

Research project:

Vocational education and training at Levels 5 to 7 in the European Qualifications Framework (H-VET) - comparative analysis of the mapping of qualifications in different countries of the EU

In brief

Observing and analysing European vocational education policy and its impacts on policy and practice, as well as documenting the effectiveness of vocational education and training (VET) in the international context, are core tasks of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, BIBB) and constitute a thematic focus for its international comparative research.

This project links in with these strands of work, and turns a focus on aspects of the steering of VET and the comparative European understanding of “vocational” education. The project concentrates on two specific content focuses that are interlinked. An analysis is carried out of the development of the tertiary education sector against the background of its embedding in the national qualifications framework (NQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Linking these two fields of research enables conclusions that provide indications regarding the similarity and comparability of qualifications in this educational sphere. Comparison of these results with the qualifications that the Member States have referenced to the European Qualification Framework (EQR) is used to determine the degree of heterogeneity between the occupational qualifications on Levels 5 to 7 of the EQF. The extent and scope of this heterogeneity and its visibility will ultimately determine if the EQF is suitable as a tool for increasing transparency.

The tertiary education sector has observably been developing comparatively dynamically in recent years. Numerous countries are introducing or expanding educational programmes that contain both vocational and academic elements, which in some cases also lead to the acquisition of double qualifications. The great variety of "dual" training offers in the tertiary education sector is attributable, among other things, to the need for compatibility with the respective national structures at the upper secondary level of education. It is also likely that the traditional governance structures of the educational systems play a decisive role in these developments.

This reality of diverse education programmes in the tertiary sector comes up against regulatory classification instruments which are intended to help to systematise this diversity. At the same time, there are very divergent national approaches to framing the relationship of vocational to academic qualifications at the higher levels of the NQFs, both in terms of the basic structure and with regard to the descriptors and descriptor types.

The core focus of the research project will be investigating the following questions:

- What common international developments are evident in the tertiary education sector? Can different types of "dual" training offers be identified? Are they a part of the university or the vocational education system? What common features denote training as both "vocational" and "professional" in the tertiary education sector? To what extent are the structure and organisation of "dual" training offers in the tertiary education sector based on traditional national vocational education concepts?
- What central control mechanisms lead to the respective structuring of the NQR at the higher qualification levels, what fundamental educational policies and aims are decisive in defining this structure? How are "dual" training offers assessed in the national qualification framework and has "vocational education" become more visible as the result of development of a qualification framework in Europe?

Among other things, the project is designed to include six country-specific case studies. Final selection of the countries will take place during the initial phase of the project. In this process, it will be important to include countries with vocational education concepts similar to Germany's, such as Austria and Switzerland, as well as countries with different ways of organising their vocational education systems. The countries must also have a national qualification framework. The short list currently includes Austria, Finland, France, England, Ireland and Poland.

Project duration

Q I/2014 to Q II/2016

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