

TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

FRENCH DIMENSIONS

A NEWSLETTER FROM CEREQ
AND ITS ASSOCIATED CENTRES

Vocational Education and Training for Operatives

A Comparative Study of **European** Systems

Research on initial vocational education and training for operatives frequently opposes countries, such as France, where it is mainly provided by schools, to those, such as West Germany, where the firms **are** much more **involved**. It is a fact that their involvement gives additional credibility to initial vocational education and training **and** allows it to develop in an autonomous way, leading to good **skilled jobs**. However, a recent extensive study carried out by **CEREQ** on the Building/Civil Engineering sector **in** four European countries (**West Germany, Italy, United Kingdom and France**) showed that **the** divide between school **and** firms is only one aspect **of** the **question**. In order to understand the organization of initial vocational education and training, it has to be **related** to the education system as a whole, and to labour market mechanisms as **well**. **In fact**, three training "**models**" emerge : **the** market-led **industry-based** model, strictly geared to short term labour market shifts, and the training-led **school-based and industry-based** models, **which** tend to anticipate both a quantitative **and** qualitative supply and demand for labour.

No 1

Autumn 1990

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TOGUTONAL **EDUCA- TION AND TRAINING FOR OPERATIVES**

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CEREQ

A FRENCH RESEARCH CENTRE
FOR ANALYSIS OF OCCUPATIONS AND OF

THE MARKET-LED INDUSTRY-BASED MODEL : GREAT-BRITAIN AND ITALY

THE market-led industry-based model can be seen in direct continuity to the traditional craft system in which training is a major feature. It is highly dependant on the labour market and loosely Institutionalized. In so far as an "institutionalized" system can be considered one in which the norms which define it are subject to consensus on the part of the social partners involved, whether this consensus be interiorized or imposed by law, then the scope of institutionalization of the market-led industry-based model can be regarded as limited.

In Italy and United Kingdom, especially in the Building/Civil Engineering sector, training is mainly based on apprenticeship. In the United Kingdom in particular, it was once compulsory in order to obtain skilled jobs. The definition of the training programmes closely follows the trades. Thus, the education and training system can only absorb technological changes with difficulty, due to the risk of putting into question the "frontiers" between trades. The training supply is strictly proportional to the evolution of the number of people in a given trade, and the number of apprenticeship places dropped by 60 % over the last decade.

When off-the-job training is provided it may be via evening classes, outside normal working hours and attendance is neither controlled nor respected. The basic approach remains "work-based learning". Furthermore, there is no obligatory examination nor certificate at the end of apprenticeship. At best it is acknowledged in United Kingdom that the apprenticeship time has been served. Training is quite heterogeneous, both in quantity and quality. There is little collective commitment by the industry or the state. Training mostly depends on individual efforts both on the part of the firms (not all of them provide it) and apprentices themselves. Even when it is defined, the apprentice's status is not guaranteed. The distinction between an apprentice and a young worker may be quite vague, by lack of trade union supervision in United Kingdom or of personal bonds in Italy. Oral agreements may be the only form of commitment.

THE TRAINING-LED MODELS : FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY

BY comparison German vocational education and training models

are characterized by the emphasis placed on teaching methods and contents, which do not just amount to work-based learning, and by a high degree of institutionalization, under State impetus in the former case (training-led school-based model), by means of consensus between social groups in the latter (training-led industry-based model). Thereby, specificities linked to trades and firms are lessened, with the educational prospect of going beyond particular short-term needs and quality requirements. In both countries, initial vocational education and training are highly organized, whether they be provided by apprenticeship (prevailing in West Germany) or by the educational system (prevailing in France). The evolution of laws on apprenticeship (the 1971 Act in France, the 1969 Act in West Germany) clearly shows the authorities' preoccupation with guaranteeing and expanding the scope of education and training by exerting influence upon the content and progression, including on-the-job training.

In France and West Germany, the apprenticeship contract is a particular form of employment contract, which states precisely the contents and duration of training as well as curriculum and remuneration. School attendance is compulsory and monitored. The apprentice's log book in France and the federal statute on education in West Germany, specify the articulation between periods spent in school and in the firm. Moreover, in the latter country, the apprentice must fill in regularly a log which can be used, if necessary, to make the employers meet their obligations. In France, the works' committees have just to be informed about apprentices, whereas they supervise them in West Germany.

Vocational school teachers are university graduates for the general subjects. They are ex-professionals for the technical subjects and especially the practical teaching. To take on apprentices in West Germany, the company director or one of his associates must have a title asserting both vocational skills and a minimal required level of competence to teaching (e.g. the title of "Handwerksmeister" in West Germany).

Direct contribution to productive activities amounts to little more than one quarter to one third of the apprenticeship period, respectively to France and West Germany. The vocational school period can be done either in training centres of big firms or, more frequently, in inter-firm apprentice workshops. In both cases, it is regarded as the means of compensating for too marked a division of labour or specialization within the firms.

In both countries, vocational education and training courses lead to national diplomas to all acknowledged specialities. Programmes are regularly amended to take into account

technological changes. There is a tendency for the number of diplomas to be reduced, along with a concern to avoid too great a specialization. Trade-unions and employers work together to define education, training and diplomas, as well as to specify the way these are to be delivered.

TRAINING-LED SCHOOL-BASED AND INDUSTRY-BASED MODELS

A PART from these similarities, which are furthermore, seldom underlined, the French and German models differ as to the role played by the firms, which is predominant in the German "dual system", but minor in France, where the school-based vocational education and training system is both widespread and common.

The high degree of institutionalization of the French model is shown by the extensive school network which exists in addition to the apprenticeship system, especially in building trades. Because of the predominance of schools, which provide a regular influx of trained people, the education and training supply is disconnected from the labour market situation. However, the articulation with the productive system is problematic and the integration period is lengthened. This is all the more true, that not all of the firms acknowledge this kind of training.

In the German training-led industry-based model, closer links with the firms make it theoretically possible for an apprentice to accede rapidly to a skilled job. Diplomas are taken into account in Job classifications. However, because it is more dependant on the labour market situation, access to education and training can sometimes be harder. Therefore, the authorities support the firms which provide education and training. They do so by means of equipment subsidies or by incentive to create inter-firms apprentice workshops. Furthermore, a federal law makes it compulsory to attend an educational establishment, at least part-time, up to the age of 18.

DIVERSIFIED EVOLUTIONS

IN United Kingdom and West Germany, full-time school-based education and training amounts to a very small part of the vocational training. The firms play a leading role in these systems and have no obligation to train. In both countries, apprenticeship seems to be

highly valued, to enjoy a large degree of autonomy as regards general education, and to be recognized as compulsory to obtain skilled jobs. These jobs can be defined as "good jobs" as far as remunerations are concerned, even if they are sometimes abandoned (e.g. in the Building/Civil Engineering sector).

On the contrary, the French and Italian initial vocational education and training systems operate under constant pressure from the general education system, the model to which they are referred. Devalued within the school system itself, they give no further guarantee as to the classification of the jobs they lead to. In France and to Italy (to a lesser extent because of strong regional disparities), especially to the Building/Civil Engineering sector, these jobs are seldom sought after and are, moreover, poorly considered.

It is therefore no wonder that initial vocational education and training systems evolved to quite diverse directions during the last few years. Faced with an increasing level of unemployment amongst youth, the central governments emphasized the role of vocational education and training within employment policies.

In West Germany, initial vocational education and training for operatives underwent no major changes. Despite criticisms about the quality of the system and the type of trades supplying apprenticeship places, the system proved its capacity to develop. The main tendencies are for the number of specialities taught to be reduced and the training period to be lengthened. Thus, the number of specialities dropped from 48 to 14 in the engineering, while the training period in building trades was changed from 33 to 36 months. However, attendance at full-time classes has increased rapidly to recent years. It seems to act as a "holding" mechanism, for a number of young people waiting for apprenticeship places. Nevertheless, because of the decrease to numbers of all age-groups, the "dual system" will have, to the future, to incorporate categories of young people which are now mostly excluded (women, immigrants).

The French system has evolved to three directions, towards a new definition of initial education and training for operatives, an expanded role of apprenticeship, and a better linkage between the educational and productive systems. Vocational "baccalaureats" (equivalent to A-level) have been created to reassert the value of initial education and training. They constitute an important means of progression for CAP (vocational training certificate) and BEP (vocational education certificate) holders. The 1987 Act expanded the role of apprenticeship. It can now lead to technical and vocational

diplomas above those of level V (1). Furthermore, **successive** contracts can be signed, which increase the education and training period. Last, but not **least**, the relations between the **Ministry** of National Education and the firms, which were **traditionally difficult**, have greatly **improved**, due to a **multiplicity** of measures taken **during** the last decade. Simultaneously, the importance and specificity of the firms' **contribution** to education and **training** tends to be better understood and more widely **admitted**.

The Italian system appears to be the most impeded. Because of the drastic fall in the number of apprentices and the crisis of the education system as well (including vocational education and **training**), young people have great **difficulty** in entering the labour **market**. Their unemployment rate is the highest amongst all European countries. Apart from frequently **discussed**, never applied general reform plans, the main **attempt** to modify the education and training methods consisted in **introducing** "employment-training agreements". Successful to a **certain extent**, these contracts encounter the same problem as apprenticeship. Although compulsory, the educational part is not **respected**. It is especially true in Italy that these contracts constitute the means of providing firms with cheap labour, **owing** to the mode of **remuneration**.

The British system underwent **radical** alteration when the Youth Training Scheme (CHS) was **introduced**, in 1983. The **authorities'** main concern was to reduce the level of youth **unemployment**, by means of **providing** new **opportunities** of training within **industry**. As an **incentive** to **enroll**, partial reimbursement of training expenses supported by the firms was **decided**, provided that **minimal engagements** be met. These are related to the school-based training **period**, which is to take place during

(1) The **level V** is the lowest **level** of vocational certificates in the French system

working **hours**, **obligatory** practical competence tests at the end of the **YTS** contract which can last either one or two years, and to the obligation to abide to **normalized programmes**, aimed at producing transferable skills. If YTS does not take the place of **apprenticeship**, it is henceforth accepted as the first six months or the first year **in some sectors**, among which the **Building/Civil Engineering** sector. These measures can be regarded as major **improvements**, since they tend to **make** education and training more homogeneous. **However**, it seems they have not succeeded **in** supplying greater educational **opportunities** for all the young people **concerned**. The principles that are at the very basis of the Scheme are **still** debated, **by** trade-unions and employers as well. The upholders **of the** traditional system do not wish to see training imposed on firms. They believe labour market **mechanisms** alone **will** provide skilled workers to meet the demand for labour. On the **contrary**, others consider the traditional system proved incapable of incorporating technological change •

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