these attitudes can be found in the FORUM papers as well.

Before proceeding to commenting the value and ethical assumptions of the papers of all Thematic Groups, a short explanation of the usage of the word 'culture' or 'cultural' must be provided. In this context the notion of culture refers to personal and trans-personal 'projects', which only exist in plural or in multiple forms. For instance, 'culturality' as the specification of meaning structures, possible for human beings, is comprised by moments of meditatively, personality, sociality and dimensions of historicity (Medialität, Personalität, Sozialität and dimensions of Historizität, Lokalität) (Göller, 2000). Culture is the realm of human meaning constitution, 'the state of, the making and production of and the creation and generation of meanings, interpretations, values and ethos and their objectification. These aspects of culture materialise at the levels of persons, communities/collectives, societies/nation states, globe/trans-national entities.' (Heikkinen, 2000) From an educational perspective, the main task of cultural analysis could be seen as making visible the interdependence between the levels. Thus, a certain 'Europe' as an intermediate category between certain 'globe' and certain sub-European entities, are trans-personal cultural projects, which require or correspond to certain kinds of personal projects, like the formation of a certain type of personality, of ethical commitment to become a certain kind of human being.

One function of 'international' educational research is to legitimise reform discourses by providing externalising reflections on the system, which is to be reformed (Schriewer, 200; Heikkinen, 1995; Gonon, 1998). The major patterns of externalisation are reference to general principles of scientific rationality, to values and value-based ideologies and to organisational realities. (Schriewer 2000, 332)

### *Learning in Learning Organisations*

Many of the papers on learning in LO's, are exemplary of the 'externalisation to world situations' in their 'international' discussions on learning, work and organisations. The papers minimize the differences of the socio-cultural, economic and political frameworks, in which the organisations/companies, managers, employers and teams are learning. By doing so, they are neutralizing the value-commitments, which are shared by certain interest groups in different countries. By using selected objects and facts in certain 'reference societies/countries' as representative of international (or, rather, global) development, by applying scientific, universal language and method, little room is given to any critical or opposing arguments, which only indicate failure of local actors or organisations to grasp and keep up-to-date with the 'international development' or change. In fact, the papers generalise from national, local and even then restricted examples and contexts: in 'the real world of VET', such organisations may hardly exist and the understanding of most forms of collective labour (division and integration of work) and learning may need quite different conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

Although culture is marginally discussed, the whole discourse on learning organisations builds heavily on the discourse on organisational culture - explicitly mentioned for the first time in the final summary (2001) -, which in this case is the 'culture of learning'. The culture of learning means habits, attitudes, meanings adopted in the company, which are crucial for its success. (Cressey, Kelleher, Tomassini) The wider cultural and historical contexts are ignored as potential (transforming) frameworks for understanding and characterising organisations and organisational cultures. In the culture of learning all other levels of culture are subsumed under the organisation. As D. Axmaccher (1990) analysed at the turn of 1990s, the company-oriented VET and human resources development is an indicator of transformation of the Beruf as a profane religion into an organisation. At the same time, by replacing other collective references of identity, it constitutes a new totalitarian entity, which demands total engagement from its members. (cf. Silverman 1999).

Ethics is the most silenced topic in the learning organisations' discourse: some papers do favour post-modern uncertainty and chaos against positivist and bureaucratic search for rationality, predictability and security. Papers represent a fusion of economical (utility, effectiveness, competitiveness) and cognitive (knowledge/information) values. Even if not using the words, utilitarian and libertarian ethics is assumed, stressing autonomy, self-directedness and liberated networks. The strong communitarian orientation is subsumed to utilitarianism. The extreme engagement to self-development at the service of the organisation implies the promotion of an authoritarian (or even totalitarian) personality, which should share its mission and adapt itself to the prescribed determinist 'the change'. 'I characterized such a state (personality system in state of flux) as flexible personalities, able to endlessly engage in the reconstruction of the self... Nowadays, people produce forms of sociability, rather than follow models of behaviour.' (Castells 2000, 3 81) Critical, resisting or non-collaborative personality and behaviour is rejected - forms of collectivity/solidarity and (shared) responsiveness to the other are replaced by self-interest and customer-

satisfaction, which are channelled through commitment to the company-organisation and its success, controlled by (impersonal) markets. (cf. Putnam 2000, Kettunen 2001, Heikkinen & al 2001) People's existential need for care, continuity and safety are mobilised in the service of the company. As representatives of 'the other', company and customers cannot, however, provide us with an ethical sense of meaning and belonging. The texts do not report any frustration or malaise in learning organisations.

For what are the organisation's religiosity and authoritarian and enterprising self-constructed an alternative? Is the most dangerous opponent to the ethical commitment of people to the integrated values of personal freedom and to the trans-organisational collective values of solidarity? In the rejection of VET as education and training, educational values of justice and care, and the obligation of promoting the social and democratic thinking, emotions and values to be developed, are challenged.

### *VET and Labour Market*

The relationship between Culture and the VET System is more or less present in all 'VET and Labour Market' papers, mainly in the ones that read the national VET systems from the labour market perspective. Some of them analyse how cultural particularities and characteristics of society influence the VET system. For instance, 'The structure and function of the Greek social system is distinctive from that of central-European countries (...). Thus, when it comes down to labour issues we do not observe a close link between education and profession' (Pationitis, s.d.). So, it appears that '(...) the labour reality (...), minimizes the importance of vocational education in today's Greece.' (Pationitis, s.d.) For this reason, 'there is a pressing need for sectors offering vocational education to make a continuous consideration and possible re-structuring of their curricula if they do not wish to see their graduates being unable to practice the profession they were trained for.'

Others read the VET system through a set of influencing factors such as the regulating role of the State, the national goals for VET and the trainer's attitude (Gamboa & Figueira, 1998). For example, in Portugal, the main concern doesn't appear to 'be the qualification of human resources - highly important for the improvement of the Portuguese economy - but the attempt to solve the problem concerning the huge number of young people who, despite their eagerness, could not enter university' (Gamboa & Figueira, 1998). In addition, trainers and teachers are expected to perform new roles and new tasks without any change in their training and professional image (Gamboa & Figueira, 1998). So, save some rare exceptions, teachers' speech continues to be very centred on curriculum development almost without any articulation to the community (Gamboa & Figueira, 1998). Mechanisms designed to bring VET closer to the labour context 'have not been implemented due to the tight schedules and programs behind these courses' (Gamboa & Figueira, 1998). However, the initial vocational training is seen as 'a potential process for the individual's whole development and also for his/her own integration. It is not a mere technical fitting (know how to do) as a response to the immediate needs of the worker's post.' (Gamboa & Figueira, 1998)

Others, still, look at the VET system making the distinction between two cultural orientations: the School's Culture and the Industry's Culture. The distinction between those two cultural orientations can be seen in terms of teaching goals, content and practices as well as in terms of teachers' roles and communication style (Ellstrom, s.d.). Nevertheless, content and practices of the VET systems do not primarily result from 'deliberate decisions on the part of some policy makers, but rather the more or less unintended results of cultural and institutional processes with dynamics of their own' (Ellstrom, s.d.). 'An important mechanism behind this process of cultural shaping is the normative pressure on teachers and other professionals to act in conformity with different ideologies and cultural assumptions (...)' (Ellstrom, s.d.). However, it also seems that underlying this view of education is the assumption that the educational system is, more or less consciously, designed to contribute for the reproduction of the economy (Ellstrom, s.d.).

However, the central idea, drawn from the 'VET and Labour Market' Workshop agenda, is the assumption that the VET system has the responsibility to effectively prepare the human resources needed for the labour market. This seems to mean that the central question to be analysed should be how can VET anticipate needs and requirements of the new society. In fact, the need for assessing the requirements of the labour market in terms of qualifications and skills of the human resources is stressed in some papers. However, neither the linear way in which this relationship is seen nor if this should be the main concern of the VET systems are sufficiently discussed. In addition, neither the social representations of culture nor the disciplinary approaches to culture is clearly analysed or discussed. From this standpoint, the following question should be asked: What way should the VET systems go in order to face the globalisation of the economy and the changes of the organisational structures?

### *Changing VET Institutions*

The 'Changing VET Institutions' FORUM Group appears to have a functional view of Culture. That is, Culture is seen as a social and personal context that limits and influences the labour flexibility and, therefore, has an impact on the VET system. '... culture and structure become a learning system in itself. Generating new knowledge and maintaining knowledge is not a special separate activity, but an integrated part of the company's behaviour with a view to creating added value in products and services' (Shapiro, 2000: 5). From this point of view, learning cannot occur outside the cultural context and, consequently, it implies the development of a professional and cultural identity for individuals. This means 'learning occurs in a context, creates identity through a reflected practice (community of practice)' (Pationitis, 2000). In addition, the pedagogical theory should be reanalysed from an anthropological rather than from a psychological basis (Shapiro, 2000). Concerning the social representation of Culture, most papers related to the 'Changing VET Institutions' seem to look at Culture from an organizational point of view, in general, and from the employers and the policy makers' perspectives, in particular.

### *Changing identities*

According to the 'VET Identities' papers, Culture and Society's demands constitute the main driving forces behind the VET systems and VET identity formation. This is true because the individual's identity is not an exclusive result from work and work environment. That is, identity formation is not restricted to the occupation; it also involves other life activities, i.e. being a citizen, a consumer or a family person (Onstenk, 1999). In fact, occupational identity 'is just a small (or a sub -identity) of the individual identity as a whole, made up of a variety of small identities (occupational, social, cultural, political,...) developed (to a variable degree) through his or her interaction and engagement with other different identities, communities of practice and environments' (M'ha med DIF, 2000). In addition, the reorganisation of the French VET system is seen as a response 'to the growing demand from businesses for highly qualified production and maintenance workers having qualifications between those of advanced technicians, who hold an advanced technical certificate (BTS) or technological university diploma (DUT), and qualified workers who hold a CAP or BEP' (Gendron, 2000, p.6). Furthermore, the building of the occupational identity of the youth 'occurs naturally on the basis of models provided, on the one hand, by the family environment and surroundings, and the young people's different socialisation groups and, on the other, by the intermingling of generations that takes place within the company' (Gendron, 2000, p.20). Furthermore, labour as a good to be exchanged in markets, work ethics and working morale are part of the cultural phenomenon. 'They form the patterns of workers' behaviour and attitudes towards work that make them useable for employment and exchange in a given labour market' (Laske, 1999,p.2) So, labour and labour markets could be seen as social constructs, historically rooted and generated in specific cultural environments (Laske, 1999).

The learning process related to skill acquisition is understood by the 'VET Identities' Group as a social process since an individual learns through the interaction and communication with others (Brown, 1999). However, it should be stressed that due to the local contextual influences on the processes of becoming skilled, the learning outcomes may be different on particular individuals (Brown, 1999).

#### **4.2.7 Social In/Exclusion and Inequities**

The criteria chosen for evaluating the texts from the perspectives of social exclusion and inclusion is a special sub-theme under ethical commitments and values. Furthermore, the intensification and expansion of the EU depends crucially on the possibility of finding forms of democracy, which can be agreed upon and accepted by people in Europe. Therefore, awareness and dealing with issues of democratic values and ethics of solidarity, integration and equality of opportunities, or of exclusion and inequities, e.g. of women or ethnic minorities, are worth being given special attention.

##### *Learning in Learning Organisations*

According to the papers, social exclusion or inequity is no issue for learning in LO's. The exclusive norms of human beings are given implicitly, e.g. as assumptions about (properly) learning people as talented, totally engaged to the company, enterprising and competitive. Papers hardly use the vocabulary of social inclusion, only by mentioning accessibility of learning or developmental activities (e.g. Svensson & al 2000). The major concern in 'organisational inclusion', which primarily means commitment to organisational mission/vision, is sharing knowledge or knowledge creating actions. One striking characteristic of these in other FORUM papers and discussions is the total absence of recognition of the differences between people. People have no bodies, no sex, no age, no families or relatives, no social or ethnic characteristics. Although sex-differences in work, occupations and VET are the most explicit indicators of underlying cultural and value assumptions, they are completely ignored. It could be concluded that one of the strongest and clearest cultural projects of European VET is the protection of male (masculine) hegemony in work, occupations and VET in the re-organisation of industrial and political power - obviously also giving new opportunities for many groups of 'middle-class' women to profit from joining such projects. However, the discourse of learning organisations, better than other FORUM themes indicates the transforming nature of gendering of work. On the one hand, there is the feminine ideal of a flexible and engaged employee working for the family-organisation; on the other hand, there is the masculine self-directed, strategic and competitive knowledge creator. The new worker is strategically using gendered attributes in constructing her/his identity.

The notions of liberality, equality and openness in the context of learning organisations echo from the 'so-called openness of our liberal democratic societies today... it is no longer a question of up or down, but in or out; those who are not in want desperately to be so; otherwise they find themselves in a social emptiness' (Touraine, in Silverman 1999, 144, cf. also Putnam 2000). The discourse of learning does not include self-reflections on who and how and with which social consequences the learning economy is leaving out or in the margins, what is its share in the making of an increasing number of 'different' people and problems groups of such an economy (and society). What is the culture of low-achieving youth, ethnic minorities, women and elderly?

The persistence of the organisational perspective inhibits discussions on ethics and values of work in non-organisational platforms, at a nation state level or between trans-organisational collective actors. Despite the intensification of the European integration, the democratic processes are still legitimised only in nation states, but do the civil servants or political and economic elites feel any more responsible for national citizens, if they are rewarded and punished by the global markets and trans-national elites?

### *VET and Labour Market*

It can be said that issues related to values are marginally analysed by the 'VET and Labour Market' Group the reintegration of workers with low levels of qualification being the main issue discussed in terms of social inclusion/exclusion. The analysis is made in terms of factors and realities that diminish the demand of the labour market for this type of workers. On the other hand, there is a total absence of referencing differences among people. It appears that workers' behaviour and attitude is not influenced by the condition of being a woman or a man, the stage of life they are in, or by the social or ethnic characteristics they have. For instance, some papers indicate that the low-skilled people are hit harder by unemployment than the high-skilled individuals and this is not only a consequence of change in job contents (Hootegem & Poolet, 1998). For this reason, actions should be designed and implemented in order to give the low-skilled unemployed new opportunities for reintegration in the labour market. However, it should be noted that some actions that have been implemented are mainly supply-driven, trying to adapt the jobseekers to the decreasing demand via appropriate training and counselling (Hootegem & Poolet, 1998). In fact, little attention has been paid to actions oriented towards the demand in order to minimize low-skilled unemployment from a more business-oriented approach (Hootegem & Poolet, 1998).

### *Changing VET-institutions*

Like the previous Group Theme, the 'Changing VET Institutions' Group does not give much relevance to the social inclusion/exclusion issues either. There is only one reference to the need for making the training profiles compatible for marginal areas. 'The use of training packages and the training of trainers permitted for the first time to face problems of disparity of trainers on edge subjects or the problem of providing or providing remote, isolated areas in the mountains or the islands where no proper groups of people with the same training needs could be formed with training' (Spiliotopoulou, 2000:2). In addition, cognitive aspects (knowledge, learning) are analysed together with the economic aspects whether issues related to gender, ethnic characteristics and solidarity are completely ignored. It seems that the VET system is seen as a tool for promoting excellence and innovation and that it does not have anything to do with social inclusion.

### *Changing Identities*

Differently from the above FORUM Group Themes, the 'VET Identities' papers have given relevance to the issues of social in/exclusion and solidarity in the analysis of identity formation. In fact, most papers on identity make explicit the concern about social in/exclusion aspects in the process of identity formation. For instance, «cultural differences», 'organisational culture', and 'social representations'», are considered adequate sources for relevant analysis of the social and cultural representations of vocational training (Gendron, 2000). On the other hand, in France, accreditation of work-related prior learning, which may contribute for social inclusion, is considered to be a 'shortcoming-free regime' due to 'identifiable' limitations (M'hamed DIF, 1999). One of them is related to the fact that 'only those formally qualified individuals who are able to accumulate, continuously or discontinuously, at least five years of working experience' are considered beneficiaries. This condition excludes 'non-qualified workers and employees' and 'qualified people who either do not possess enough working experience or are simply denied access to the labour market for non-qualification-based requirements' (M'hamed DIF, 1999). Concerns are extended to the notion that the processes of becoming skilled may take young people to become 'too attached to particular occupational identities' (Brown, 1999). For this reason, 'in order to overcome worries that vocational education and training will be too narrowly focused upon particular (current) conceptions of jobs and occupations', education and training systems and employment needs should be interrelated with each other, on the basis of the learning process and on the learner's need for learning how to learn (Brown, 1999). Social in/exclusion concern is also evident in the analysis of the French CVT-provision in terms of implications for identity formation and development of the concept of work (M'hamed DIF, 2000). In fact, analyses made of the CVT models always include the social-vocational in/exclusion of unemployed or disadvantaged people. Although the externalisation model allows users to develop multidimensional identities (better preparing them for socio-economic and technological change), it should be noted that it excludes people who cannot have the 'provider' status (M'hamed DIF, 2000). On the other hand, the internalisation model can be considered as a complementary model to other models since it takes into consideration individuals excluded by both the growing externalisation model and the declining traditional model. However, being a model of precariousness, it also contributes for social exclusion 'through the development of an increasingly larger sphere of precariously employed people' and 'the development of poorer identities in the peripheral segment of the internal labour market' (M'hamed DIF, 2000). An analysis of the processes of identity formation in relation to employability reinforces the concern for the social exclusion issue. It is said that job security requires a balance between cultivating individual skills and being flexible and available for mobility (Onstenk, 1999).

#### 4.2.12 The European Perspective

VET in European countries is carried out by different structures and, in general, follows two main modes of organisation. One of those organisational models is predominantly school-based and the other is essentially based on the alternance system, involving both employers and educational institutions. However, several European countries present characteristics of the two VET systems mentioned above. For instance, some countries that follow the school-based system have an apprenticeship system running alongside with vocational schooling. This fact points out that exploring the European dimension of the VET phenomenon may constitute an important added value to set up policies for vocational qualification throughout the European Union. In fact, those realities constitute important sources of information about VET systems that can and should be used to study effective solutions for problems faced by the European VET systems. Furthermore, three factors contribute to the need for exploring the European dimension of VET. First of all, the increasing 'Europeanisation' of the activities of the trans-national home-based businesses in either the EU or the USA or Far East might lead to a need of convergence in labour utilisation and training policies (Mueller, 1992; 1994). Secondly, the VET systems must face the challenge of the trends towards a new post-Fordist philosophy. That is, VET systems should take into consideration the gradual elimination of the typical mass production jobs and the increasing job complexity and flexibility at all company levels. Thirdly, a widespread perception exists that other nation's VET systems have been one of the causes for the higher economic performance of one's own country. For this reason, benefits might be attainable from importing certain aspects deemed successful elsewhere.

So, a trans-national European Forum to analyse, reflect and debate the patterns of the VET system in the European member states, without neglecting the frame of the social, cultural and work values, is essential to get a real European dimension of the phenomenon. The FORUM for European research on VET will give an important contribution for the promotion of lifelong learning and for the improvement of the quality of education by enhancing European co-operation on VET research. That is, the FORUM as a European project, should explicitly question the meaning and implications of 'Europe' in industry, occupations and VET, which means that our conceptions of them should be elaborated so as to distinguish between their meanings at an individual, local, national and trans-national or at an European level. Instead of searching for explicit expressions of Europe or European dimension, we could assume that what partners bring into the FORUM discussion, to the European platform, is indicative of the typical, hegemonic assumptions, values and interpretations of what 'European' means in the context of their theme.

### *Learning in Learning Organisations*

Because of the given consensual commitment of the authors to the concepts and ideas of the learning organisation, the references to Europe or the nation states are marginal. On the one hand, this seems to be due to the basic assumptions that learning and learning organisations are fundamentally universal phenomena and, on the other hand, to the factual development of companies and production networks into globally functioning organisations. Whilst nearly all the authors were involved either entirely, or in a considerable amount, into consultancy work for such companies, it is understandable that they marginally conceive their views and texts in relation to nation states or national cultures, or Europe. However, the examples come typically from certain 'reference - countries and industries', like Japanese, German, UK and Swedish car -industry, ICT industry or banking business, which of course depends as much on the participating individuals as on the country of their origin. The vocabularies, conclusions and recommendations seem to be more or less societally or culturally embedded in the UK, Swedish and Dutch traditions of industrial relations and negotiations about education and work. The few marginal sentences do not change the message that these are the given universalising conditions for discussions on learning in learning organisations in Europe, or anywhere else. (Is the openly managerial and decontextualised management consultancy style perhaps typical of the Italian discourse?)

It may be indicative that the contributions from Germany and Spain report primarily only the backwardness or the need to adapt the ideas of learning organisations in their countries and that there are no contributions from Southern or Eastern European countries. The contribution from France is a non -direct critique towards decontextualised concepts of learning and organisation. Dif (2000) is evaluating organisations as LO's according to the extent to which they recognise and take the responsibility as (national) educational actors and promote individuals and groups to develop their personal identity in a wide sense (also as citizens). In plenary discussions, remarks have been made about the fact that such companies and traditions of industrial relations, which are the prototype for the learning organisation concept, do not have any counterparts in countries like Greece or Portugal - and the applicability of the concept may be limited even in the authors' home countries. Not before the final summary are the problems of discussing learning and organisations in general in relation to divergent cultural and historical systems of education, industry, occupations and their negotiation procedures recognised.

Following the general discourse of learning organisations, the texts are hardly problematising Europe or the nation states, if they are mentioned at all. They are given as 'the politically responsible', 'EU' or 'governments', just like the national cultures, as external factors influencing learning organisations - enabling, facilitating, financing etc., but not as constitutive to the learning organisations themselves. The ignorance is striking, whilst the most important driving force behind the learning organisation is considered to be the globalising economy, which implies trans -nationalisation of business and production and emergence of global organisational, societal, information and communication networks. Applying the analysis of M. Castells (2000), one may conclude that the discourse of the learning organisations is implicitly taking Europe as a (provisory) project of

globalisation, a temporary form of organising labour markets, competences, where the role of the nation states is in transition. However, certain countries (the nation states, cultural traditions) remain exemplary, i.e., culturally hegemonic, in the sense that their national policy makers and leaders of industry have more profoundly adopted and supported the implementation of the visions of learning economies, societies and organisations.

It is striking that in a EU project's context, authors do not share the discourse, which is used in the national context, especially by economists (of education): a crucial element of learning economy-discourse is the 'national innovation system', which makes it easier to grasp the political and economic nature of the learning organisation's discourse (Lundvall 1996, 1999, Vartia & Ylä-Anttila 1996, cf. Kettunen 2001). The reference to the nation state is fundamental because decisions and allocation of funding - i.e., making the country's people adopt and support their becoming learners for the learning economy - is still targeted and legitimised by the citizens, who have to share some national motivation. It seems that in the FORUM project's context, authors stress more the nation states and Europe are provisory states in the development of global learning economy and organisations as their substitutes also as platforms of policy and identity formation. And since occupational identities and VET have come to have a strong national character, as co-constitutors of national orders of industry and division of work (as regulative and bureaucratic institutions), they are also in this respect obsolete and a hindrance to change.

#### *VET and the Labour Market and Changing VET Institutions*

Europe as a project and concept is not explicitly problematised by the papers 'VET and the Labour Market' and the 'Changing VET Institutions', in general. The European 'Vision' appears to be based on the need for increasing effectiveness and competitiveness of organisations without any reference to the social component of the European Project. In addition, some papers assume that '(...) VET's change in every state in Europe has to rely on both researchers and instructors. It is not possible to have successful long term changes in this field imposed only by the centres of European policy.' (Pationiotis, s.d.) The main references to the European Project, as a collaborative perspective, are made in terms of financing, related mostly to the financing of VET research. For instance, Greek financing of scientific research on VET, provided it exists, simply supports the activity of the European Union, which, on the other hand, finances a wide spectrum of studies (Pationiotis, s.d.). However, a reference is made to the "citizens' demand for better vocational education and for an improved link to the needs and capacities of the labour market given the economic innovation and reforms, social transformation, and European unification procedures' (Pationitis, s.d.).

In terms of Europe, as a competitive project, the main references go to the so-called new 'e-economy'. Renovating and adapting the VET systems to the 'e-economy' is a transversal message in the Changing VET Institutions papers. The 'e-economy' is essentially seen as 'new spider web networks of relationships and interactions across time, space and place' (Shapiro, 2000). However, no directions are introduced in order to build a European model for this question. That is, the 'e-economy' networks are analysed more in

terms of process aiming at the competitiveness of the European economic space than as a basis for the European Project.

It appears from the papers 'VET and the Labour Market' and the 'Changing VET Institutions' that the national level is interpreted without a complementary European vision. In fact, the European context and the European are, most times, referenced for comparing the national situations or for analysing trans-national mobility of the workers in the labour market. For instance, 'The deficit of the Portuguese training/educational systems were clearer when compared with systems carried by other countries, mainly in the European Union.' (Gamboa & Figueira, 1998) The European 'vision' is based on the organizational effectiveness and efficiency perspective. That is, Europe is not explicitly analysed and discussed as a concept and a project. In addition, renovation and adaptation of the VET systems to the new e-economy and the net-economy is just a light and transversal message. Analysing the experience developed by the 'American Skill Standards Board' (NSSB), Shapiro (2000) implicitly concludes for the need for a similar system for Europe. 'At the turn of the millennium the labour market is undergoing radical changes in terms of how work is organised, what types of competences are demanded and how branches and sectors are structured and defined' (Shapiro, 2000:6). However, directions for a 'common' model are not presented.

### *Changing identities*

The European project appears to be a transversal concern analysed by all 'VET Identities' papers. The general discourse present in those papers can be summarised as follows: The success of the convergence of pan-European vocational training standardisation programs should be based not only on institutional arrangements but also on the mutual recognition and understanding of the meanings and representations associated to this topic throughout Europe. For this purpose, we believed it necessary to take a closer look at the social and cultural representations of the various players involved in vocational training (Gendron, 2000). This problematic is analysed from different points of view. For instance, Laske (1999) looks at the problematic from the perspective of the European concept of work and asks: What are the desired features, specific qualities and values a European concept of work needs to generate in order to meet the challenges of the future? Will vocational identity and its work ethics providing mechanisms continue to be of importance in a modern European concept of work? Are they of any advantage for Europe in the global competition? On the other hand, referring the social exclusion caused by the models of labour flexibility within the French CVT, M'hamed DIF (2000) points out that 'Due to globalisation, these structural and functioning deficiencies can be dealt with only through a long term concerted policy action on both national and European level to allow for:

- The development of a more integrated educational and training system based on curricular and learning-path flexibility. This can effectively contribute to the promotion of career options and progressions and, at the same time, provide the foundations for lifelong learning;
- The creation of a real mix between learning and work via the promotion of alternating vocational training, apprenticeship and continuous accreditation of work-based learning;
- The establishment of more comprehensive and active socio-vocational inclusion programmes based on effective accompaniment and continuing follow-up.'

### 4.2.3 Concluding Comments

Although culture is presently a controversial concept in human and social science research and although many FORUM papers do not give enough relevance to differences of the socio-cultural European contexts, it seems that the influence on the VET systems of the cultural systems is recognised by all FORUM members. For some, Culture influences the labour flexibility and, therefore, has an impact on the VET system. For others, Culture and Society's demands constitute the main driving forces behind the VET systems and VET identity formation.

Social exclusion or inequity are marginally analysed by many of the FORUM Theme papers. Those papers hardly use either the vocabulary of social inclusion or refer to differences among individuals. It appears that workers' behaviour and attitude is not influenced by their characteristics. However, some exceptions have been registered among papers presented by the 'VET Identities' Theme Group.

In general, the European VET systems follow, in general, two models of organisation: One is predominantly school-based and the other is essentially based on the alternance system, involving both employers and educational institutions. For this reason, a trans-national FORUM for European research on VET has constituted an important framework to reflect and debate the patterns of the VET system in the European member states. However, from the present analysis, it is possible to conclude that there is a need for further analysis and debate around the European Project and its relationship to the VET systems. In fact, Europe as a project and concept is not explicitly problematised by the FORUM papers, in general, and the European 'Vision' appears to be based on the need for increasing effectiveness and competitiveness of organisations.

## **4.3 Ways for improving co-ordination of VET and employment**

### **4.3.1 Relevance**

Research about the relationship of vocational education and training (VET) and the labour market is highly relevant because of a number of reasons. On the one hand several pressures to that relationship are stemming from the scope and the speed of change in various areas and dimensions of our societies: employment, demography, life style, family structures, expectations of young people, etc. On the other hand the educational systems are supposed to have difficulties to cope with those changes. The VET systems have the preparation for the labour market as one of their main objectives, so they are charged to adapt to the changing demands of the economy. However, as those systems have developed in several countries in close relation to the craft and manufacturing sectors, their basic structures and programmes are often supposed to fit poorly to the new demands of the rise of the so called globalised knowledge societies.

Deep reforms of those systems have been proposed all over the world since the 1990s which concern a tightening of their relationship to the economy and the market, the reform of administration and policy making by de-bureaucratisation and new financial arrangements, and a broadening of access to some kind of vocational competencies and qualifications (World Bank 1991, OECD 1996, EC 1996, UNESCO 1999). A long term process of integration of VET into the whole of educational systems is under way, at the same time producing new forms of differentiation and “cooling out” within those systems, between general and vocational elements, and among the different sectors of tertiary education. The market and market like forms of organising the relationship between VET systems and the economy have become prominent in the reform discourse, partly as a response to policy failures, and partly as an element of a holy belief in the superiority of the efficiency of the market mechanism. Issues of systemic reform and coordination within education have been brought back on the agenda more recently, as a response to the several layers of market failure (OECD 2001, 1996, Booth/Snowder 1996).

On the background of the general consensus that the VET systems have clearly to take into account the demands of the labour market, several issues for research can be identified. At least four basic lines or levels of debate must be addressed in order to provide a conceptual basis for the analysis of the relationship of VET and the labour market, or, more broadly speaking, the relationship of VET and employment: a normative-conceptual level, an evaluative level, an analytic and prospective level, and a strategic level.

Normative and conceptual. A first debate is concerning the issue to which extent the demands of the labour market should be taken into account: This debate concerns the educational legacy of VET, in relation to functional imperatives of employment - should the latter be the only or the main driving force for the development of VET? Which other functions, social, political, or cultural, are imperative for VET as a part of the education

system? Have there to be limits to follow economic imperatives? This debate refers to basic questions concerning the mission and legacy of VET as part of educational systems which in turn are inextricably connected to the basic values of humanity and human development, including the embeddedness of work and the economy into society, and more specifically the issues of identity and culture, which are main research topics in FORUM.

Evaluative. A second debate is concerning the issue how good the existing VET -systems are actually able to meet the demands of the labour market. There are widespread doubts about the performance of VET in this respect, however, it is by all means not clear so far how to measure that performance and, if gaps or mismatches are found by some kind of measurement, to which extent VET can be seen as mainly responsible for those problems (or posing the question the other way round: to which extent can changes in VET provide for a solution of those gaps or mismatches?). That debate concerns at least two main questions: (a) by which kinds of indicators can performance of VET be measured accurately? (b) how should the time dimension (short, mid, long term perspective) be taken into consideration? Analytic and prospective. A third debate is concerning the issue of giving a clear account of the main challenges to the objective of meeting the labour market demands by VET. Dynamic and rapid changes in several dimensions of contemporary societies are commonly seen at the root of those challenges. The labour market as an institution mediating demand for and supply of labour actually reflects ongoing changes on both sides and makes them to some extent visible. However, the signals on the labour market are basically short term, thus to understand those signals, the structures and activities behind them have to be analysed accurately. Thus the labour market has to be seen in its context, taking into consideration changes at both sides (supply and demand), trends in economic and in broader societal (social, political, cultural) sectors, and interactions among those dimensions.

Strategic. A fourth debate is concerning the strategies which can be reasonably taken to secure the best possible answer to the demands of the labour market by VET. Taking into account the dimensions outlined above we reach a broad and multidimensional array of strategies and strategic elements resulting from specific answers given to those normative, conceptual, evaluative, analytic and prospective questions. A way to a viable strategy which has to be found at the national as well as at the European and supranational levels could start from an analytic perspective seeing education and employment basically as two sectors of society, each following basically its own path of development, on the one hand separate and different from each other, on the other hand also connected to and interacting with each other, and of course also with the other sectors of society. As a consequence of that analytic perspective we have to answer the question as to how those sectors are and may be coordinated, if we want to develop appropriate strategies for bringing VET in line with the demands of the labour market.

Instead of taking narrow imperatives (e.g., some specific short-term demands) or specific strategic assertions (e.g., deregulation and free-market measures) as a starting point, the development of a strategy can start from a broader concept of coordination which allows for the integration of several strategic elements into the development of ways for improving coordination of VET and employment. Especially the very common one-way conceptualisation of the relation of VET and the labour market saying that VET has to

adapt as perfectly as possible in terms of time and structure to the asserted demands is avoided from the beginning by the sketched perspective on coordination. The two-way conceptualisation of the VET-employment relationship takes into account the influences running the other way round, and allows for insights about the role of VET in structuring several aspects of the labour market and of employment with its long-term consequences of building complex and idiosyncratic institutional regimes.

The relevance of the research about coordination of VET and employment is given by the development of a new kind of conceptual framework which provides a basis for the analysis of coordination strategies between VET and employment at national and supranational levels, and which can integrate several debates in a more systematic way. That framework allows for a more systematic comparison of specific strategies and policy elements which aim at better coordination, and may also turn out as a basis for the resolution - at least conceptually - of seemingly conflicting strategies.

#### **4.3.2 State of the art**

Research about the relationship of VET and the labour market has been performed by various disciplines, especially in the fields of the social sciences and the humanities, which have looked on the issues from different viewpoints and perspectives, based on a wide range of different concepts. However, most of that research has been performed about education systems in general, partly looking on higher education, or training within the enterprise sector. VET as a specific part of education and training has been covered more sparsely, and VET research is often confined to very specific and mainly practical and pedagogic issues, and does seldom cover the relations of VET to the other parts of education and training. Thus there is a gap in research which has been addressed by FORUM activities.

Our review of the state of the art starts from a somewhat contradictory observation, maybe a kind of paradox. Coordination of VET and employment is often seen in the policy discourse as a clear-cut objective, stating “that coordination only has to be done straightforwardly and properly”. However, we can observe that in fact it is not done successfully in most or all systems. This contradiction has led us to ask whether that seemingly clear objective may be substantially more difficult to solve than expected in the daily discourses. Thus the various involved disciplines from the social sciences have been examined more thoroughly about what they have to say explicitly about the issue of coordination of education and employment. The conceptual interchanges with pedagogy and VET research have been highlighted as another research topic.

That review has brought up several unsolved basic conceptual and theoretical issues in and between the involved disciplines, a main path of contemporary reasoning being that inter-sectorial or inter-systemic coordination is analysed as an extremely problematic and unlikely successful business. Moreover, that interdisciplinary review gives us the impression that the coordination issue is as much a theoretical problem as a practical one. That means

that VET research which deals with phenomena within education has critically to secure its conceptual and theoretical linkages to the other disciplines which are dealing with the societal context on a theoretical as well as on a practical level. Finally, the review has to take the analysis a step further, beyond the consideration of gaps and problems, it has to outline paths and possibilities towards solutions for the challenges posed by coordination.

An exhaustive interdisciplinary review of the topic would be beyond the scope of this summary. The full report points especially to some important unresolved problems concerning the gaps and cleavages between disciplines as well as within the coordination field. From the social sciences we must take into account the views and perspectives from the mainstream disciplines of economics, sociology and political sciences. Economists have applied the market model as a main coordination mechanism to the relationship of education and the economy, analysing the labour market as the main field of coordination between the supply of graduates and competences from education and the demand for labour from the economy, at least in the short term. Various models of market analysis have been applied to the labour market, and extended analysis has reached out to the educational market also (Psacharopoulos 1987, Booth/Snowder 1996, OECD 1996).

Summarizing the state of the art we can point to several simplifications in the scientific and political discussions. They often lead to a misconception of the problems involved and of the possible solutions, which may be taken for improvement.

Firstly the perspective should be widened from the focus on the labour market to a broader conception of employment. The labour market is a transitional coordination mechanism covering only a certain part of the much more complex coordination mechanism between VET and employment. In terms of influence the labour market represents even a rather weak part within the relationship between VET and employment.

A second simplification consists in a functional view of the VET system in relation to labour market and employment. In this view the VET system is supposed to react properly to changes and demands on the labour market and in employment.<sup>3</sup>

One result of the functional view is thirdly that the discussion is too much focussed on the observation of the qualities and quantities of demand and on making charges to VET for meeting them. Therefore the mechanisms how those charges may be translated into VET, and how the VET side may act in that relationship are not sufficiently discovered.

Fourthly, the functioning of the relationship between VET and employment is understood mainly in terms of holistic simplifying models like that of the bureaucracy and the market which do not cover the complex relations properly. As a result the main policy solutions are trapped because bureaucracy and market are seen often as competitive and substitutive concepts, more or less excluding each other.

Thus, there is a gap between the rising challenges to coordination on the one hand, and the shortcomings concerning the understanding of coordination on the other hand. On the background of the mentioned simplification in the mainstream views about the relationship of VET and the labour market a deconstructive conceptual analysis of the coordination mechanisms and processes is proposed as a starting point for a more broad and inclusive conception of research and practice.

The focus is on alternative means of coordination beyond the traditional market - bureaucracy dichotomy. The analysis shows how the conventional approach to the coordination problem, starting with the general market -led steering mechanism, which is seen as dominant, or through hierarchical or bureaucratic forms, seriously restricts the scope of reasoning from the outset. The helpful decrease in complexity, which results from the generalised models is bought at the price of conceptual simplification which greatly reduces the scope and number of possible coordination mechanisms. The deconstructive approach taken in our research makes it possible to open up the scope of the question by building up an area of intermediate, alternative and complementary mechanisms and types of organisation, where there is room for the conceptual integration of many other mechanisms (particularly interorganisational networks, organisation by associations, corporatism). Those mechanisms are included from the outset as integrated and, in principle at least, equal components of the coordination system, and are not viewed through bureaucratic versus market spectacles.

### **4.3.3 Main Findings**

#### **4.3.3.1 Practical**

The review of research and the development of a comprehensive framework for coordination of VET and employment, detailed in the full version of this paper, gives a basic structure for the more systematic understanding of the complex and multifaceted array of tasks, activities and mechanisms which are or should be fulfilled to provide for coordination in an existing VET system.

Based on that framework we can distinguish findings of practical relevance at three levels of rising complexity: first, the level of identification of the basic elements of coordination systems, and the compilation of an inclusive taxonomy of those kinds of elements; second, the level of experience and best practice for the construction and functioning of those elements as single elements; third, the understanding of the combination of a number of those elements to broader strategies of coordination practice.

The first level of findings of practical relevance is concerning a more systematic mapping of the various specific tasks, mechanisms and strategies, which are contributing to coordination.

The following elements can be outlined which play an essential role in coordination mechanisms:

- transition (how are the transition processes from VET into working life, and through the education and training system managed? Is there a specific emphasis in policy to evaluate and to improve transition? )
- information and guidance (which activities and mechanisms are in place to provide information and guidance to students and parents? How widespread is access to information and guidance provision? To which extent is there a developed and update knowledge base?)
- anticipation (which kinds of activities and mechanisms are in place to monitor the needs for education and training, taking into account the interrelationships of working life and the various changes in society?)
- education and training pathways (how are the courses and programmes structured and linked to each other to provide opportunities for access and exit points? to which extent is mobility and flexibility allowed for?)
- curriculum matching (how are the goals for VET programmes set, worked out, and implemented, taking into account feedback to the changing and conflicting needs of the multitude of actors involved?)
- qualifications and credentials (how is the signalling structure organised, and to which extent does it respond to the needs of the various actors?)
- interest organisation (how are the various actors organised to bring their interests into the coordination process?)
- co-production of skills (which arrangements are in place for the co-production of skills by actors and/or organisations external to VET, and to what extent are those arrangements systematically used, e.g., kinds of work -based learning, interchange with HRD-activities?)
- apprenticeship as institution (are elements of apprenticeship as a systematic institutional form of holistic learning in a practical context in contact with a master prevalent and/or developed?)
- internal quality management (how are the activities within the VET organisations linked to outcomes and improvement of processes?)
- professional development (how are the people working within VET supported to fulfil their tasks and responsibilities in a sustainable way?)
- coordination outcomes assessment (how is the information about the outcomes of coordination generated and used, e.g., labour market information?)
- financing mechanisms (how do the financing mechanisms take into account incentives for the various actors involved?)

- knowledge base (to what extent is an a system of knowledge production developed which produces an interrelated knowledge base about the main dimensions of coordination, combining the knowledge about those dimensions?)
- management of system structure (to what extent do activities and mechanisms exist for systemic management, to bring in line the various sectors of the education and training system?)

Each of those elements does have an important status for successful coordination, and in one way or another will be prevalent in any VET system, however, their shape and scope may differ widely. Thus, some elements may be strongly emphasised in a specific context, others may be weak. It should also be noted that those elements are differing in complexity, e.g., curriculum matching or the structure of pathways are more complex than transition or interest organisation - the latter being complex enough. In VET research we can find emphasis on each of those elements, however, mostly in isolation from each other, and frequently highlighting a specific issue as a kind of kings road to improvement. The same seems true for the emphasis, which is given to them by the various actors involved. A practical recommendation is therefore to use the list of elements as a taxonomy for the assessment of the overall configuration of how coordination is organised, and to find out the strong as well as the weak elements in a specific VET system.

The second level is concerning the analysis of experience and good practice in at least some of those areas. A considerable body of research is already available which covers several of those elements, however, seldom as a part of a more comprehensive perspective of coordination. Frequently a specific national system is analysed, comparative or cooperative research is less developed. Examples of elements contributing to coordination, which have been more systematically analysed, are transition from school to work (OECD 1999, Ryan/Büchtemann 1996), or about anticipation of changes of demand for qualifications (Feijen/Reubsaet 1996), or about matching of curriculum development and qualification structures (Nijhof/Brandsma 1999, Part 2), or the construction of linkages between education organizations and enterprises (Planas forthc.), or the functioning of apprenticeship systems (Lynch 1994), or evaluations of youth labour market policy, etc. That research cannot be reported here, it should be noted however, that the impact of best practice for practice seems rather low so far. Impact to the development of more general policy strategies and recommendations seems to prevail over the practical utilisation of that research.

The third level is concerning the interplay of those basic elements, and thus the development of basic ideas about the emergence and development of more coherent coordination systems. The overall concept points out that coordination of VET and employment is a multifaceted and multilevel task which cannot be solved in a holistic manner, by a single mechanism (e.g., the market), or at a systems level (e.g., national politics). Therefore several activities within the VET system, and outside of it (in enterprises, policies etc.), are in fact concerned with issues of coordination, in several cases implicitly. To make the actual functioning of a running coordination system, in its local, regional, national, or even supranational context explicit, and to make the roles of the

involved actors and the effects of their interactions clear, will provide the basic understanding necessary for improvement of coordination. That means

- to work out the shape of the actual coordination regime and to bring the actors together which are involved,
- to develop a clear understanding among actors about their respective roles, taking into account issues which are affecting the performance indirectly
- to tackle out the aims and objectives which should be reached more concretely and more coherently than is normally the case, including the time frame envisaged,
- to develop a clear understanding of and a consensus among actors about the indicators which are and should be used for the assessment of the performance of coordinating activities,
- to develop a clear positioning within the ongoing political and professional strategies and conflicts, etc.

Maybe the most important domain where those activities have to take place is the interaction of organisations at the meso-level which are criss-crossing the sectoral divide between the world of education and the world of employment, thus opening up the systems against each other without merging them and without subordinating the one to other, and creating trust among actors. Public-private partnerships, buffer organisations, or professional relationships, creation of and links to innovation systems may be organisational forms of main practical interest.

Cooperative research can provide contacts among practitioners from different countries which, by learning from each other may on the one hand distract themselves from the pressures of indigenous policy cultures, and on the other hand develop experience towards a more generalized coordination regime at the European or supranational level.

An important issue on that third level of analysis is concerning the emergence of certain combined strategies, which comprise specific traits of a collection of the outlined elements. This is on the one hand a pragmatic question of practical interest. On the other hand, a more deeper theoretical question seems to be important in recent research: Some researchers are seeing coordination in a holistic manner, as a emergent complex system with a rather high degree of internal coherence and its own logic, embedded in a framework of industrial relations (cf. the concept of education and training regimes cited above), others seem to emphasise coordination in a more loose perspective, with some important pillars seen as necessary ingredients, which may be changed rather easily. That seems to refer to the important political question as to how easily some of the elements can be changed to improve coordination. The holistic view would emphasise the danger of producing unintended consequences or of destroying the functioning of a complex regime or system by changing one of its crucial elements, and thus require an overall understanding before intervening. The other view would ply for the improvement or change of weak elements towards best practice.

#### 4.3.4 Political

The findings of political relevance are concerning the outline of challenges for the political actors in terms of evaluating the actual coordination systems, and as a next step the identification of gaps and contradictions within the systems, which can in a further step lead to the setting of priorities for better coordination. A main starting point for the political level may be the understanding of the complexities involved in the issue of coordination, and the practical result that no one single element or mechanism can provide a proper solution for the coordination problems.

The development of a more open and coherent framework for the analysis of coordination of VET and employment provides a basis for the accurate understanding of intersections and contradictions among political strategies which affect coordination explicitly or implicitly on the one hand, and gives room for a more proper understanding of conflicting positions, which may be integrated in a more inclusive coordination regime on the other hand.

Research from various angles has shown so far that the institutional frameworks on the side of education and training as well as on the side of employment (including work organisation and regulation, corporatist frameworks, internal-external labour markets, regulations affecting HRD, etc.) are crucial for well functioning coordination mechanisms between education and employment. Several selective policy proposals, e.g., concerning transition policy, or anticipation of economic needs, or the creation of skills structures linking training and employment have to be related to each other and to the overall coordination regime, to understand their prospective effects properly. The development of effective life long learning strategies depends on the coherence of the education and training system, and presupposes the articulation of those selective policy elements.

As comparative research has pointed out, different patterns of coordination can be identified, which combine the various policy elements in different manner. The interplay of those policy elements within a system, and the internal coherence and structuring pose important questions concerning policy learning and policy borrowing: Some reasoning within that research underline the existence of rather strong structures of internal coherence, thus elements cannot be changed, or imported, easily without changing the internal logic of such a system - these ideas may be related to a too holistic or reductionist view, however. The proposed framework for the analysis of coordination regimes may allow for a more detailed analysis, which could make the conditions of changes of elements clearer.

At the political level certain kinds of policy strategies can be taken as starting points for the improvement of the understanding of the functioning of coordination systems. The following list may function as a first outline of the mapping of examples for new policy strategies:

- An overall strategy for reform: education policy in Finland, or Denmark
- Complex co-ordination systems: regulation of apprenticeship, “old” and “new”
- Implantation of new comprehensive steering bodies: the Austrian Fachhochschule
- Sectoral organisations for steering of VET: The Netherlands
- Modularisation of studies: educational reform in Spain, Denmark
- Competency based qualifications: NVQ
- Policies for school-to-work transition: education and labour market policy
- Feedback from anticipation of change and innovation
- Development of an educational knowledge base: support structures in NL
- Alternative financing strategies: training funds, vouchers
- Strategies for the development of life long learning: Coherence and linkages
- Some of these political approaches will be discussed at greater length, in order to highlight the special implications of professionalisation, the effects on roles and functions, and the division of labour between “VET professionals”. The examples and approaches should be understood in stylised form, more as a taster to encourage more in-depth probing than as a conclusive assessment.

#### **4.3.4.1 A comprehensive strategy for overall reform**

The Finnish strategy of overall reform consists of a comprehensive set of changes affecting all aspects of the education and coordination system (aims, planning, steering and finance structures, the educational supply structure, curricula, recording of qualifications, linking of training and companies in the form of in-house practical training and apprenticeships, linking vocational training and higher education, linking initial training and adult education).

This strategy, which emanates from and is led by the political and administrative bodies supported by the social partners, introduces a lot of change at many of the system’s elements, providing even external players as well as the educational organisations and educators with considerably more space to define and develop their activities. The basic pattern of the reform strategy follows the concept of “management by objectives”, with the objectives being provided by a common set of strategic aims from the political arena.

But educators have the impression that these changes are led from outside the system, and may even clash with their professional identity: by stressing external influences, and particularly the needs of companies, on the aims and knowledge base of vocational training, the conventional and more comprehensive educational aims were undermined, and actual teaching activity upset by the addition of many other tasks and responsibilities. There are also signs of the existence of a certain potential for conflict between the established systems of pedagogical production of knowledge in the universities and teaching -based education on the one hand, and the groups and forces opting for reform on the other.

With regard to the coordination system, many new elements come into being in this strategy of overall reform, whose interplay is conceived within a loose strategic master plan. The implementation strategy, however, is left rather open, and leaves a lot of scope for the development of the individual elements of reform, so that the real interplay between these elements only begins with implementation, and is thus hard to predict.

Unintended effects can well be expected to crop up with this reform strategy, and with so many reform initiatives underway at the same time some are bound to be more successful than others. In any case, this approach is a field in which more in -depth analysis of how things are moving and of their effects can also provide other countries many important insights.

#### **4.3.4.2 Complex coordination systems: apprenticeship**

As a system of vocational training and with regard to what, superficially at least, looks like a successful coordination function of education and employment for young people, apprenticeship, particularly in the German so -called “dual system” has caused such a stir that for a time it was an export hit. The complexity of the apprenticeship system derives from the fact that this system is placed at the interface between the different social systems where the various cultures and institutional models merge, i.e. clash with and complement one another.

Looked at more closely from the point of view of the coordination system, this system is a complex combination of market, contract and regulation, which embraces a multiplicity of “VET professionals” and is also tied to the system of industrial relations and the occupational system. Apprenticeship training in the traditional sense of the term should be interpreted as an institution within the meaning of institutionalism, so the way in which it works and also its political influencability is connected to many social requirements irrespective of whether it is a case of changing already institutionalised systems or newly establishing this system. Simple organisational or utilitarian-economic interpretations would fall short of the mark.

At the same time, this institution is marked by far -reaching inherent contradictions which complicate its performance: because of the informal nature of the training processes and the unequal power relations or dependencies, the workability of this system largely hinges on

the trust of the numerous players involved, which is basically also the measure for the viability of technical-organisational solutions.

The basic peculiarity of the apprenticeship system lies in the fact that in this model not only are the two systems - training and employment - bridged, but training and selection is organised within the company environment, in other words in principle outside the formal education system (at the same time it is a relatively integrated part of the formal education system). Essential steering decisions are taken market -style by the companies (allocation of training places, selection of applicants, training infrastructure, concretisation of the content and quality of training courses, etc.), although they are rooted in a rather narrow system of regulations, which is controlled by a combination of associations and state bodies. Traditionally, an accompanying school component which can be part of the regulations governing the school training system is built into the system, and there is also an occupational structure which constitutes the basic units of the traditional occupational system, and the formal competences related thereto.

One essential element which is often neglected in this field is that social structures in the form of occupational organisations also correspond to the formalised categories of the occupational system, whose role in the overall regulation system is easily overlooked as decisions on regulation are usually taken at the higher, central level. Because of this structure, there is a combination of standardisation and fragmentation which exists at all levels. Standardisation produces the “training occupations” which represent a combination of qualification and skill profiles, and which act as intelligible signals to the labour market. But because these categories are separated from exercising the occupation in the work process, however, the difference between “exercising occupations” and “training occupations” provides a source of flexibility and guaranteed expectations which is often not taken into consideration<sup>4</sup>.

The system of “training occupations” corresponds essentially to the new “competence - based” systems, a fact which is however concealed by the “naturalistic” interpretation of the occupations. This aspect is of major importance to the mechanisms for constructing the occupational profiles, because this does not happen according to “constructivist” consideration of what is practicable and reasonable, but also following factual consideration of what is, is happening, or will be.

The many aspects and players involved in these construction processes make any further development of the structure both difficult and long-winded. The vocational structure of apprenticeship training governs both the company structure on the employer side (through linking with access to the independent exercise of an occupation) and the occupational structure of the employee side, and also embraces the different segments of companies (small, medium, large; technical, commercial, industrial, etc.). The use of manpower, the qualifications structures and also the innovation dynamics vary tremendously between these different sectors, and any further development will depend on the political negotiating processes in the appropriate social structures, which can be characterised by very different constellations within the fragmented framework.

What is common to these systems however with regard to further development is the fact that in-house training reflects the existing company strategy, and does not provide any

additional input for the innovation dynamics in the companies. A second common characteristic is their high informal load, with codification processes tending to be not particularly institutionalised (through loose framework conditions, model or sample documents, codified company practices, training of trainers, the school part of training).

In the conception of the dynamics of forms of knowledge the qualification focus of traditional apprenticeship training lies fairly and squarely on the categories of know-how and the handing on of tacit knowledge. This is an important strength compared with the formalised school system, which cannot purvey these components unless at great cost - but it is possibly a weakness when compared with the demands of innovation dynamics, which also stress the other forms of knowledge (cf. Section 2.2.). A fundamental question for the development of the apprenticeship system is the development and shaping of the link with the new HRD mechanisms.

#### **4.3.4.3 Policies for school-to-work transition: education and labour market policy**

The question of the transition from education to employment became the focus of political attention with the rise in youth unemployment in the eighties. Interestingly enough, however, for quite some time the question was only dealt with very generally and indirectly, and it was a long time before direct political strategies were systematically discussed and developed for this sector. Interaction is desirable in this area of policy, linking different types of players in the different systems and at different levels. For a long time the weakness lay in the fact that the processes of transition were only understood in terms of individual market transactions, with the more compound organisational connections and guiding forces being neglected.

Incorrect choice of training, inadequate qualifications, high minimum wages, and structural changes on the youth employment market in conjunction with low rates of growth and shrinking employment were the focus of discussions in the eighties. Establishing priorities for labour-market policy for young people was the most important response, but often with little or no success. An ongoing OECD project looked into the question of transition policy.

Alongside the traditional themes of minimum wages and labour market policy for young people, aspects of education policy which can help to smooth the transition (structure of educational incentives, content of curricula, contacts with the world of work, information and counselling) were thereby also brought into the public eye.

From the point of view of "VET professionals", these analyses brought the aspect of cooperation on the more complex levels of labour-market policy in particular to the fore, where major flaws are to be found. European employment policy also underscores this aspect.

#### **4.3.4.4 Feedback from anticipation of change and innovation**

The field for developing mechanisms for anticipating innovation and change in the employment system and in questions of skill requirements possibly demonstrates most clearly the changes which are occurring in the shaping of coordination systems.

The original approach, beginning in the seventies when the importance of economic structural change to training policy was becoming increasingly clear and computer models for system analysis were developed, was the prognosis model of education and manpower planning. It was recognised back then that education policy cannot be guided by stationary skill requirements, but must take account of the changes to be expected in the economic and vocational structure, particularly given the importance of human resources for economic growth. The response was clearly rooted in bureaucratic logic and the segmentary organisation of the education system: science and research should develop and supply the tools, teaching administrations should set up planning departments, which would be responsible for implementing the results of prognosis models through corresponding educational policy steps. This conception also squared beautifully with the then predominant paradigm of technocratic politics.

In practice, however, this approach failed for many reasons, and the change in political paradigms which came with the neo-liberal U-turn brought with it the predominant trend towards the efficacy of market-economy mechanisms, which were also expected to bring about coordination and steering in the training field. Self-steering also became an important buzz word for sociological and socio-scientific considerations. In education policy discussions in the late seventies, the interface between the predominant bureaucratically organised training system and the market-economy based mechanisms in employment and the labour market were complicated by the terms of coupling, uncoupling and flexibilisation. The first forms of distinction between types of qualification or more general educational aims were a basis for this, and they continue to play an important role, even today: the distinction between general and specific qualifications in the human capital theory, or the distinction between general, foundation, and specific qualifications in the education policy analysis in the OECD framework.

The basic idea underlying these distinctions was that the elements in the education processes with long-term effect should be separated from those with a short-term effect, in order to establish them in different organisational arrangements: the qualifications with long-term effect should be acquired in the more inflexible bureaucratic education systems (planning without adaptation), whereas those with short-term effect which therefore need to be renewed very quickly should be acquired on the job itself or in the further training system (adaptation without planning).

These stringent and tempting considerations failed because of the complex nature of qualifications and skills, since although the basic underlying distinctions could be made on a conceptual basis, in practice it was impossible to define qualifications or to square this approach with the nature of the learning process because of the decontextualisation of the long-term qualifications component. The analyses of the implications for qualifications of the new production concepts in particular made it clear that ideas about “specific

qualifications” were highly influenced by the image of company -specific qualifications within a Fordist and technologically determined model of internal company labour markets, which was however increasingly undermined by later research.

So new solutions had to be found in order to square the anticipation of change in the necessary skills in the employment system with the logic of development of suitable qualification profiles in the training system. These solutions now appear to produce a two - track approach which builds on the multiple possibilities for interaction between the various players and types of players in the coordination system:

on the one hand the aim of employability can be interpreted as a multi -dimensional qualification concept, which brings together both general and specific components, and should in particular also form the basis for further learning processes. The realisation of this concept is based on the interaction between different players with highly varied possibilities of primary and informal experiences in the practical context of the employment system being targeted alongside the more formalised learning procedures;

on the other hand, the dichotomy of formalised prognosis models as a basis for planning and market economy -based assignment processes is bridged through the development of interactive anticipation systems which, rather than shunning model calculations, tend to embody them in social processes of evaluation and dissemination between the players who contribute their primary experience.

This approach corresponds to ideas about the new forms of production of knowledge within the innovation system, with a knowledge base being built up in complex social processes through the pooling of multiple experiences and methods for gaining knowledge, and by involving the various players concerned, so that applied and basic knowledge, as well as the production, dissemination and use of knowledge are all related. Although this conception appears very simple and plausible, it is in no way trivial since it makes major demands on implementation.

The players from education, the economy, research, politics, etc. must be brought together and they must be prepared to carry the communications can, to formulate and work out their ideas, to understand other, different ideas, particularly those from science and research, to do the necessary weighing up and carrying out of interest -related matters in a cooperative manner and to draw conclusions in the awareness that this is an ongoing process not only of investigation but also of reality building, which can be somewhat tiresome at least during the early stages (because of the lack of information, interest -related idiosyncrasies and hypostatisation, etc.), and consists at the beginning of more of a revelation of not knowing than in the production of knowledge itself. But if this strategy is consistently applied, it can give rise to policy learning and consensus -forming policies which are seen as a central requirement on the path towards a learning society.

### 4.3.5 Future Research

So far a comprehensive framework for coordination of VET and employment has been developed, based on an interdisciplinary review of research. The elements of coordination policy have been identified and analysed to some degree. Several tasks for future research have remained.

1. To close the white areas on the map of specific coordination tasks, mechanisms, and strategies.

A specifically important issue is the improvement of the methods of assessment of the outcomes of coordination, and the relation of the various policy elements. So far the methods mainly used are based on information about actual labour market mismatch, excess demand or supply, the sources of information being employment or income statistics or employers surveys. Frequently that information is provided on an abstract level, scattered, and not used systematically for an assessment of the outcomes of coordination. The qualitative side and methods for foresight are weakly developed.

Transition, anticipation, financing mechanisms, quality management, information and guidance are rather specific fields, where much progress has been achieved. The core areas of VET policy, pathway construction, curriculum matching and qualifications and credentials are hot areas in which much effort is concentrated, however, those areas are very complex and in terms of coordination their interfaces to other elements are crucial. Interest organisation, apprenticeship, and co-production of skills are situated more or less at the fringe of VET research, and their closer integration would be important. Professionalism, knowledge base and system management are the most complex, most difficult, and comparatively new issues of research.

2. To develop a better understanding of the systemic assets by more in-depth analysis of specific coordination systems.

The understanding of the systemic assets would be improved by a more systematic analysis of the positions and contributions of the various actors involved in the coordination process. The developed framework gives mainly a heuristic frame of the overall structure, which has to be fleshed empirically.

An analysis of a specific coordination system in a country or a region can work out more specifically the systemic aspect of VET policy, especially of how the interplay of the different parts of the system, as compared to the competitive or conflicting aspects, is managed.

3. To develop a better understanding of the contradictions between the various involved disciplines and paradigms

We have shown the different perspectives of the economic, sociological, or political sciences disciplines as contrasted to pedagogy. The complexity of the coordination issue, however, involves a combination of aspects from those views to develop practical strategies. The contrasting of the institutional versus the technical view on educational

organisations is an example for the far-reaching consequences of the different perspectives on broad policy strategies. Another example is the analysis of the positions and interests of involved actors, e.g. the employers, which differs strongly, and also has consequences for the construction of overall coordination strategies.

## **4.4 Change in VET: a systems approach - institutions and organisations in VET**

### **4.4.1 Introduction**

According to Edquist and Johnson (1997), social systems are specific set ups of institutions and organisations. Social systems are designed incrementally to reach societal goals.

- Institutions can be defined as sets of common habits, routines, rules or laws that regulate the relations and interactions between individuals and groups. Functions of institutions are for example the provision of information and the reduction of uncertainty; managing conflicts and cooperation; the provision of incentives; the channelling of resources.
- Organisations are formal structures with an explicit purpose: they are consciously created and they are players and actors in the system.

VET can be seen as a social system. In each country and/or economic sector a specific set of institutions and organisations has been developed over time. Government, social partners and educational organisations have built an institutional set up for VET, which is deeply rooted into social, cultural and economic patterns. Because of this roots, VET -institutions are difficult to change and sometimes even obstacles for innovation of the system: changes in VET are not only a matter of the educational system, but also of the socio-economic system and cultural traditions. Examples of VET -institutions are: laws on education and labour; public-private arrangements; training funds; collective labour agreements; pathways to becoming skilled; qualifications and wages; occupational identity; training traditions.

Organisations are (in theory) much easier to change than institutions, but organisations are depending on the institutional set up. So, technical-rational arguments (e.g. instructional science for VET) for a systems' change are not convincing if they are not compatible with the institutional set up.

Legislation, as part of the institutional set up, can better be understood as the finishing touch or the descriptive stage of a systems' change, than as the impulse for change. In many cases of large social systems' change, legislation is more descriptive than prescriptive: changing VET by law will be an unsuccessful operation (cf. Nieuwenhuis, 2001). For understanding the design and restructuring of VET -systems, this is an important observation. Changing VET and its evaluation has to be directed simultaneously on all the levels involved. Policy, intermediary structures, colleges, companies and teachers should

interact in the change enterprise; managing this enterprise is like directing a large orchestra: if one party is out of tune, the whole enterprise is endangered.

#### **4.4.1.1 Reasons for change**

In Europe, all states are in search for modernisation of their VET -systems. Old systems were built on stable economies and labour market institutions (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands) or were built on a low -skill-equilibrium (e.g. UK; see Finegold, 1989). In both cases powerful economic forces urge for upgrading and flexibility of VET -systems: globalisation of markets, high-speed technological innovation, ICT-development are examples of these forces. The development of GNVQs in England, the reformation of the dual system in Germany, rebuilding of VET in eastern European countries and new legislation in the Netherlands: there is no VET -system which is not under revision!

In all VET -systems the search is for new equilibrium:

- Between initial VET and life long learning: the old infrastructure is built on the delivery of initial VET; the new one should be able to deliver support for life long learning;
- Between traditional occupations and flexible qualifications: old -fashioned occupations are slowly disappearing, but the institutions are still built on the traditional occupational structure; for new occupations there is no room in the arena;
- Between curriculum-based learning and qualification through work experience: learning steered by formalised targets is to be replaced by learning within changing communities of practice; at the other hand, instruction is still a powerful educational tool.
- Between social demands and economic markets: should the student be adapted to the labour market demands or can the worker create his own economic context (shaping?).
- Between employment and self-employment/entrepreneurship: is the 'new economy' for employed workers or for entrepreneurial workers?

Policy makers and other stakeholders try to formulate new balances on those dimensions, but in each case the institutional set up of VET is in stake. The old regulations and appointments and the social-economic meaning of VET is changing. So stakeholders (like colleges, employers, trade-unions and the government) should reposition themselves towards the new developing VET - systems. The design of new VET is the reinvention of VET-institutions; because of the socio -cultural roots of institutions this will take long and will cost lots of struggle.

#### **4.4.2 Evaluating system change**

In most European countries VET systems are under reconstruction. The changing economic context and the growing social demand for education and training urge governments and schools to reconsider the existing supply of trajectories towards skills and competencies. Researching these system changes can be done best from an evaluating perspective: do the efforts for improvement have the targeted impact on the supply of socially and economically requested skills. In the discussions, two evaluative perspectives emerged: a system perspective (how do VET systems meet performance criteria?) and a change programme perspective (how effective and sustainable is the impact of programmes for the implementation of change?). Both evaluation perspectives are elaborated on in the next paragraphs.

Before doing so, it is important to take a wider scope. VET systems cannot be analysed without taking account of its position within the larger educational systems. In most systems a choice for VET is a second choice. VET has a lower status than general educational tracks towards academic levels. Also in many educational systems comprehensive education is extended to the age of 14 or 16. So VET is confronted with a fundamental dilemma: fighting against social exclusion of low educated students at the one hand and delivering increasing skill levels for flexible demands at the other hand. The sceptic view of Crouch (1999) is partly based on this paradoxical position of VET in most educational systems. If VET is attaining the same status as general education, it is losing the fight for social inclusion of the low skilled. It will be rather difficult to find a workable equilibrium between these two demands.

#### 4.4.2.1 In search for criteria on system level

As Rosenfelt (1998) stated, VET (and VET colleges, which his contribution is targeting on) has four main working fields:

- Training of new employees and employers to support the knowledge base in companies,
- The supply of training facilities for updating the knowledge and skills of the workforce
- Facilitation of technology adaptation
- The organisation of networks of enterprises to facilitate interactive learning processes.

The OECD (2000; see [www.oecd.org/els/papers](http://www.oecd.org/els/papers)) made a comparison of 15 national systems for the transition of youth from education towards labour. Within this framework some basic goals are suggested that all transition policies should aim for. These include:

- High proportions of young people completing a full upper secondary education with a recognised qualification for work, tertiary study or both.
- High levels of knowledge and skill among young people at the end of the transition phase;
- A low proportion of teenagers being at one time not in education and unemployed.
- A high proportion of those young adults who have left education having a job.
- Few young people remaining unemployed for lengthy periods after leaving education.
- Stable and positive employment and educational histories in the years after leaving upper secondary education; and
- An equitable distribution of outcomes by gender, social background and region.

Based on the review of the 15 national systems the OECD came up with a set of key features of effective transition systems; effective transition systems are characterised by a limited number of key ingredients. These are:

- A healthy economy;
- Well organised pathways that connect initial education with work and further study;
- Widespread opportunities to combine study with workplace experience;
- Tightly knit safety nets for those at risk;
- Good information and guidance; and
- Effective institutions and processes.

The first mentioned ingredient is an externality for VET -systems, all the other features can be seen as evaluation criteria for VET -systems. Some of them are located at institutional level (pathways; safety nets); others are located at organisational level (study -work combination; guidance and learning processes). Interesting is, where Rosenfeld only stresses the economic demands, the OECD review also stresses social aspects as important evaluation criteria.

#### **4.4.2.2 In search for criteria on programme level**

Baumgartl (2000) presented in Bucharest an overview of dimensions for evaluation of programmes for the change of VET. This overview has been built on experiences in programme evaluation activities in Eastern European VET systems. Baumgartl ends up with 11 dimensions for the evaluation of VET change projects:

1. The basic project strategy: the status of the reform. Varying from a legal decision for system change, a 'Model versuch', an experiment/pilot project up to a feasibility study of change options.
2. Investments and commitment: resources and dedication to the project
3. Legal embeddedness: is the change project embedded within a legal framework or is the project meant for law development?
4. Width and depth: is the change oriented at the fundament of the VET system or are only parts and instruments in stake?
5. Perpetuation: is the project build on a sustainability mechanism: are there mechanisms built in for self-evolving and continuing reform?
6. End-user-centred: is the project oriented up to the primary process of education or are only administrators and intermediary actors involved?
7. Teacher training and teacher incentives: teachers should be seen as the eventual implementers of educational reform. So teacher training and teacher incentives should be built in into the change programme.
8. Social partners involvement: employers' and workers' organisations are natural partners in VET-change programmes. They have to assure the recognition of new learning outcomes and they are important in organising learning practices for the students.
9. Links to higher education: organising coherent vertical pathways is important for recognition of the changes inside the VET -system.
10. Backup for sustainability: measures to ensure that the results of a programme will last longer than the programme itself: especially the set up of new institutions compatible with the change targets are mentioned.
11. Budget for programme evaluation

Baumgartl stresses with these criteria the coherence of system change projects. VET change projects will only be successful if the project activities are targeted at all system levels at once: legislation, institutional frame, organisational conditions and teachers challenges should be in line with each other. If not, the sustainability of change results will be very low.

Within the Forum work package on “changing VET institutions and organisations” several systems in change are discussed to challenge the sets of criteria mentioned before. Here we will describe three cases more in depth; in the next chapter we will discuss some common features: how are the different system levels connected in the various system changes?

#### **4.4.3 The Danish case: VET 2005**

Recent governmental analyses as well as analyses by OECD conclude that although the standards and performance of the educational system in Denmark is good and in general of high quality (also by international comparison) - some malfunctions are apparent.

Some of the key issues on the policy agenda are:

- The quality of apprentices performance should be increased
- The number of students completing a full youth education (which means competence as either an upper secondary academic student or as a journeyman) should be increased and within a few years amount to at least 95%.
- The efficiency of the system should be enhanced in order to avoid unnecessary spending caused by slow student progress, lack of accountability of elements in related courses and similar inflexible arrangements.
- In order to achieve these goals it is the ambition of the Reform 2000 that:
- The VET-system must become more attractive and attain higher status in order to enhance the competitiveness of the system
- The system should be simplified, so that students do not have to make a binding choice between a vast number of trades from the very outset, a structure in many ways representing the industrial economy now under change. This means that students who have made the final choice can start according to their specific choice whilst other students can within a broader time frame examine different options in a hand on way.
- Flexibility in the system must be enhanced both to give students and enterprises increasingly diversified options and to reduce the amount of wasted time and resources related to “wrong” choice of courses and to making alternative choices when students have already followed a programme for a while.

- A modernised system should encompass more options for academic supplements to vocationally oriented programmes.
- More focus on life long learning should be visible in the structure arrangements and in the actual curriculum and underlying pedagogical principles.
- Better opportunities for weak performers to contribute to the realisation of the overall goal of education for all youngsters.

The most important innovative features of reform 2000 are:

- An entirely new entrance construction for all programmes - structuring until now 90 different programmes into seven new gateways /families each of them to on average 13 different routes to different trades.
- The individual route principle also means that the routes can vary much in content i.e. breath, depth, and duration.
- The personal programme (route plan) and an individual log book are introduced to facilitate the individual route
- The academic addition option, eventually it should also be possible to obtain a full upper secondary certificate incorporating both vocational and academic qualifications
- The “part qualification option” offering a new possibility to low achievers - as an alternative to dropping out - giving the apprentice a certificate of specific vocational skills, but on a lower level than that of a journeyman.
- A new statutory arrangement combining the vocational college offer with the labour market authorities offer of further education training courses in the like topics - to enhance flexibility - and to give new options for adult apprentices.

#### **4.4.3.1 Taxonomical problems**

In the search for a new terminology Reform 2000 has been confronted with a main challenge to rethink a pedagogical theory that is founded on an anthropological rather than a psychological pedagogical basis - seeing goals and frameworks as learning potentials.

In the memorandum, as systematically as possible, a distinction is made between the two main concepts: competence and qualification.

- ‘Competence’ refers to a human and social potential to be understood on an anthropological basis. (Well knowing that ‘competence’ also means something like: the formal rights and tasks which an individual has on the labour market and in a business).

- ‘Qualification’ means that the person ‘can’ something that is described as something ‘exterior’: An area of knowledge, a skill relating to a situation, an organisation, a system, etc.

#### **4.4.3.2 The Didactic Space**

It must be emphasised that reforming the pedagogical area involves both a continuation of known elements and development and integration of innovative elements. Among the most important known elements are the general ministerial order, the education order and the local educational plan. The most important innovative elements are: the student’s individualised and documented learning pathway and log book possibly developing as a learning portfolio, guidelines for the ministerial orders and an expansion of the ministerial order with provisions for evaluation of results and quality development in connection with the educational offer.

One of the most important general intentions with amending the legislation is a clearer emphasis on the individual student’s opportunities and on the student as the active party in the learning process, and as a person who chooses and shapes his or her individual learning process. It is also important that the student becomes the central figure in the design of the learning process and in individual learning situations.

The educational offer is organised and offered in a modular way. The modules offered constitute the goals of the education and training. The modules are offered in a learning/situation arrangement. During the course of the programme, the apprentice therefore chooses a certain number of modules within the fixed and offered framework.

Activities = credits: this should be understood as what the institution expects the student to be able to do; the competencies the student has acquired or the development which the student has been through after the completion of the assignment/activities.

We have proposed that the methodology should provide a space so that learning described in situation arrangements and/or projects. A situation arrangement consists of:

- Framework and relationships for the assignment/situation arrangement
- Criteria/targets for a well-executed action. Conditions/context, quality.
- How should the action be evaluated (observation, test, demonstration, work portfolio, product evaluation, etc.)? Rationale and reason for the situation (described dynamically, problem oriented and in relation to the superior context)

#### **4.4.3.3 Status**

At the end of 1999, the reform is being pilot ed in 5 regions comprising in 26 schools and all 6 family entries: technology& communication, building & construction, crafts & technique, from earth to table, transport and logistics, service. An evaluation of the first experiences will begin November 1<sup>st</sup> 1999. It is expected that a restricted tender for the system design will be ready by the end of the year 1999.

#### **4.4.4 The Romanian reform programme**

Since 1990, the Romanian Government has been swift to recognise the implication that the transition from a centrally planned economy to a competitive market economy has had and will continue to have on the education sector. Until recently, the VET system in Romania provided education and training through vocational and technical school in very narrow defined occupations determined by (a) central planning of all inputs into the system and (b) mass production in large state owned enterprises by which the VET schools were partly supported. Due to the backwardness of technologies in the enterprises themselves and a low investment rate in general, the range of skills taught at schools was limited and rarely modified. The curriculum, duration of instruction and didactic methodology were prescribed in a top down approach and there was little room for alteration or innovation.

The move toward a market economy has highlighted the inappropriateness of such a tightly specified education system to the reality of the evolving labour market in Romania and thus reform of the VET sector has been aimed at preparing a trainable, a daptable and innovative workforce with the flexibility to shift occupations in accordance with the demands of the market. Furthermore, equal rights and the development of personalities have been identified as key objectives in this process of reform in line with the democratic and social principles of EU education structures. The recognition of changing needs of the labour market combined with the will to harmonise the principles of EU schools with Romanian schools has brought about a significant number of legislative decisions in the reform of education and training.

#### **4.4.4.1 Elements of the analysis/diagnosis preceding the VET reform**

A previous diagnosis analyse proved that the pre -university vocational and technical education has achieved a narrow and early specialisation for pupils (14-15 years old), which resulted in the following pupils' features:

- Vulnerable to the economy's rise and fall;
- Without the needed flexibility for the transfer of their skills to other occupations;
- They did not benefit of career orientation and information;
- They had poor possibilities to get new qualifications.

#### **4.4.4.2 The vocational education reform through the Phare VET 94 -05 project**

It is important to present what the Phare VET RO 9405 Programme meant for the Romanian educational reform. The main program's goal was to provide the necessary assistance for the Ministry of National Education to achieve the reform of the pre -university vocational and technical education in Romania.

The specific program objectives guided the vocational education and training process towards:

- The achievement of vocational education through school at the level of the training standards of the European Union;
- The mutual acknowledgement with regard to the vocational qualifications on the Internal Market of the European Union;
- The accomplishment of the European integration conditions that were assumed through the European Agreement for associating Romania with the European Union and through the National Strategy of Preparing the accession of Romania to the European Union through adopting the "acquis communautaire";
- The achievement of vocational education adapted to the democratic society, based on the market economy with social participative character, in accordance to the occupational structure specific to the dynamic evolution of the labour market in Romania;
- The adjustment of the structure of the vocational education through school (types of school) to the needs of qualifications identified on the basis of the individual and community interests/demands, in the conditions of maintaining and even stressing the educational system objectives;
- The synergetic decentralisation of the vocational education subsystem through making the social partners co -responsible;

- The more diverse financing resources for the vocational education;
- The logical and coherent information flow regarding the vocational education in a permissible informational system through the co-operation with the institutions, programs and projects which operate in this field.

The reform policy of the vocational and technical education was prescribed as critical reference within the entire educational restructuring as it is one of the three main constituents of the reform together with the quality increase of the basic and secondary education and with the improvement of the system's financial administration. The reform's basis consisted in combining the potential and the local solicitations with the international experience and the Romanian traditions. The strategy was three-folded: restructuring, modernity and giving solutions to the urgent problems. The national administration of education had to reflect the decentralisation and the democratisation of the system.

Concerning the development of the social partnership, the project acted in several directions:

- Setting up the structures, regulations and necessary laws;
- Clarification of the roles of each partner, referring to: planning, need analysis, training structure development, elaboration and revision of teaching documents, evaluation;
- Social partners training.

These structures were perfectible ones, but the major idea was to create structures for a long time period, ready to act after the end of the project, to develop the social partnership on normal basis and to induce to the idea that a real VET system cannot function without social partners.

#### **4.4.4.3 Standards in use**

Based on an opportunity study, carried out by the project, the relevant trades were identified. Next step was to develop Training Standards (TS), based on the Occupational Standards (OS). Occupational Standards are developed by an independent Romanian agency: COSA (Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment) and are referring to the skills and tasks a qualified person is supposed to accomplish and is based on the labour market demands.

Regarding the evaluation and certification, we must say Phare-VET Project acted in following directions:

- Introduction of an intermediate evaluation after the first two school years, certifying general competencies for a group of related trades;
- Involvement of social partners in evaluation;

- Introduction, beside the usual diploma, of the “Competencies Certificate”, showing the key competencies achieved by the graduate. This certificate is useful both for employers and regional departments of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, in case of re-training the unemployed people. It is an intermediate step towards the introduction of a “transferable credit system”.

As structure, the curricula were developed close to the traditional way - syllabi for each subject - for basic and advanced training. For the specialized training, curricula were developed on “modules”. A “module” meant an independent (fully independent desirable) unit of study including theory and practical training, focused on a possible purpose of activity of the future graduate.

#### **4.4.4.4 Features of the VET innovation**

The modular system (beside the previously mentioned structure of training) increased the adaptability and mobility of the system. The reason for that is because the contents could be easily changed, according to the labour market demands: modifying contents of modules, replacing modules, eliminating modules. Such a structure offers the schools a better chance to become more active in the activity of further training and re training, by offering short-term courses, easily adaptable to the demands of the employers.

Because, usually, the local needs were many, “Occupational mobility” and “Deeper specialization” modules were developed in packages, out of which, each student, was going to choose one of each type, according to his/her individual aspirations for a specific future working place. This is the reason for the other name of these modules: “Optional modules”.

Special mentions about “Trans-curricular themes”. This new concept was introduced in order to make “links” between different subjects and create professional behaviours. The themes were mentioned in the curriculum, in a general manner, and were developed on local basis, within the already mentioned 30% of local applications.

In order to encourage the individual options, the subject “class activity” adopted the denomination and contents of a transdisciplinary field, which became unit of the basic curriculum: “vocational orientation and counselling”. Further more, in order to offer the students a better personal development and wider possibility of employment, new syllabi were elaborated: technical foreign language, informatics and computerized technology, entrepreneurial education.

For the students willing, after the graduation of vocational school, to continue their study in high-school Phare-VET Project facilitates the possibility by developing, for the third school year, a package of “elective” modules. These modules were meant to complete the general culture knowledge, which, in vocational schools, were reduced in comparison with high schools.

#### **4.4.4.5 Conceptions on curriculum in the VET system**

It is based on the occupational standards (elaborated by COSA) and on the vocational education standards (Phare VET), built up on the integrated competency principle (knowledge, occupation and social development):

- It is pre-determined by the studies on the economic market and on the mobility of the labour resource force;
- It was modular at the level of the vocational school regarding the distribution of the knowledge areas, a tendency to integrate the disciplines in learning areas which should express the specific way of the VET knowledge development -through intuition and experience and competencies based at the level of technological high school;
- It is spirally developed-starting from field observation and practice in order to generalize the experience and to enable the abstract approach;
- It is centred on “technological modules” (from the levels of the vocational standards) or competencies, depending on the type and performances of the related field technology;
- It is influenced by the curricula development in VET in the European context;
- It is a target of specialisation on the levels of qualification and specialisation, as a response and training to the qualification need on both the internal and European market;
- It is developed within the social partnership with the social agents (economic agents, authorities, experts).

#### **4.4.5 Evaluation of WEB -1996, the Dutch law on VET**

After 20 years of political debate and preliminary legislation, a new law on vocational and adult education is launched in the Netherlands in 1996. This law, the WEB, is built on several developments, working since 1980. For the design of the WEB two major perspectives have played their role: regional and sectoral policies. The regional perspective has led to the formation of large regional training centres (ROC's) with a high degree of autonomy. The sectoral policy is based on the implementation of sectoral qualification structures, in which the labour markets demands are translated into educational trajectories. These two perspectives are not completely in line with each other: with their qualification structure, social partners try to reduce implicitly the autonomy of the ROC's. The crossroad sector by region will be the critical spot for the implementation of the WEB. The Dutch parliament has obliged the minister of education to present a formative evaluation of WEB before the end of 2001. So, in 2000 seven research teams have been working on several evaluation topics, which have led to an evaluation report in the summer of 2001. (Stuurgroep Evaluatie WEB, 2001). Some key results will be presented in the next paragraphs.

##### **4.4.5.1 Features of WEB -1996**

- Integration of initial and continuous VET.
- Social demands and economic demands: the main issue is preparing and supporting youngsters and adults for lifelong learning, according to the needs of a rapidly changing economy.
- Regional perspective: the training infrastructure is organised region-wise.
- Sectoral perspective: the needs of industrial branches and occupational sectors should be satisfied via the regulation of goal definition.
- Autonomous colleges: within the boundaries of the qualification structure (product definition), the examination regulation (quality definition) and the application rules for courses (financial frame), the colleges are autonomous to deliver the courses.

To reach this ambitious set of goals, WEB -1996 contains legal instruments both on institutional as well as on organisational level. On institutional level the main instruments are 1) the qualification structure, in which a prescription can be found for 750 different educational tracks towards occupations; 2) about 20 sectoral bodies, responsible for the definition of the qualification structure and the quality of learning -working environments in the enterprises; to realise this task, the sectoral bodies organise the debate between social partners and educational representatives; 3) about 50 examination bodies, responsible for the quality assurance of examination procedures on the colleges and 4) the inspection service, executing the quality control for the minister of education.

On organisational level WEB-1996 defines the regional colleges, which should be autonomous educational institutes organising the vocational learning together with the local companies. Colleges are responsible for the (quality of) primary learning processes, and have to adjust educational programmes to the local needs of companies and the community.

#### **4.4.5.2 Developing evaluation criteria for VET -systems' change**

In the Netherlands, the WEB will be evaluated politically at the end of 2001, after five years of implementation and working. Several research teams are involved in the evaluation, including the authors. The evaluation model 'in use' is a stepping-stone model: the law has impact on institutions and organisations; organisations are responsible for the quality of training and education delivered. In such chain-linked models, lack of quality of the primary process can be caused both by autonomous decisions on lower levels as by bad legal regulations. All political and social stakeholders are involved in the formulation and implementation of the WEB (the famous Dutch polde r model), so failures in the system will be difficult to point at, to mention and to be improved.

#### **4.4.5.3 Preliminary results of the evaluation of WEB -1996 (May 2001)**

After 5 years of working under WEB-1996, the results of the evaluation studies are not very promising. Although the general quality of Dutch vocational education is rather high, the results at many points are disappointing in the sense of reaching change goals as stated in the WEB. The main conclusion in most of the evaluation reports is that the policy concept behind WEB-1996 is not compatible anymore with the requirements of a knowledge-based economy. WEB-1996 is built on a strong belief in prescription and forecasting of qualification requirements. This belief stems from the industrial work paradigm, which emerged in co-evolution with fordist institutional set-ups like full-time employment, clear occupational assignments and a well-established career pattern over the life cycle corresponding to a concept of guaranteed 'job for life'. Young people went to school, got a job and often did the job for much of the rest of their working life. Worker networks and trade unions in this system were organized to protect the permanence of these 'life jobs' and to build social welfare programs around it. Educational systems in this context have been used not only to deliver cognitive skills, but function also as social selectors, steering children from various socio-economic backgrounds into 'appropriate' levels of education that then make them eligible for 'appropriate' jobs. This industrial VET-system could work reasonably well since the hierarchical industrial system was built on jobs that were mostly semi-skilled and changed little over an individual's working life. The system was stratified but could provide security and increasing wages even to those with basic education only (Carnoy/Castells 1997, p.36f. Mayer & Nieuwenhuis, 2001).

In the knowledge based economy the work paradigm has to change towards the recognition of unstable and unpredictable requirements, which ask for a different steering concept for VET. The prescriptive educational policies should be altered into a greater reliance on the flexibility and expertise of colleges to organise flexible pathways towards

competence in tight cooperation with the local companies. The focus of Dutch policies for VET should change from prescription towards facilitating accountable VET -professionals and -colleges.

But at the same time the evaluative studies report a great shortage of expertise within the colleges, both on managerial level as well as on the level of teachers. Especially the quality of examinations is dramatically low, and therefore the exchange value of qualifications. Caused by the prescriptive nature of WEB -1996 colleges have not been challenged to organize responsiveness and flexibility in their organisations.

In the actual political debate, both in government as well between social partners and other stakeholders, the main reaction is to establish more and more detailed prescriptions to improve WEB-1996. The evaluating researchers are warning against this reaction, because it will turn out as a contra productive and backward movement. The challenge will be to improve WEB-1996 within a forward mode, which will change the relations between institutional actors and organisational actors 180° degrees around: colleges and local companies should be seen as the primary, professional actors, and the institutional set up should be facilitating them in stead of setting the rules. The second half of 200 1 will be decisive for the quality ambitions in Dutch VET for the next decade.

#### **4.4.6 Analysis of policy instruments for VET -systems change**

The three VET systems described, are not representative for the European diversity in VET systems. All the three systems are more or less school based systems, comparable to the Nordic and French systems. In the German speaking countries VET systems are more company based, under the regime of the Dual system; whereas the UK systems are much more market led. These system differences have large impact on important characteristics as responsiveness and innovativeness of the systems, as Crouch (1999) has pointed out extensively. Having said this, the basic problem within the three observed systems is quite similar: how to build a flexible VET system, balancing between stable structures and dynamic, changing labour market demands.

In Denmark a systemic solution is sought for this problem in disconnecting educational tracks and the work system, enabling students to develop their own occupational identity and competencies: forward mapping and participation in communities of practice is a more powerful way of connecting by supporting individual development towards self -employing skills.

In Romania they also have chosen for a disconnection between the occupational standards and the training standards: this offers a way to institutional disconnection and local reconnection.

In the Netherlands policy makers tend to choose for improvement of the industry based VET system. In the Dutch case the institutional connection will be strengthened; experts expect severe problems; 1) motivational problems for students; 2) flexibility problems for

local delivery; 3) integrative problems for work based learning in national programmes; APL will uncover this rapidly; 4) widening discrepancies between exchange value and use value of competencies; 5) recruitment and motivation problems with VET -teachers. The power of traditional institutions is still quite strong in the Dutch case: connecting school to work in an industrial paradigm through forecasting and prescriptions. At the other hand, the minister of education in the Netherlands pretends to liberate the position of the (VET) -colleges, in his last policy document. School boards should decide on educational content, only a very small core curriculum should be decided on politically by the government.

So, policymakers are balancing between disconnecting and reconnecting school and work: they are looking for a new paradigm where the locus of connection is moving down from the institutional level towards the primary process of learning and working. On institutional level this means a shift from a prescriptive policy towards a facilitating policy; on organisational level this means a shift in organisational culture and professionalism towards autonomy and accountability. In the Danish case, experiments are going on local level: local economic and educational actors are challenged to organise pathways towards competence development, fitting both to the local economic demands as well as to the ambitions of future students. Within the Dutch context, experts sketch the challenges and recommendations for colleges as local spiders in innovative networks. VET -colleges as learning organisations is a scenario, described by Kelleher & Simons (see Forum web site).

Within the different system approaches we see a variety in balancing solutions for the dilemmas, as described in paragraph 2.

- On the dilemma between initial and life long learning, all systems have chosen in practice for an initial perspective; life long learning is still wishful thinking, at least in system development.
- Traditional occupations or flexible qualifications: the Danish approach is very promising to deliver flexible pathways towards competencies. The basic perspective in the Danish system is a forward mapping, developmental approach by which broad initial choices will be moderated and targeted through a guiding educational system. The Rumanian system takes a middle position, by disconnecting the training system and the occupational system. In the Dutch system the backward mapping system, based on a fair trust in forecasting techniques, is still the leading perspective
- Curriculum based or work experience: the Rumanian system seems to be the most curriculum based perspective; the construction of educational infrastructure forces towards an emphasis on school based learning. The Dutch and Danish infrastructure is established three or four decennia ago, so in these countries there are much more discussion on work based learning as an attractive approach for students. In the Netherlands a mixed model is under development, whereas in Denmark both mixed pathways as well as work based pathways are development in the new educational reform.
- Social demands or economic demands: in Denmark and Romania the policy perspective on this dilemma is mixed: both social as well as economic demands are seen as important input for the VET system. In the Dutch system much more

emphasis is laid on the economic demand; this is compatible with the backward mapping approach: the system 'knows' what is good for the students; they don't have to develop that perspective themselves.

- Employment or self-employment: in all systems self-employment is not mentioned as a serious alternative for the employment perspective; this is compatible with the low emphasis on life long learning in the first dilemma.

So, the strategic profile of each system is different. The source for these differences can be found in history (how did systems grow), in the political power of institutional actors (how strong is the protection of traditions balanced against the need for innovation), and in the elaborateness of the educational infrastructure (existing professionalism and resources). Each system is unique in combining these sources, so also the outcomes in system features will be different. Changing VET-systems can be seen as a kind of governmental learning: depending on the specific problem definition and the specific configuration of institutional and organisational actors and their stakes, policy strategies and targets of systems change should be defined. There is no right way for VET, although the set of evaluation criteria suggests a convergence of targets and goals. There are no recipes for countries to reach those goals and targets. VET policy is a matter of chaos and complexity: each country has to examine its own 'set up'; examples from other countries can be used as good practices, but should be adapted to the own national or regional situation. One important lesson for systems innovations is that the learning and experimentation should be coherent and compatible on all systems' levels: from law, through institutions and organisations up till primary teaching learning processes. Just changing the college level will not be successful if legislation and institutional set up at the one hand, and teachers and students behaviour and expectations at the other hand are changed in a compatible way. The Danish approach to change all systems levels, but only in one or two regions, seems to be a smart way to encounter this adventure.

The recommendation for a comprehensive systems approach is not only valid for the school-based systems we have observed in this article. Also for market and dual VET-systems this recommendation counts. In either of these systems the deeper involvement of companies will increase the complexity of the endeavour. So, system innovation of dual systems and market led systems will take even longer than the innovation of school based systems. European VET policies should not be sought in prescriptive designs and regulations: the most successful road for European policies on VET is a set of challenging goals and evaluation criteria: which targets should be dealt with on several dilemmas we have described in this article. Also on systems level a backward mapping, blueprinting policy is inferior to a forward mapping developing concept of systems' evolution. Challenging evaluation criteria can form the heart of a development oriented European VET policy.

#### **4.4.7 Towards new perspectives on learning and working in VET**

Evidently, it is not easy for VET to take up a new task, as sketched by Rosenfeld (1998). Lifelong learning, the facilitation of technology adaptation and the fomenting of innovative networks seem to be mentally understood by the colleges, but in practice rarely to be put in action. This is the case in all European VET -systems. The development of a system for lifelong learning in a dynamic knowledge based economy, is not simply a supplement to the education and training assortment of the colleges; lifelong learning implicates a fundamental change of enterprise for the colleges.

The learning enterprise in the traditional VET -system, developed within the industrial economy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is completely different from the innovative learning processes within knowledge intensive companies. These differences in learning processes cause different professional profiles for teachers and educators at the one hand and for professionals in companies at the other hand. Also the work culture and the incentive structures differ largely for professionals and managers in companies and colleges. The design of VET for the knowledge economy involves not only reorganization of the course supplies but also a redesign of the fundamental processes and culture.

VET is trapped in decontextual and meaningless broadening of skills, and has to query for new forms of participatory didactics and assessment in the context of experientially rich communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Such a shift in learning perspectives can not be completed by the VET -colleges only. Tomassini shows that the learning perspectives are deeply rooted in the institutional set up around VET. So the institutional actors (government, politics, social partners) should become aware of the chaotic context around vocational learning: a new design of learning processes requires new conditions and incentive structures on systems' level.

VET, as a community of practice for teachers, is a sterile reality, in which codified knowledge and skills are central: methods, books and curricula form an intermediary between learners and practice. According to Wenger (1998) codification has its costs and returns: it facilitates the entrance to new knowledge, but it hinders the giving of meaning of that knowledge through participation. In traditional VET the equilibrium between codification and participation is disappeared. In such a practice, teachers have little chance to develop their expertise and identity as participants in innovative processes and are no longer strong role models for their students, because they are no longer representatives of the future communities of practice, the students are heading for. Professionals and entrepreneurs do not see teachers anymore from the sectors as recognized partners in innovative networks. They don't have the possibilities anymore to play a pivotal role in regional developmental projects and to support the entrance of their students into the world of work. Colleges should offer to teachers more possibilities to authentic participation in economic activities and by doing such, getting in touch with the uncertainties of innovative activities: they should experience the tacit aspects of competencies, the trial and error aspects of innovation and the uncertainty of innovative learning processes. Through authentic participation of teachers, both students and teachers can act as full participants in the VET-community of learning for working.

In the actual VET -system, colleges get their returns from efficiency in the industrial paradigm: participatory goals are addressed to learning at the workplace, and by doing that,

the college and teachers can concentrate on the codified part of the curriculum. The actual non-competitive position on the 'students market' does not force colleges to invest in adult education: non-initial education takes only 5 - 10% of the turn over of colleges and the course supply in adult education is restricted to routine content. Caused by the traditional incentive structure, colleges are not interested in innovation of the learning processes and the organizational visions behind. Most of the discussion is directed to adapt external developments into the codified educational paradigm.

VET is locked in the codified practices of an educational system developed for and in the industrial society of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The institutional set up in VET is strongly focussed on the economic perspective, in which the exchange value of competencies plays the prime role. The important actors in the system like social partners, government and even students, restate this perspective time by time in the political debate. Without a systemic debate and a paradigm shift on all levels in the educational system, the margins for innovative policies on college level will stay restricted. Colleges are aware of the urgency of a repositioning in the local economy, but they lack the instruments and the visions for claiming new roles. Also teachers are locked in the traditional paradigm on the enterprise of VET, which results in professional resistance against uncertainty in participatory adventures with professionals from outside school. We have found some good practices as benchmarks for new educational policy, but they should be considered as front runners and innovators, for which inside the educational system no institutional and organizational set up, exist. An educational system, supporting innovation and learning within economic practices, is not only a matter of the colleges, but requires strategic design on all systems' levels: legislation, institutional set up, organizational design and constraints and redesign of the learning process itself.

## **4.5 Developing Social Identities in a period of change: changing patterns of learning while working in Europe**

### **4.5.1 The importance of occupational identities**

Social identities locate us within society and mediate our interactions with others. One of the most important identities is the identity we build through work – our occupational identity. Occupational identities mediate the ways in which we relate to the work organisation and work process and, critically, to how we learn new skills and knowledge over time

This chapter will focus on occupational identities and in particular their importance for the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Traditional models of the processes of becoming skilled have tended to assume there is a set body of skills and knowledge that can be taught or learnt. We believe these models are too simple.

Firstly, the body of skills, knowledge and understanding to be acquired changes over time. What it means to be skilled is usually perceived and defined differently at the beginning of the process of becoming skilled compared with how it is seen at the end of the formal process.

Secondly, becoming skilled has a social dimension. The skills, knowledge and understanding that an individual develops over time are acquired in particular social settings. The social context in which learning takes place needs to be acknowledged. Individuals learn with and from others and help others learn. This means that the process of skill acquisition needs to be placed in a social context.

Thirdly, an individual is an agent in the construction of her or his own particular set of skills and understandings. Even if individuals are faced with a similar, albeit changing, body of skills, knowledge and understanding, the process whereby they go about trying to achieve mastery may be very different. In looking at the acquisition of skills and knowledge it is also important to consider why someone is participating in learning. There is a big difference between learning for a hobby or sport and learning for work.

Occupational identities are formed within particular 'communities of practice'. There may be a broad community of practice at a sectoral or occupational level but there will be more particular communities of practice associated with particular work organisations and within particular education and training institutions. It may also be the case that particular workgroups within an institution have typical ways of working that differentiate them to some extent from other groups. The FORUM discussions and papers produced contribute some European perspectives to the discussion of vocational education and training (VET) policy and changing occupational identities in Europe. The first section of this chapter examines changes in processes of occupational identity formation. The second section focuses in changes in learning and work, including self-directed learning, non-formal learning and support for learning at work, drawing on examples from particular national

contexts. The concluding section discusses options for future policy development round occupational identities in Europe.

#### **4.5.2 Pressures for change: occupational identities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

We are living through a period of profound economic and social development and change. The globalisation of capital, the internationalisation of manufacturing and service provision and the rapid implementation of new technologies are leading to major changes in the ways people live and work. Traditional industries have declined with a parallel expansion in service provision and in electronics. The centres of production and employment have changed both between and within countries. Fewer industries and occupations hold out the promise of a job for life, and even many of those occupations that do hold out such prospects may be significantly transformed. Increased insecurity in employment is accompanied by the redundancy of specific skills and knowledge. Occupational identities are challenged by new demands for competitiveness. New forms of work organisation stress multi-skilled teams and the ability to learn and apply new skills and knowledge. Policies for employability stress the role of the individual in maintaining and updating their own skills and knowledge for the labour market. Education and training is designed to foster flexibility and the ability to deal with future change. Mobility is promoted to match changes in the location of employment. Large manufacturing firms are employing fewer people, whilst employment in SMEs grows. Teleworking and the use of information and communication technologies allow individuals to work from home or from isolated communities.

All these factors are leading to a weakening of traditional occupational identities. We believe this should be a cause for concern, rather than viewed as an inevitable by-product of economic progress. Firstly, occupational identities play an important social role. The weakening of occupational identities can only weaken social solidarity and reinforce tendencies for social exclusion. Occupational identity is strongly related to other forms of social identity and especially to the identity and self-governance of communities. The individualisation of work roles reflects and reinforces pressures of individualism and isolation within these wider communities. Occupational identity also forms an important part of the way in which individuals cope with the pressures and stress of work. This is particularly important in a period of such rapid change.

However, there are other reasons for regarding the weakening of occupational identities with concern that are more generally related to the development of the knowledge society and to learning in general. Knowledge development and innovation are not individual or random phenomena. Research shows that knowledge is developed and shared through those communities of practice that are, at least in part, based on occupational identity. As effective knowledge management becomes increasingly important for companies, so the need to strengthen processes of communication and exchange within the workforce increases. In order to use their individual skills and knowledge in context, workers need a broad-based understanding of the whole work process, rather than an atomised view of

their own role within it. This understanding in some cases is predicated on their occupational identity and their occupational relationship to the work process.

Even more important is the relationship between occupational identity formation and individual learning histories. One feature of the changing economies, technologies and work organisation is the need for lifelong learning – for the continuous updating of skills and knowledge. This in turn has focused attention on the workplace as a learning environment and on new strategies of competence development for individual and organisational learning. But it is precisely through communities of practice – often based on occupational identity – in which knowledge is acquired, interpreted and applied in the workplace. Learning is a social activity. Learning is most powerful when situated in real life experience. The past decade has seen a move away from theories of teaching to a focus on theories and processes of learning with teachers and trainers taking on new roles as coaches, role models and mentors. The weakening of occupational identities and the individualisation of work practices and work places may inhibit the development of lifelong learning and work-based learning as social activities.

This argument explains the background to the policy recommendations that follow. The development of flexible work practices, the implementation of new forms of work organisation, the implementation of lifelong learning and the fostering of innovation require strong social identities. Traditionally one way to achieve this was through the development of strong occupational identities. This means the development of occupational identities could contribute to the EU policy goals of social solidarity, inclusion and the improvement of working conditions. However, it is not enough to lament the passing of older forms of learning and identity formation. Policies have to be forged which can engage with modern patterns of skills formation and use. Although the Forum Network focuses on education and training issues, it is recognised that education and training measures in themselves are not sufficient. The issue of occupational identities raises broader concerns including the operation of the labour market and the regulation of professions. The aim of the policies advanced below is to build and strengthen modern occupational identities in a new work context and as part of a new social framework.

### 4.5.3 Possibilities of different ways of constructing occupational identities

Finegold and Wagner (1999) focused attention upon what was traditionally one of the strengths of the German economy and their approach to skill development: capital goods manufacturing built upon a system of diversified quality production, using the abilities of highly skilled workers and engineers. They point out, however, that this system was essentially based around individual performance. Hence the shift towards the multi-functional team as the basic organisational unit for work performance in lean manufacturing, typical of US practice, posed particular challenges in a German context. Finegold and Wagner (1999) in a study of the pump industry in the US and Germany, confirmed the thesis of Herrigel and Sabel that “most German assemble-to-order and customized plants had made relatively little use of multi-functional teams, at least in part because the personal identity of German skilled workers appeared to conflict with the blurring of individual roles and narrowing of some technical skill requirements that can accompany the move toward a team-based organization” (pp. 152-153).

Finegold and Wagner (1999) go on to advocate that German manufacturing companies need to develop their own production concepts that “fully utilize the potential of their highly skilled workers and newly-deployed *Meisters*” (p.155). This has the apparent advantage of reinforcing the importance of career pathways within the firm in ways that build upon the extensive initial training typical of the German VET system. This may be a sensible approach in those industries where competitive advantage can be extracted from knowledge and expertise that mainly resides within individuals strongly associated with particular companies. On the other hand, in more dynamic sectors such as telecommunications it may be that tacit knowledge is generated and shared at least partly through individuals moving between companies in the industry (Mason and Wagner, 2000).

**Reflection Point 1:** diversified quality production, using the abilities of highly skilled workers and engineers, can be built around individual performance and clear occupational pathways, where a company builds up its store of knowledge and expertise. This approach works best in a relatively stable environment where depth of technical knowledge developed over time remains a continuing asset. However, a viable alternative approach may be for (tacit) knowledge to be spread between companies by a comparatively rapid employee churn. These two approaches reflect very different ways of constructing occupational identities.

#### **4.5.3.1 Importance of non-formal learning for development of identities at work**

Dehnbostel (forthcoming) argues that the increasing significance of non-formal learning is partly due to the too narrow limits of organised and intentional learning processes. Only a certain amount of occupational competence can be gained through intentional learning processes. Dehnbostel (forthcoming), in a study of the German dual system, argues that the learning and development processes that form the actual basis of qualified workers' occupational knowledge are determined to a large extent by informal learning processes at work. Operational models for learning by doing assume that knowledge and insight is gained not when actions are repeated, but rather when unforeseen problems and uncertainties crop up during the working process and have to be solved. The increased emphasis given to non-formal learning does draw attention to the rich variety of learning areas and forms available outside formal education and training.

**Reflection Point 2:** even in countries with strong systems of initial training there is a recognition that learning and working in the workplace are partly complementary and partly competing – how the relationship can be handled most effectively varies between contexts. According to this view identities at work are strongly shaped by informal processes of learning and development, not just by the formal attempts at skill development.

#### **4.5.3.2 The Netherlands: reflective dialogue and core problems - using core activities, problems and dilemmas of an occupation as a basis for learning in the workplace.**

Two elements of current Dutch practice in VET are of particular interest in a consideration of how work-related identities may be developed. The first concerns the use of reflective dialogue within the assessment of non-formal learning. While the second relates to the use of core problems as a driver for occupational identity formation, through using core activities, problems and dilemmas of an occupation as a basis for learning in the workplace.

The Dutch development of systems for assessment of non-formal learning depends upon a methodology that involves a candidate wishing to have his or her non-formal learning recognised having to go through two stages. In the first stage, all available documentation is gathered in a portfolio (formal certificates, statements from employers, examples of work carried out and so on). This documentation is then compared with the requirements listed in the national qualification structure and a decision on partial qualification may be reached. Normally this stage will be followed by a practically oriented assessment aiming at formal certification. The methodology is centred on assessment of the planning, execution and evaluation of a practical task. In the first stage, planning, the aim is to assess the candidate's methodological competencies and his or her ability to plan the task ahead.

Criterion referenced interviews are used together with observation of work preparation. The second stage focuses on the execution of the task, trying to assess execution as well as reflective skills through a combination of observation (of process and result) and a criterion-oriented interview. In the third stage, evaluation, the candidate is asked to reflect on the task performed, to identify alternative ways of doing it, and to indicate how the chosen approach could be transferred to other working situations.

The emphasis on evaluation and reflection is an interesting aspect of the Dutch approach, and that part of the assessment utilises four strands of questioning. First, and related to the preparations, why did the candidate act in a certain way and were other options available? Second, and related to the process itself, why did the candidate act as she or he did and could other options be envisaged? Third, and related to the product (or service), how can the candidate tell that it complies with requirements? Fourth, and related to the completion of the task, why did the candidate act the way she or he did and are other options possible? This illustrates the strong dialogical character of the approach - success relying not only on formal procedures and descriptions but also on the abilities and experiences of the assessors.

**Reflection Point 3:** reflective dialogue and evaluation can be used to broaden and deepen learning in the workplace (and in part compensate for the possible narrowness of experience in the work tasks performed by an individual). This also draws attention to the role of interaction with others in helping to draw out individual understanding of their work-related learning, which in turn helps to shape and confirm occupational identities.

In the last few years in the Netherlands increasing attention has been paid to the idea of using core problems as a basis for learning in the workplace. Onstenk and Brown (forthcoming) highlight how core problems comprise the essential characteristics of the professional task, in which decisions and choices must be made, and in which deliberate application of knowledge and skills, and the extent to which the appropriate set of action alternatives and the speed with which they are selected, determine the degree of expertise of an individual. Core problems refer to recurring and central occupational situations in which complex problems are solved and in which the specific characteristics of the situation and the social context are of central importance. This implies uncertainty and the need to balance different, sometimes contradictory considerations and interests against each other.

When dealing with a core problem a practitioner has to deal with choices or dilemmas, which make a core problem complex. A core activity can be characterised by specific dilemmas and choices to be made in the work process. A recurrent tension field in core activities and core problems is the one between effectiveness, costs and quality. The resulting choices can vary with the situation. Another tension can exist between newer and older ways of doing things. It can be expected of a practitioner that he or she is able to make situationally adequate and responsible choices, and is able to contribute to a further development of the profession by resolving these tensions and further expanding the work

activity (Engeström, 1994). This dimension of core problems relates to the developmental aspect of competence development.

Core problems could offer vocational education and training an integrated approach. The concept of core problems connects the determination of the central issues of the profession with the importance of making decisions and choices in relation to both occupational expertise and to educational practices and learning processes. Competence can develop through solving problems, meeting challenges, taking decisions, considering different action possibilities, and weighing up alternatives (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986). Situated learning theory (Brown *et al.*, 1989; Lave and Wenger, 1991), and with some reservations also activity theory (Engeström, 1994), suggest that learning in and through the work process itself can be a very effective way to acquire this kind of work-related knowledge and key qualifications.

‘Exposure’ to core problems can contribute on two levels to the acquisition and development of broad occupational competence. On a first level, the learner acquires competence and expertise regarding central elements of the occupation. However, on a second level, the learner at the same time develops more general learning, problem solving and meta-cognitive competences in solving specific and concrete core problems, by learning to handle complexities, contradictions and uncertainties. Thus learning through core problems contributes to the development of transfer skills. Core problems can be distinguished in breadth, depth and complexity. They do not look the same for a beginner as to an expert (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986; Benner, 1984). Different levels of the learning process imply different levels of complexity for core problems as a didactic strategy.

A didactic approach, which focuses upon ‘core problems’, would highlight that it is a reflexive collaborative learning environment, making use of problem-based learning, such that:

- it provides authentic contexts for learning with a focus upon real (complex) problems
- it is collaborative and dynamic, enabling learners to develop shared understandings and a sense of belonging to a dynamic community of practice, which they are helping to change and shape
- it is participative and fosters active engagement as the learners determine for themselves the issues that need to be addressed when facing core problems. They can draw upon the knowledge and skills of others in facing these issues and also create their own learning agenda to fill any gaps in their knowledge and understanding
- it supports learning which is highly relevant, because the learning is focused upon issues which are perceived as pressing by practitioners
- it gives (possibly isolated) individuals the opportunity to think through problems as part of a team
- it supports the development of creative and flexible approaches to problems

- it supports the development of contextualised critical learning
- it supports reflection upon and review of the learning process as well as of the outcomes.

Reflection upon core problems can give insight into current practice and provide learners with ideas as to how they might tackle similar problems in future. Such reflection is critical in two respects. First, it is necessary if learners are to look beyond current practice and to help shape how such problems are tackled in future. Second, it can act as a stimulus to creativity and innovation, not least because the learners have learned the value of applying a reflective approach to the development of their own practice and expertise. Such an approach not only increases the likelihood of significant learning, it also provides a framework for subsequent continuing professional development in which it is likely that processes of new knowledge creation may be facilitated. In this sense it helps those that are learning within vocational education to feel they are moving towards assuming a full position within particular 'communities of practice' (Lave 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Learners are then perhaps more likely to exhibit a subsequent continuing commitment to explore, reflect upon and improve their occupational practice (Schön, 1983; 1987).

A focus upon the core problems of practitioners is also an interesting way to raise the intellectual demands required within vocational education. It stimulates use of problem-based learning, acknowledging the contribution theoretical concepts make to assist individuals to understand what they are doing and why work practices are subject to change (Engeström, 1994). Core problems in vocational education can therefore be used as a facilitator of both practical and theoretical learning (Onstenk, 1997; Brown, 1999). So the use of core problems within vocational education can act as a springboard for:

- the exploration of and reflection upon occupational practice
- the development of skills, knowledge and understanding (of critical reflection) necessary to evaluate and review occupational practice
- understanding processes of change (in complex and dynamic contexts)
- developing the ability to create new knowledge
- the development of theoretical knowledge to underpin and complement reflection upon practice
- the study of the interplay between theory and practice
- developing the ability to transfer skills, knowledge and understanding from one context to another
- developing the ability to handle complexity and inter-connectedness of issues
- the development of contextualised understandings
- the translation of understanding into action, as appropriate

- the further development of communication skills.

**Reflection Point 4:** the primary advantage of the use of core problems from this perspective is in its support for an integrated approach to curriculum development. That is, it is an imaginative way of linking knowledge acquisition, problem solving and key qualifications development in work-related activities, which are relevant to the workplace and meaningful for the learner. Other related benefits include support for the development of broader systems thinking and the way it supports reflection and learning from practical experience. It also links to the need to engage with theoretical learning and gives emphasis to the importance of being able to transfer skills, knowledge and understanding between contexts. Such an approach could help transform the processes of initial occupational identity formation.

#### **4.5.3.3 France: the assessment of non-formal learning**

The interest in non-formal learning in Germany mentioned above is mirrored in other European countries. Assessment has traditionally been understood as a way of judging and/or measuring the learning and performance of individuals within formal education and training settings (Little and Wolf 1996). This traditional role is currently undergoing substantial change, as a number of European countries are paying increasing attention to the development of assessment methodologies trying to measure and judge the informal or non-formal learning taking place at work, in leisure time activities and at home (Bjørnåvold 2000). Bjørnåvold and Brown (forthcoming) analyse recent developments in this area in France, and it may be useful to reproduce here some examples drawn from the introduction of the '*bilan de competence*' in France. This can be seen as an example that falls outside the dominant approaches of linking strongly assessments of non-formal learning to formal education structures. In this case assessment methodologies are defined within a labour market or enterprise setting.

Bjørnåvold and Brown (forthcoming) point out that in this case the process may not be oriented towards formal qualifications, but rather seek the identification of competences relevant to individual careers (within or between enterprises) or in the context of human resource management. Less constrained by what is defined as relevant by the formal education and training system, these approaches may potentially be better positioned to identify those competences that are not developed within formal education and training and thus transcend formal qualifications. In some instances a balance between education and training and the labour market is sought through the introduction of qualification standards developed in co-operation between educational authorities and representatives of employers and employees. While systems linked to formal education have been dominant so far, the number of approaches linked to the labour market or enterprises seems to be growing.

Bjørnåvold and Brown (forthcoming) review the operation of the French '*bilan de competence*'. After a period of experimentation, during the second half of the 1980s, with a system for the validation of occupational competences acquired outside formal education, legislation to support the system was enacted in 1991. The Law of December 1991 entitled employees to educational leave (of 24 hours or 3 working days) for the *bilan* process. This was intended to permit the employee to review his or her occupational and personal competencies, as well as their motivation and aptitudes, in order to facilitate his or her occupational as well as their educational development. Most national systems of non-formal assessment are intrinsically linked into formal education and training, but the *bilan de competence* is focused on the labour market and the enterprise. The initiative for the *bilan* process may though come from an enterprise or a worker.

Officially, the *bilan* has a clear formative role. The idea is to give feed back to the employer or employee on questions of competence in order to support further learning or career development. More than 700 organisations and institutions have been accredited as '*centres de bilan*', competing over requests for assessments. The profile and professional basis of these organisations varies greatly, as does their methodological approach.

How successful the various approaches to the *bilan de competence* have been is difficult to judge. There is no institutionalised control of the results of the *bilan* process. This does not alter the fact that the *bilan de competence* is one of the few competence measurement systems operating on a large scale. It is also one of the few systems operating on a formative basis - the main idea being to clarify the potential of individuals. This, it is hoped, will then aid their further learning and strengthen their career possibilities. That the *bilan de competence* does not aim to give formal recognition of competences according to a qualification standard makes it distinctly different from the other systems so far considered. The main reference points are individuals and enterprises. Other external references are not referred to, at least not formally, although there might very well be informal standards reflecting the professional background and methodological choices of the centres de bilan. Hence the summative role of the *bilan* is intentionally weak, if we use summative in the sense of 'summative for the accountability to the public' (Black 1998), whereas this is a central feature of traditional assessment and testing in France.

The increased emphasis given to non-formal learning does draw attention to the rich variety of learning areas and forms available outside formal education and training. Learning outside formal education and training institutions is increasingly presented as a prerequisite for a learning strategy aiming at a broader knowledge and competence base, transcending specific organisations, technologies, contexts and problems. This does though present particular challenges for assessment.

**Reflection Point 5:** it is possible to offer institutional support to a system that looks to develop employees in ways considered to be meaningful by the individuals concerned (rather than necessarily fitting the requirements of formal education and training). By this means there is a stronger role for individual agency, as against formal structure, in the construction of identities at work.

#### **4.5.3.4 UK: self-directed learning at work and the importance for individual learning of the support of colleagues**

The whole idea of self-directed learning at work is somewhat paradoxical. Learning itself is both an intensely personal activity and a quintessentially social process. Self-directed learning depends upon individual commitment and the support and encouragement of others. A study by Rajan et al (1997) highlights, in a survey of 950 small and medium-sized companies in central London, that growing companies were likely to be moving towards a performance-driven business culture, with an emphasis upon empowerment, teamwork, lifelong learning and individuals managing their own careers. Graduates were “reckoned to have intellectual and behavioural traits more in tune with the main elements of the new culture” (Rajan et al, 1997, p.13). The training methods most frequently used with new graduate recruits were learning by doing; coaching by line managers; interacting with suppliers and customers; and through the exercise of significant work responsibilities.

**Reflection Point 6:** self-directed learning at work is becoming more central to the development of changing identities at work.

Recognition of personal worth by an influential sponsor or mentor and recognition by your community of peers can be powerful drivers to individual programmes of self-directed learning. Eraut et al (1998a) in their study on learning at work found many examples of organised but relatively informal learning support through reference to unofficial sponsors, mentors or ‘designated experts’, where the support was a function of a personal network of relationships. Individuals used a mix of different kinds of skills, in particular social skills, to gain access to and use of knowledge possessed by someone else, often through a combination of professional and personal networks (Eraut et al, 1998b).

This type of personal encouragement for more expansive forms of self-directed learning at work could be undermined by pressures due to a perceived shortage of time and work intensification in some organisations. If informal support for learning is undermined by work intensification it may mean that organisations should pay greater attention to the need for self-directed learning to be formally supported (Eraut et al, 1998b). For example, where the amount of work to be done and the speed with which people are expected to work reinforce the routinisation and short-term nature of thinking in even complex work, this inevitably squeezes time for medium to long-term thinking and review of practice. Hence people need support to help them engage in patterns of thought conducive to learning, simply because of the amount of their time bound up with routinised behaviours. That is, they need to be given time and space to engage in critical thought, self-reflection and personal development. This should include opportunities for both collaborative and self-directed learning.

One of the key issues concerning 'facilitating self-directed learning' lies in how to implement it in practice. Within companies, if they move towards becoming learning organisations and facilitate self-directed learning, they are faced with a challenge of balancing management and freedom in learning: "how can we relax control over the learning process while at the same time channelling the benefits from it?" (Jones & Hendry, 1994, p. 160). Fully self-directed learning at work requires individuals not only to learn from work, but also to use their own initiative to find out what they need to know. Eraut et al (1998b) point out that "managers' hopes that employees will be self-directed learners may not be realised if their attitude is perceived as permissive rather than positively supportive" (p. 39).

There are dangers then that the possible need for support is overlooked. Ashton (1998) found that in certain firms learning was thought to be unproblematic, a natural process which occurs of its own accord and therefore did not require any special support or consideration. This did, however, sometimes mean that new entrants, especially graduates, received little support: there was a belief that they "learn by being 'thrown in at the deep end'" (Ashton, 1998, p. 67). Practical examples of a substantive commitment to learning throughout companies remain hard to find. Eraut et al (1998b) investigated the extent of organised learning support in the development of knowledge and skills in employment of 120 people operating at professional, management, team leader or technician level in 12 organisations. The organised learning support included use of mentoring and coaching; rotations, visits and shadowing; as well as reference to 'designated experts', although very few of the positive examples of learning "resulted from organisation-wide strategies or initiatives. Most were relatively informal and initiated by middle managers, colleagues or the learners themselves" (Eraut et al, 1998b, p. 41). On the other hand, "negative examples where the absence of these kinds of organised support for learning on-the-job left people struggling were too numerous to count" (p. 41).

Those in need of support for learning at work, however, often turn to colleagues. Eraut et al (1998b) highlight the extent to which feedback from colleagues, and consultation and collaboration within working groups can form the basis for substantive learning, including through mutual consultation and support. Additionally, membership of task groups or committees could help people develop new skills, fresh perspectives or deepen their organisational or contextual understanding. Similarly some people at work pointed to the extent to which they could learn from others outside their department, from professional networks or from suppliers and customers. One "major reason for the prevalence of learning from other people was that this [tacit] knowledge was held by individuals rather than embedded in social activities. While some knowledge was firmly embedded in organisational activities, other knowledge was located with a small number of individuals" (Eraut et al, 1998b, p. 48, emphasis in the original).

**Reflection Point 7:** learning from others is an important source of learning at work, but employees often require support for this form of learning to be effective. Changing identities at work can be strongly influenced by interactions with and learning from others.

#### **4.5.4 Modern occupational identities: a policy approach**

The FORUM Changing identities workgroup has discussed a number of different options for policy development in this field. The following section outlines what some of those policies might be.

##### *The Development of broader occupational profiles*

Broader occupational profiles can allow the development of a broader occupational identity and allow occupational expertise and identity to migrate over time as the content of jobs change or ‘neighbouring’ occupations provide new opportunities for employment.

##### *The Development of integrated general and occupational education*

Curriculum reform providing integrated general and vocational education could allow broader career options, provide a foundation for lifelong learning and allow opportunities for occupational career progression. Whilst maintaining the notion of occupational identities, a new integrated curriculum can provide the basis for movement within and between occupations.

##### *The Development of core and optional modular programmes*

The development of core and modular occupational learning programmes can assist in both building occupational identity and also allow flexibility and customisation to meet changing needs and the requirements of individual employers. Core modules provide the basis for entry into an occupation whilst optional modules enable specialisation in particular areas and also allow for subject updating and the provision of continuing vocational education.

### *The Development of a new mix of learning and working opportunities*

The workplace can be developed as a place of learning through the mapping different learning opportunities, providing learning resources and developing trainer skills. Periods of work based learning can be provided in alternance with school based learning for adults as well as young people.

### *The strengthening of apprenticeship programmes*

Apprenticeship programmes offer a route to strong occupational identities and a way to ease the problems of school to work transition. The extension of apprenticeship programmes to adults can allow the increased articulation between work based learning and the general and higher education systems. Apprenticeship may allow university graduates to apply their knowledge in a work situation. For those with work experience but no formal training qualifications, it allows recognition of previous work based learning.

### *The Development of programmes for continuing professional Development*

Opportunities for continuing professional development need to acknowledge the commitments that underpin occupational identity. These include the wider skills and knowledge of an occupation over and above those involved in the immediate application of occupational skills in a particular workplace. The process or key skills needed for updating occupational skills and the relevant knowledge base are also required.

### *The recognition of informal learning*

There is increasing recognition of the importance of informal learning acquired in the workplace or in wider social contexts. It is important that the previously unrecognised skills and knowledge of the workforce are acknowledged, especially as a stage towards further education and training and to extend the understanding of work and education to encompass all forms of learning, however acquired. This requires the recognition of the value of tacit knowledge, not easily acquired through formal education and training processes, and the provision of spaces and opportunities to extend that knowledge.

### *The strengthening of social identities*

We all have multiple identities of which occupational identity is only one. Occupational identity is important because of the centrality of work to our lives. The weakening of occupational identities has an affect on other identities especially to community identity which, since the industrial revolution, has often been bound up with dominant local industries and trades. New patterns of work practice and new forms of employment offer the opportunity to develop new forms of identities. These may still be rooted in work practice but may be less defined by a particular occupation or trade. The development of different forms of tele-working centres – in communities or through start-up units- offer the opportunity for social interaction and mutual learning through the nature of work and the work location rather than the particular occupations. As the spread of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies, and the move to smaller enterprises continues to gather pace, it is important to look at new ways of developing and reinforcing social identity. This may include re-examining older forms of social institutions – workers' clubs, mechanics institutes and trade union centres - that provided identity outside the actual workplace. New technologies also offer the potential to develop dispersed communities of practice, less dependent on geographical location for contact, support and interchange.

#### **4.5.5 Dissemination and/or exploitation of results.**

FORUM was conceived as a network project to develop and support the community of practice in VET research. As such dissemination was seen as an integral and on-going activity involving interaction between FORUM project partners and researchers, practitioners and policy makers in VET in Europe. The project developed a multi faceted approach to the issue.

1. The network was opened to invited experts who were not part of the original project application. This allowed FORUM to access expertise and knowledge in wider areas of research and in new institutions, regions and countries. Invited experts were expected to pay their own costs for attending the meetings. In return participants were both entitled to fully participate in the workshops and to present work in progress for critical review by FORUM members. Experts also acted as a conduit for dissemination both to institutions and organisations and to other national and transnational projects. The success of this strategy may be seen in the many contributions from non-FORUM members to the products produced through the network project and to the dissemination of the project.

Workshop hosts were also encouraged to invite national experts and policy makers to workshop meetings held in their country.

2. A sub committee was formed to develop and manage the publications strategy for the project. This strategy had a three fold character:

a) Thematic publications by the different working groups. These include:

i) A series of working papers by the Changing Identities workgroup to be published in conjunction with Leeds Metropolitan University in the UK.

ii) A book to be published in autumn 2001 by the VET and the Labour Market workgroup

iii) A book to be published in conjunction with CEDEFOP in autumn 2001 by the Changing Organisations workgroup.

b) The development and publication of a series of dissemination papers. Whilst other FORUM products are in English language these have been produced in native languages to provide summaries of the overall project outcomes and policy implications for researchers and policy makers in each of the partner Member States. Partners are also seeking to publish these papers in journals and other VET publications in their country.

c) The publication of a book based on the overall project outcomes. The book includes contributions from each of the workgroups together with an introduction explaining the background to the FORUM network and a discussion and elucidation of the policy implications of the work of the project.

3. FORUM sought interaction and exchange with other national and transnational projects, networks and organisations as a means for dissemination of products and of key policy findings. The list is too long to include here but some examples may be given.

The Changing identities workgroup developed close links with a Socrates studies and Analysis project, Lifequal. The workgroup also developed links with another Framework 4 project, FAME.

The Changing organisations workgroup developed close links to the European Consortium for the Learning Organisation (ECLO) and with the CEDEFOP Research Arena (CEDRA).

Work undertaken by the VET cultures group was presented to a transnational network on education and culture.

The project had a series of interchanges with the European COST project on education and training. It also enjoyed close working relationships with the European Foundation and with CEDEFOP.

4. FORUM work was presented at national and transnational seminars, symposia and conferences. A series of presentations were made to the European Conference for Education Research (ECER).

5. FORUM members were particularly concerned that the work of the project should be available in the countries of East Europe. To this end a conference was jointly organised between FORUM and 'the Group' - an organisation of East European researchers in education and training - with the support of the European Training Foundation. This conference which attracted over 50 participants was held in Maribor in Slovenia in 1998. The network made sustained efforts to invite and support the participation of researchers from the East European countries.
6. A web site was developed for the project hosted by the Institut Technik und Bildung at the University of Bremen. This web site provided access to basic information on the work and outcomes of the project. In 2001 the project commissioned a new advanced interactive web site, providing access to over 60 papers and presentations and allowing users annotation of project papers.
7. The FORUM project hosted a major dissemination conference in Sweden in June 2001. Over 50 researchers and policy makers attended the conference from sixteen Member States and East European countries. The conference featured presentation of the work of the different working groups together with workshop sessions on the policy implications of the research.
8. Considerable follow up work is still in progress. FORUM has adopted a new constitution as an un-funded network following the period of TSER funding and is planning to meet twice a year, with a major emphasis on the opportunity to critically discuss research in progress in education and training. The working groups are continuing to discuss how the work can be advanced and disseminated following the end of the network funding. It is anticipated that a number of new publications will be developed in the forthcoming period. The web site is also continuing to be maintained.

## 5. Acknowledgements and references

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## 6. Annex 1: Overview of all papers presented on Forum Workshops

No	Location	Date	Title	Author
0	Athens	Feb 98	TSER-FORUM for European Research in VET - Aims, Tasks, Organisation, Management and Deliverables	Michael Kuhn
0	Athens	Feb 98	Notes on the Athens meeting (WS)	Massimo Tomassini
0	Evo	Jun 98	Contribution to the FORUM workshop	Per-Erik Ellström
0	Athens	Feb 98	Problematising the notion that national concepts of VET represent common values (WS)	Alan Brown
0	Athens	Feb 98	Need for VET to be considered from a Broad labour market perspective (WS)	Lorenz Lassnigg
0	Athens	Feb 98	Problematising the notion that VET institutions should always seek to link learning more closely to working (WS)	Alan Brown et al
0	Athens	Feb 98	Problematising school to work transitions (WS)	Alan Brown et al
0	Athens	Feb 98	Problematising the notion of the learning organisation (WS)	Alan Brown et al
0	Athens	Feb 98	Finnish involving in Tser -forum project (WS)	Anja Heikkinen
0	Athens	Feb 98	The Learning Organisation (WS)	Mike Kelleher
1	Evo	Jun 98	Changing VET Institutions Towards a Reference System for a trans -national Comparison	Michael Kuhn
1	Evo	Jun 98	The College as a Learning Organisation (WS)	Mike Kelleher
1	Evo	Jun 98	Changing VET -institutions (WP)	Loek Nieuwenhuis
1	Evo	Jun 98	Equality and VET (WS) 1 workshop report	Alan Brown
1	Evo	Jun 98	Learning colleges and learning teachers (WP)	Robert Simons
1	Evo	Jun 98	VET institutions for Local contexts and SME's networks Development (WP)	Massimo Tomassini
1	Evo	Jun 98	Innovation and VET - Institutions: A new rationale for VET -policies	Kurt Mayer
1	Evo	Jun 98	A note on the restructuring of the FORUM organisation (WS)	Nikitas Patiniotis
1	Evo	Jun 98	Offices and managers the Corporate Stand and Incorporation Researching VET from collaboration to News comparative approaches	Jenny Hughes
1	Evo	Jun 98	Background report on the introduction of L.O. principles in Greek SMEs, the example of the clothing sector (WS)	Sofia Spliotopoulou
1	Evo	Jun 98	Changing VET professionalism? (WP)	Anja Heikkinen
1	Evo	Jun 98	The public health nurse as an expert (WS)	Alan Brown et al
1	Evo	Jun 98	Functioning and quality of middle management in VET -colleges	Jittie Brandsma
2	Berlin	Okt 98	VET and labour market – Raising some research questions	Michael Kuhn, Wulf Heise
2	Berlin	Okt 98	From labour market Analysis to ...? (WP)	Mike Kelleher
2	Berlin	Okt 98	What are the differences between broad and small VET? On the labour market position of VET-school leavers (WP)	Mariett Jelema

2	Berlin	Okt 98	VET and labour market (WS) technological Courses in the Secondary schools from the model to the practice (WP)	Eduardo Figueira
2	Berlin	Okt 98	Between Work and Education. On the cultural shaping of vocational education and training (WP)	Per-Erik Ellström
2	Berlin	Okt 98	Focus on Local, Towards new policies for combating unemployment and reshaping VET Systems (WP)	Massimo Tomassini
2	Berlin	Okt 98	Transition from Initial Education to working Life in Austria What conclusions to draw from the political management of the current crisis?	Lorenz Lassnigg, Kurt Mayer
2	Berlin	Okt 98	Labour Market and Functioning of VET in Greece (WP)	Nikitas Patiniotis
2	Berlin	Okt 98	Workshop statement and workshop presentation paper	Agnes Dietzen
2	Berlin	Okt 98	Reflections on the use of the Rem environment by Forum members (WS)	Alan Brown
2	Berlin	Okt 98	Computer-mediated collaboration and knowledge transformation (DP)	Alan Brown
2	Berlin	Okt 98	VET and the labour market five statements from an outsider (WS)	Robert Simons
2	Berlin	Okt 98	Loose ends or new jobs. Organisational Strategies to improve access to employment for the low skilled.	Veerle Van de Velde
2	Berlin	Okt 98	Skills for the future (WS)	Hanna Shapiro
2	Berlin	Okt 98	Scenario setting as an approach to develop future oriented occupational profiles	Jittie Brandsma, Graham Attwell
3	Caceres	Feb 99	Metamorphosis of VET -Systems-how to compare VET -Systems and learning processes in industrial cultures	Gabriele Laske
3	Caceres	Feb 99	Social Dialogue and Human Resource Development (WS)	Mike Kelleher
3	Caceres	Feb 99	Culture, values and meanings (WS) Cultural Embeddedness of VET in Europe Research issues (WP)	Eduardo Figueira, Sandra Saude
3	Caceres	Feb 99	Conditions of knowledge creation and use in caring - The case of home help services in a Swedish Municipality (WP)	Bodil Ekhol, Eva Ellström
3	Caceres	Feb 99	Inter-organisational learning of VET Institutions	Massimo Tomassini
3	Caceres	Feb 99	New embeddedness of VET, the case of Spain	Florentino Entonado Blasquez
3	Caceres	Feb 99	Forging Links Between Educational Establishment and Enterprises (WP)	Nikitas Patiniotis
3	Caceres	Feb 99	Computer mediated collaboration and knowledge transformation for the European Vocational Education and Training Research Community	Alan Brown
3	Caceres	Feb 99	A network perspective on organizing work -related learning projects.	Rob Poell
3	Caceres	Feb 99	VET for social Inclusion (WS)	Sofia Spliotopoulou
3	Caceres	Feb 99	Cultural perspectives about working in EU -project (WS)	Anja Heikkinen
3	Caceres	Feb 99	VET as the co-constitutor of Europe as cultural project	Anja Heikkinen
3	Caceres	Feb 99	Knowledge at a gateway (WS)	Hanna Shapiro
3	Caceres	Feb 99	A nurse as a learner in clinical practice and statement paper Academic cultures and working in EU- projects	Palvi Palmu

4	Vienna	Jun 99	Vocational identity - a central element in the European concept of work	Gabriele Laske
4	Vienna	Jun 99	The impact of the structure of work and tasks on occupational identities - some thoughts on UK situation	Mike Kelleher
4	Vienna	Jun 99	Presentation on the thematic group Changing VET institutions on plenary session	Loek Nieuwenhuis
4	Vienna	Jun 99	Values and Professional aims of youngsters The case of highschool students in the municipality of Beja -Portugal	Sandra Saude, Eduardo Figueira, Vitor Gamboa
4	Vienna	Jun 99	Continuous improvements of work processes. A strategy for intergrating individual and organisational learning	Per-Erik Ellström
4	Vienna	Jun 99	VET and Social identity	Nikitas Patiniotis, Olympia Kaminioti
4	Vienna	Jun 99	A dynamic model of occupational identity formation	Alan Brown
4	Vienna	Jun 99	STATEMENT The transition from school to work and the development of a professional identity.	Veerle Van de Velde
4	Vienna	Jun 99	New occupational identities in VET in order to manage change	Sofia Spliotopoulou
4	Vienna	Jun 99	Occupational identity as a personal cultural project - theoretical considerations. Implications for VET in Europe?	Anja Heikkenen
4	Vienna	Jun 99	The role of accrediting work -based prior learning within the French VET system	M'hammed Dif
4	Vienna	Jun 99	Transitions in individual life careers, the development of identities and the role of lifelong learning	Jittie Brandsma
4	Vienna	Jun 99	Broad occupational expertise and identity formation	Jeroen Onstenk
5	Evora	Nov 99	How to conceptualise Organisational Learning in the Company	Martin Fischer
5	Evora	Nov 99	Advances and paradoxes of corporate learning practices	Peter Cressey Mike Kelleher
5	Evora	Nov 99	Flexible craftsmanship or critical reflection?	Marianne van Woerkom
5	Evora	Nov 99	Innovation and Learning in agricultural SME's	Loek Nieuwenhuis P.M Gielen ,H.Smulders
5	Evora	Nov 99	Learning and learning organisations concepts and realities	madalena Pregoica, Eduardo Figueira
5	Evora	Nov 99	VET in chaos	Jenny Hughes, Graham Attwell
5	Evora	Nov 99	Learning in Production Systems - A Study of Learning and Operator Work in Highly Automated Manufacturing and Processing Industry	Bo Davidson, Per - Olaf Svedin
5	Evora	Nov 99	Integrating Learning and Work Problems and Prospects	Per-Erik Ellström
5	Evora	Nov 99	Spaces for training and development interventions in support of knowledge -oriented management	Massimo Tomassini
5	Evora	Nov 99	Institutional Learning Amongst the Austrian Social Partners	Bernd Baumgartl, Kurt Mayer
5	Evora	Nov 99	Competing perspectives on workplace learning and the learning organisation	Alan Brown, Ewart Keep
5	Evora	Nov 99	HRD Consultant Roles in different types of organisations	Alan Brown, Ewart

				Keep
5	Evora	Nov 99	STATEMENT Globalisation, division of labour and training needs from a company view.	Katrien Van Valckenborgh
5	Evora	Nov 99	STATEMENT Dissemination of knowledge and competencies within innovation networks.	Katrien Van Valckenborgh
5	Evora	Nov 99	Development, Enskilling, Learning Organisation Package	Elena Manolakaki
5	Evora	Nov 99	Evaluators of VET services and managers of didactic processes?	Anja Heikkenen
5	Evora	Nov 99	Innovation of The Danish VET System - Reform 2000 The Bornholm Experiment	Hanne Shapiro
5	Evora	Nov 99	Researching Learning environments in knowledge intense companies on the European arena - the search for a European dimension in the construction of learning in organisations	Rob Poell
5	Evora	Nov 99	About how organisations learn how organisations learn. Basic elements of one theory of learning and organisation development.	Hans Werner Franz
5	Evora	Nov 99	Learning in the Workplace - Situated, collaborative and self-directed dimensions and some implications for the new roles of VET professionals	John Konrad
5	Evora	Nov 99	HRD and VET Traditions in Europe and Community of Practice criteria	Barry Nyhan
5	Evora	Nov 99	Appraisal forms a motivating aspect for Teachers operating within the Learning Organisation	Anne Temple
5	Evora	Nov 99	Role of employee - self directed learning versus employer directed learning within a learning organisation in a French context	M'hammed Dif
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	New concepts within Dual VET – approaches to evaluation (the example of the BLK project)	Dirk Stieglitz
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	Evaluating from a learning organisation perspective	Jenny Hughes Michael Kelleher
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	Evaluation criteria for the development of VET -systems	Loek Nieuwenhuis Jittie Brandsma
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	VET and employment -policies for co-ordination- A basic framework for a FORUM publication	Lorenz Lassnigg
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	Quality assurance in education in the context of changing VET institutions -European perspectives	Nikitas Patiniotis
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	STATEMENT Should modules become building blocks for education in Flanders ?	Mia Douterlungne, Katrien Van Valckenborgh
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	Policies and practices affecting youth without qualifications.	Mia Douterlungne, Katrien Van Valckenborgh
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	European employment projects in Greece /changes in Evaluation	Sofia Spiliotopoulou
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	Innovation of the Danish VET System – reform 2000	Hanne Shapiro
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	Evaluation Conceptual framework and operationalisation in central and eastern Europe	Bernd Baumgartl
6	Bucharest	Feb 00	The restructuring of the pre - University vocational and technical education in Romania , Ministry of national Education Indicators and Benchmarks on quality of school education	Alexandru Constantin Modrescu
7	Wales	Jun 00	Learning organisations and labour markets - a reflection	Mike Kelleher
7	Wales	Jun 00	Tacit knowledge and VET”	Eduardo Figueira

7	Wales	Jun 00	Developing social identities in a period of change A FORUM policy document	Jenny Hughes, Graham Attwell
7	Wales	Jun 00	Some comments on the FORUM framework paper VET and employment -policies for co-ordination by Lassnigg, Di etzen & Mayer	Per- Eric Ellström
7	Wales	Jun 00	Statement paper Reply to the L.O. group	Massimo Tomassini
7	Wales	Jun 00	VET and employment -policies for co-ordination	Lorenz Lassnigg
7	Wales	Jun 00	Approaching a Learning Economy? Changing VET - Employment relations in the Post -Fordist paradigm	Kurt Mayer
7	Wales	Jun 00	Statement paper Relations between VET and employment in Greece	Nikitas Patiniotis
7	Wales	Jun 00	VET and employment -policies for co-ordination The Development of New Competencies as a Challenge for VET and Employment Systems	Agnes Dietzen
7	Wales	Jun 00	Additional qualifications at the Interfacce between initial and continuing training	Georg Hanf
7	Wales	Jun 00	Changing professional identities in the UK National Health service a study of the skill implications of changes in the patterns of work of radiographers and physiotherapists	Alan Brown
7	Wales	Jun 00	Transition from school to work	Veerle Van De Velde
7	Wales	Jun 00	The passage from pilot project to mainstream applications in employment and VET	Sofia Spliotopoulou
7	Wales	Jun 00	On the Emerging models of labour flexibility within the French continuing Vocational training Institution Implications for inclusions, skill and identity formation	M'hammed DIF
7	Wales	Jun 00	The French Baccalauréat and its impact on the change of VET - identity	Bénédicte Gendron
7	Wales	Jun 00	Identity formation and learning in work settings A continuing investigation	Jeron Onstenk
7	Wales	Jun 00	Change, social partnership and learning in organisations	Mike Kelleher, Peter Cressey
7	Wales	Jun 00	Pursuing and Exploring Developmental Learning at Work: The ApeL Model	Lennart Svensson, Carina Aberg, Per - Erik Ellström
7	Wales	Jun 00	Working towards a convergence between the educational and economic field: Perspectives of the Greek paradigm	Nikitas Patiniotis
7	Wales	Jun 00	Innovation in performance measuring systems -Casey study Denmark"Ws statement (IDEC) "Learning in learning organisations"Statement paper	Sofia Spliotopoulou
7	Wales	Jun 00	Culture, Values and Meanings - difficulties to find a job encountered by women graduates of humanistic studies and arts/ additional skills needed	Christine Lamprou, Rula Gouveri
7	Wales	Jun 00	Learning in multicultural environment.	Panos Kenderlis
7	Wales	Jun 00	How two Danish VET -colleges implemented the Q -concept for quality assessment and improvement in 1997 -Appendix Innovation in performance measuring systems –Casey study Denmark	Hanne Shapiro
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	Pursuing and Exploring Developmental Learning at Work: The ApeL Model	Lennart Svensson, Carina Aberg, Per - Erik Ellström

8	Wageningen	Nov 00	Working towards a convergence between the educational and economic field: Perspectives of the Greek paradigm	Nikitas Patiniotis
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	Ws statement (IDEC) "Learning in learning organisations"	Sofia Spliotopoulou
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	Culture, Values and Meanings - difficulties to find a job encountered by women graduates of humanistic studies and arts/ additional skills needed.	Christine Lamprou, Rula Gouveri
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	Learning in multicultural environment.	Panos Kenderlis
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	How two Danish VET -colleges implemented the Q -concept for quality assessment and improvement in 1997 -Appendix	Hanne Shapiro
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	Innovation in performance measuring systems –Casey study Denmark.	Hanne Shapiro
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	Social Learning through Social Intervention. The evolution of sfs towards a learning organisation	Hans-Werner Franz
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	ICT as support for knowledge development in communities of practice	Graham Attwell
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	Self-Training & Recognition of Learning for Training Professionals	Marta Alves
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	Change, social partnership and learning in organisations	Peter Cressey
8	Wageningen	Nov 00	ICT-support in SME network learning	Tom Smits
9	Rome	Feb 01	Dissemination and impact: the messages of the FORUM project for education and training research in Europe	Michael Kuhn
9	Rome	Feb 01	Learning in organisations	Mike Kelleher
9	Rome	Feb 01	VET and Culture	Eduardo Figueira
9	Rome	Feb 01	VET and the Labour Market	Lorenz Lassnigg
9	Rome	Feb 01	Changing institutions	Loek Nieuwenhuis
9	Rome	Feb 01	Changing Identities	Graham Attwell
10	Norrköping	Jun 01	Introduction to the objectives and activities of the FORUM TSER Network	Michael Kuhn
10	Norrköping	Jun 01	Vocational education and training, culture, meanings and values	Eduardo Figueira
10	Norrköping	Jun 01	Changing VET institutions	Loek Nieuwenhuis
10	Norrköping	Jun 01	The implications of research for policy development and implication and for the development of a European pathway for education and training	Robert Jan Simons, Anja Heikkinen
10	Norrköping	Jun 01	VET and the Labour Market	Lorenz Lassnigg
10	Norrköping	Jun 01	Changing Identities	Graham Attwell

10	Norrköping	Jun 01	Information Technology and skill requirements	Christer Marking
10	Norrköping	Jun 01	Learning in Learning Organisations	Massimo Tomassini, Per-Erik Ellström Robert Jan Simons
10	Norrköping	Jun 01	The implications of research for policy development and implication and for the development of a European pathway for education and training	Alan Brown, Agnes Dietzen
10	Norrköping	Jun 01	Vocation education and training in Europe – ways forward in developing research, policy and practice – facilitator	Michael Kuhn

