

vocational education and training in Scotland and France a comparative study



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training in Scotland and France
a comparative study

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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Background | 2 |
| VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN FRANCE | 3 |
| Compulsory education | 3 |
| Upper secondary curriculum | 4 |
| National Educational and Vocational guidance | 4 |
| National Vocational Qualifications | 5 |
| Core skills | 5 |
| Vocational training providers | 7 |
| Government initiatives | 10 |
| Vocational discovery courses | 11 |
| VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SCOTLAND | 12 |
| Compulsory education | 12 |
| Upper secondary curriculum | 12 |
| National Educational and Vocational Guidance..... | 13 |
| National vocational qualifications | 13 |
| Core Skills..... | 14 |
| Vocational Training providers | 15 |
| Government initiatives | 18 |
| Skills for Work courses | 20 |
| Key findings..... | 22 |
| References and sources..... | 24 |

A Comparative Study of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in France and Scotland

Background

The Franco-Scottish Vocational Education and Training (VET) Expert Group was set up under the auspices of the Co-operation Agreement in education and training between Scotland and France, signed by Ministers from both countries in Paris on 30 November 2004. There have been 2 meetings to date with our French partners, in June 2006 and February 2007.

Objectives

The wish of the Expert Group is that the study focuses on the age group of 14-19 and particular aspects of VET which have evoked most interest in discussions between the partners e.g. Skills for Work and the French equivalent(s) for pre-vocational preparation, + 16-19 vocational provision in both systems.

Dissemination

It is the intention to launch the study at the HMIE Skills for Work good practice conference on 7 September 2007, where the Deputy Director of Vocational Education from the French Ministry of Education has been invited to give a presentation and lead a workshop.

Vocational Education and Training in France

Compulsory education

Education in France is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16. It is divided into three stages:

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Primary education | Ages 6-11 |
| Lower secondary education (<i>collège</i>) | Ages 12-15 |
| Upper secondary education in either General and technological <i>lycée</i> or vocational <i>lycée</i> | Compulsory between ages 15 and 16 |

Lower secondary

Education at a *collège* lasts for four years, corresponding to what are known as the sixth, fifth, fourth and third classes respectively (6^{ème} - 3^{ème}).

The *collège* is organised into three pedagogical cycles:

- the observation and adaptation cycle in the 6^{ème}, a transition between primary school and *collège*
- the middle consolidation cycle, in the 5^{ème} and 4^{ème}, aims to deepen the knowledge and work skills of pupils
- the “orientation” and vocational guidance cycle in the 3^{ème}, rounds off what has been acquired and prepares pupils for the following general, technological and vocational education.

On completion of their *collège* schooling, pupils are awarded a *brevet* (national certificate) on the basis of their marks in the final two years (fourth and third classes) and a national examination. The *brevet* is not a compulsory qualification and continuation of their schooling in a *lycée* is not dependent on their passing the examination, but on having successfully completed the 3^{ème}.

Giving marks for school life

Teaching pupils to have a sense of civic responsibility is recognised as one of the major challenges for the education system. *La note de vie scolaire* (giving marks for school life) is part of this educational approach which concerns all aspects of schooling at *collège*. It becomes an element of pupil evaluation in itself, as well as for the award of the (national certificate). It is intended to reinforce the value of positive attitudes towards school and others.

Progression

For entry to a *lycée*, pupils are offered three educational options:

- general studies;
- technological studies;
- vocational training.

Upper secondary and post-secondary level

| | |
|--|------------------|
| <i>Lycée d'enseignement général et technologique</i> | Ages 15/16-18 |
| <i>Lycée professionnel</i> | Ages 15/16-17/19 |

Education at a *lycée* lasts for at least two years, from the 2nd to the final class: 2^{nde} to Terminale.

Upper secondary curriculum

General and technological *lycées* prepare pupils over 3 years to sit one of three general baccalaureates (economic and social, literary, or scientific), a technological baccalaureate (one of eight categories) or a *brevet de technicien* (vocational training certificate). Pupils having obtained a vocational training certificate can enter into working life or continue their studies in higher education vocational sections or in an *Institut Universitaire Technologique* (IUT).

The *lycée professionnel* combines general education with a high level of specialised technical knowledge, and always includes an in-company placement. It prepares students in two years for the first level of vocational qualification, corresponding to the *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP or vocational aptitude certificate) or *brevet d'études professionnelles* (BEP or technical school certificate). Both these qualifications are at Level V but the distinction lies in the content of the programmes. The CAP concentrates more on the vocational training aspect, as it is intended for those entering directly into employment, while the BEP concentrates more on general education, as it is intended for those continuing their studies.

At the end of this initial vocational training, students may study for a vocational baccalaureate (*baccalauréat professionnel*) for another two years, which can then lead to direct employment or to further study, such as for the *brevet de technicien supérieur* (BTS.)

National Educational and Vocational guidance

The main source of guidance is the *Centres d'Information et D'Orientation* (CIO), or Vocational information and guidance centres, which are under the authority of the Ministry of National Education and are located throughout the country, with one centre for each recruitment zone of usually 2/3 *lycées*.

Each CIO has a base of documents on studies, professional training programmes, qualifications and professions that people can consult, but they also offer personalised guidance and foster the exchange of ideas between the educational system, parents, young people, local decision-makers and economic authorities.

Guidance counsellor-psychologists (*conseiller d'orientation-psychologue*)

The guidance counsellor-psychologists, who are attached to the CIOs, work mainly with pupils in secondary schools, young people seeking to enter a profession and university students. They also help adults seeking further education and training. Their goal is to help people develop their guidance plan using different techniques: individual interviews, group discussions, evaluations, etc. They work as individual guidance counsellors and on the pedagogical team of *collèges* and *lycées*.

National Vocational Qualifications

The state awards a single nationally recognised vocational diploma, which has the same worth whether it is acquired through initial training (either full-time at school or on-the-job training), through professional development, or through accreditation of work experience. These diplomas are listed on the RNCP database (*répertoire national des certifications professionnelles*.)

Legal framework

The law defines the role of stakeholders and the framework for action: the central level (the State and Inspectorate) creates and manages diplomas, the regional (*académie*) level (local authority and local inspectorate) organise exams within the national framework. The other stakeholder is the exam panel ("*jury*") which is nominated by the regional Director of Education ("*recteur*") and is made up of professional representatives and teachers and which validates diplomas.

The development of vocational qualifications

The content and standards of all national vocational qualifications are worked out in partnership with the economic sector concerned, within consultative vocational committees or CPCs (*commissions professionnelles consultatives*). These are consultative bodies where all the stakeholders (the State, employer representatives and employee representatives as well as practitioners) work in partnership in the development, review and constant updating of vocational qualifications, from the CAP-BEP at the first level (level V) to the BTS (level III.)

There are 14 CPCs, corresponding to the main business sectors, which also monitor the labour market. It is the CPCs which draw up the frame of reference from which the qualifications are then developed, and which is defined in terms of the skills, competencies and knowledge to be acquired. The frame of reference for the vocational qualifications forms the basis for the development of teaching strategies, adapted to the type of candidates, and for the organisation of the certification.

The role of industry

Industry contributes to the development of qualifications, provides work placements, contributes to the funding of training through taxes, and belongs to the panels ("*les jurys*") which award qualifications in partnership with the state.

Core skills

The common core of knowledge and skills was established by the 11 July 2006 decree and now provides the main basis for drafting the national curricula.

The seven major skills that schools undertake to impart are:

- proficiency in French;
- knowledge of a foreign language;
- background in mathematics and science;
- openness towards information technologies;
- knowledge of the humanities;
- social and civic skills;
- independence and initiative.

This is an entirely new development in France. The National Ministry of Education has defined what each pupil should achieve in terms of core skills when they exit from the end of each phase of compulsory school, that is, primary, secondary, lycée etc.

Savoir-être

An interesting component of the vocational qualifications in France is that they all include *savoir-être* (professional attitudes and behaviour) as well as *savoir-faire* (the skills required at various levels.)

Awarding of diplomas

Diplomas are obtained in three different ways:

1. candidates sit an external exam (written, oral and practical) usually in June
2. candidates undergo continuous internal assessment
3. candidates can have their professional experience validated (la Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience VAE)

Generally school pupils, apprentices and those doing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in a public establishment are assessed by external and internal assessment, or totally internal. Other types of candidate are only assessed externally. However, the skills and competences being judged are identical. The candidate can keep their grades for five years and only sit exams in the subjects where they failed.

Continuous assessment has been an extremely important development for vocational education. Trainers find it easier to show pupils that what they are doing is recognised during the training which helps to motivate them. It also allows teachers to adapt the assessments to the rhythm of learning of the candidates.

The VAE (Recognition of Prior Learning) option is for those who have worked for 3 years in a particular profession, as an employee or doing voluntary work, and have to demonstrate the same skills to the same exam panel as those taking the diploma by the other two routes. This is done by means of a dossier, with an interview if deemed necessary. All candidates are offered the opportunity of mentoring and guidance throughout this process.

Initial vocational qualifications

The first level qualifications, which can be taken at vocational secondary school, apprenticeship training centre or other training provider are: *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP or vocational aptitude certificate) or *brevet d'études professionnelles* (BEP or technical school certificate).

The CAP gives practical knowledge in specific sectors and makes it possible to immediately begin practising a profession. For certain sectors, such as construction, wood, furnishing, hotels, custodial services, handcrafts, artistic professions, the CAP guarantees and attests to the mastery of professional techniques and capacities. In other sectors, however, such as electronics, secretarial work and accounting, a CAP is insufficient. In these cases, additional training is necessary: a CAP can be augmented by another diploma with a *mention complémentaire* (MC or additional specialisation) or through a *formation complémentaire d'initiative locale* (FCIL or local initiative training programme.)

The BEP is different in that it teaches higher technological standards in sectors requiring an increased level of technological skills and is more suitable for those pupils wishing to continue their studies with the goal of obtaining a professional or technological baccalauréat.

Vocational Baccalaureate

Pupils who have the CAP or BEP may then go on to study for a further two years for a *baccalauréat professionnel* (vocational baccalaureate) in one of 48 specialised fields on offer. This gives access to higher education studies, as well as providing direct access to employment. It is a 2-year course, which can be taken in either the *lycée professionnel* or a *centre de formation d'apprentis* (C.F.A.). For adults, the GRETAs (the network of continuing vocational training providers) can also lead to the vocational baccalaureate, the CAP and the BEP.

The baccalaureate is achieved either by examinations (*épreuves ponctuelles*) and/or continuous assessment (*contrôle en cours de formation CCF*) or by the VAE (Recognition of Prior Learning) process.

Vocational training providers

The routes to these vocational qualifications are therefore optional:

- either full-time training in a vocational secondary school
- or on-the-job apprenticeship with part-time study at a training centre

In the vocational secondary school there are:

- Close links between content of academic and vocational programmes
- Compulsory work placements
- Cross-curricular team-working in small groups (PPCP)

- Development of citizenship education
- Close links between training and evaluation

A new vocational multi-disciplinary project has been developed called PPCP (*un projet pluri-disciplinaire à caractère professionnelle*) which consists of the students acquiring the knowledge and/or competences required in concrete vocational situations. The project activities involve several curriculum areas as well as working in specific vocational settings, and are carried out in teams, both of teachers and students, although each student is also accompanied individually.

The « *chef de travaux* » (curriculum manager) has a very important dual role within the vocational secondary school. These are advisors who help the head teacher to develop the training on offer, to set up the teaching teams in the areas for which they have responsibility and to keep abreast of the latest vocational developments. They also manage the teachers, timetables, and resources in their area, and play a major role in partnerships with the world of work.

Apprenticeship option

Another route for training is *apprentissage*, a programme that divides the pupils' time between school and work under contract. Most learning takes place inside companies, with theoretical studies mainly offered through *centres de formation d'apprentis* (CFA), or apprenticeship training centres. Since January 2005, because of the importance placed by the government on the development of apprenticeships, it has been possible for all local public teaching establishments (EPLE - *établissements publics locaux d'enseignement*) to open apprenticeship training sections or *unités de formation par apprentissage* (UFA.) In both cases, it is the head of the educational establishment is responsible for the programme.

In the CFA young people follow a work-based training route with a work contract (*contrat de travail*) but with the same qualifications and same training content as the school-based route. The apprentices have direct experience of the world of work (65-70% of their time is spent in the workplace), are paid a wage and have theory plus practical experience in the CFA. The legal age for taking up an Apprenticeship and signing the contract is 16 (16 to 25) and the training is tailored to build upon the skills acquired in the workplace.

French employers pay the apprenticeship levy ("*taxe d'apprentissage*") to help fund initial vocational training. When an employer takes on an apprentice the company benefits from a financial incentive through a tax reduction. The role of the Apprentice Master (*maître d'apprentissage*) in a firm is very important, as this person has to identify the right people within the firm to take charge of any apprentices.

Figures for 2005 show 723,900 students in the vocational secondary schools and 369,000 apprentices taking on-the-job training. For vocational school pupils a legal framework determines how much time is spent in the workplace

(eg 12-16 weeks over 2 years for a CAP) whereas the work contract signed by the apprentice determines how much time is spent in the work place. It is usually about 70 weeks over 2 years for a CAP.

Vocational secondary school or Apprenticeship Training Centre?

Traditionally certain sectors such as arts and crafts, construction and catering have preferred the apprenticeship route to work, whereas the vocational secondary schools have had a better “image” because of the greater number of hours spent on general education. However, what remains the most important for companies is that the pupil has obtained a diploma, which, after all, has the same value whichever route has been taken.

The answer to this question could come from the recently created *lycée des métiers* – the principal tool for improving the image of vocational training in France. This designation is given to a *lycée* offering a range of training for a specific sector eg. *lycée des métiers du bâtiment*. The objective is to provide coherence for all the vocational training routes, to link the academic route with the advanced vocational route in order to facilitate continued study, and to offer flexible routes for young people.

Additional Training Providers

As well as the vocational secondary schools and apprenticeship training centres described above, there are the following providers of VET:

Continuing Vocational Training for adults – the GRETA network

The French system gives employees a permanent entitlement to training, during working hours and with no loss of earnings.

GRETA's are public educational establishments (schools and general, vocational and technical colleges) which group together depending on their geographical proximity and pool their skills to provide ongoing training for adults. Together they constitute what is known as the GRETA network, which is run by the Ministry of Education and which offers comprehensive training across the 22 Regions. There are 255 GRETA's spread across the whole territory, with 6,500 training sites and 446,080 people trained annually (figures for 2005).

They design training for employees, civil servants, job seekers, young people and senior citizens, and also provide mentoring and guidance for people wishing to use the VAE option. In the GRETA's, adults can acquire basic or specialised skills, learn a foreign language or prepare professional diplomas such as the CAP, the BEP or the Vocational Baccalaureate.

Chambers of Commerce (*Chambres de Commerce et d'Industrie* CCIs)

The national network of Chambers of Commerce and Industry plays a major role in vocational training across France – in initial training, lifelong learning (*formation tout au long de la vie*), in training within companies, particularly

SMEs, continuing professional development (CPD) and apprenticeships. There are 540 training centres (of which 160 are CFAs run by the CCIs or in partnership) and 400,000 young people and adults trained per year (of whom three quarters are employees and 90,000 are apprentices, 85% of whom get jobs after their training.) The CCIs constitute the second largest national network of continuing professional development after the GRETA's. They also collect the apprenticeship tax.

National Vocational Training Association for Adults (AFPA)

The *Association Nationale pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes* (AFPA) is a vocational training and career counselling organization for adults seeking employment, with 458 training and guidance locations all over France and 150,000 people trained every year, 81 % of whom find employment within 6 months of completing their training. AFPA also offers validation of acquired knowledge or skills (VAE).

Government initiatives

The development of learning is a government priority within the framework of the policy for the commitment to employment and social cohesion. The government plan is to increase the total number of apprentices over the next five years from 370,000 to 500,000, involving the participation of all contributors to these streams of study, in particular national education. The objective is to increase the number of young people who undergo apprenticeship training in secondary schools, as well as in establishments for pupils with disabilities, by 50% before 2010.

Vocational Guidance in lower secondary school

One of the concerns identified by the French Ministry is how to make young people reflect on their future career paths.

This responsibility is shared in schools between the Principal Teacher of the class and the vocational guidance counsellor (*conseiller d'orientation-psychologue*.) The latter is attached to several schools and institutions, and will have signed a contract with each institution. Their role is twofold:

- 1 To provide information sessions from the sixth class to the third
- 2 To be available for advice and to respond to questions from pupils and parents eg. for one afternoon per week

From the sixth class in *collège* onwards, pupils start gradually to look at different vocational possibilities. This could simply be in the form of having a presentation about one particular job. After the fifth class there are pre-guidance sessions which gradually increase throughout the fourth class and the third.

Each school develops its own orientation education project in cooperation with the vocational information and guidance centre. The sessions are designed to help the pupils to choose their path when the time comes, given their tastes,

abilities, aspirations, the economic environment and training programmes, with the intention that by the end of the third class they will know which professional route they wish to follow. One concern is that the pupils choosing a vocational route are often the ones already having some difficulty with school.

Vocational discovery courses

A new initiative introduced by the government is a reform of the 'third' class (3^{ème}) in *collège*. It took effect at the beginning of the 2005/06 school year, and made discovering the world of work one of the optional courses on offer at the age of 14 - *la découverte professionnelle* (DP). This course relies heavily on collaboration with many partners from the world of work.

There are 2 choices for pupils: **either** a 3-hour per week option (*une option facultative de découverte professionnelle 3 heures*) **or** a 6-hour per week option (*un module de découverte professionnelle 6 heures*.) Neither choice is compulsory and will mean replacing another subject in the curriculum. Both courses last for the whole school year.

3-hour discovery option

This general option, which takes place within the *collège*, is organised by the guidance counsellor and gives an overview of as wide a range as possible of occupations, of training options, of the workplace and of the economic and social background. It often takes the form of presentations from employers from one particular vocational area, either general or their own personal experience, or past pupils of the school. It includes looking at employment contracts and the reality and culture of the workplace, including the necessity of showing respect.

6-hour discovery option

This option, usually chosen by those pupils who are academically "fragile," is based on project work, with the intention of ensuring that they are ready to pursue a particular occupational direction after the third class. One of the main objectives is to reduce the number of pupils leaving school with no qualifications. The 6-hour "discovery" module normally takes place in an LP (*lycée professionnel*) and is intended to help pupils to get to know the world of work, the training options, and the different pathways available to them.

As well as the above two options, it is now an obligation for schools to provide a week's work placement for all pupils in the 3rd class (final year in *collège*.) However, the pupils are not allowed "hands-on" experience in the workplace, but can only observe. The placements are organised by the principal teacher and the guidance counsellor and have to fit in with the school timetable. As it is not easy to find placements of 5 days, the families are asked to help with locating them, for their own children and others.

Vocational Education and Training in Scotland

Compulsory education

All children between the ages of 5 and 16 receive compulsory education.

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Primary schools | 5–11 years of age |
| Secondary schools | 12–16 years of age |

Lower secondary

Secondary education in Scotland extends over four to six years from the age of 12. All state schools are comprehensive and pupils attend them full-time for four, five or six years. Subject choice in years 3 and 4 makes it possible for pupils to pursue academic or vocational interests, but all secondary schools offer a general education and, alongside it, some more vocationally oriented courses for pupils, usually from the third year onwards.

Curriculum

There is no statutory curriculum in Scotland. However, Scotland's devolved Administration, the Scottish Executive, sets the framework for learning and teaching through the "National Priorities for Education." The Executive's *Agency Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS)* provides further support and advice to enable Scotland's schools to deliver a broad curriculum, including for secondary schools through the document '*Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages*'. All secondary schools offer a similar range of subjects at each stage, including the same core subjects, but what is offered beyond the core is a matter for the school to decide.

At lower secondary level the curriculum is divided into two stages. The first two years (S1 and S2) provide a general education following the National 5-14 Programme. The third and fourth years (S3 and S4) have elements of specialisation and vocational education for all.

Upper secondary and post-secondary level

Post-compulsory secondary education is from 16 to 18 years old, and pupils usually remain in the same secondary school for that purpose. This final stage (S5 and S6) is one of greater specialisation. Not all pupils remain for 2 years: some leave to take up employment, training or further study. Some pupils proceed to higher education after only one year in upper secondary education if they have gained sufficient passes in their Higher Grade examinations taken in S5. Others may leave to follow courses at any of the 43 Further Education colleges in Scotland or to take up a Modern Apprenticeship.

Upper secondary curriculum

In upper secondary education a broad range of options is offered and the freedom of choice is generally much greater than in previous years. In the

upper stage (S5 and S6) a particular aim is to equip pupils to profit from vocational education and training and from higher education.

A new unified system of post-16 National Qualifications has been gradually introduced in schools, further education colleges and training centres from 1999. The National Qualifications are available at five levels: Access, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher, and Advanced Higher, and bring together vocational and academic subjects to ensure that these are given equal status.

National Educational and Vocational Guidance

In Scotland the provision of guidance services is a feature of all educational institutions both in the public and private sectors and in both schools and post-school educational institutions. In every type of educational institution, all teaching staff are responsible for the care and guidance of pupils. Throughout the secondary years, however, pupils in all schools also have the extra support of specially trained guidance staff. These specialists provide a service in three broad areas: personal guidance, curricular guidance and vocational guidance. It is through the guidance system that other forms of support and advice from outside the school are channelled, such as the careers service, the psychological service and the social work service.

Careers services for all young people and adults are provided throughout Scotland by Careers Scotland, established by the Scottish Executive in April 2002. Careers Scotland works closely with individuals, schools, colleges, universities, community learning providers and other teaching and learning organisations, as well as in partnership with business to support the development of more employable and enterprising workers. They also support development of the enterprise in education agenda across Scotland.

In many schools, a deputy head teacher or member of the guidance staff co-operates with Careers Scotland staff in ensuring that pupils receive appropriate careers guidance and acts as a link with local industry and with further and higher education.

National vocational qualifications

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the national body in Scotland which is responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment, and certification of all national qualifications other than degrees. In the development and updating of qualifications SQA has always worked in partnership with the different business sectors and with educational practitioners.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is a framework which brings together all mainstream Scottish Qualifications. The Framework gives each qualification from across Scotland SCQF Credits and a level which

makes it easier for pupils, students and employers to compare one qualification with another. It currently incorporates all the mainstream Scottish qualifications from Access level to Doctorate level. It includes both academic and vocational qualifications provided in schools, further education, higher education, and the workplace. Qualifications are allocated credit points and placed at one of the twelve component levels of the framework.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) form a UK-wide network of sectoral representative organisations which have replaced National Training Organisations (NTOs). SSCs are the recognised national strategic bodies responsible for identifying the skills, education and training needs of their sector and maintaining National Occupational Standards (NOS) for jobs within it. Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are based on these standards. SSCs are responsible for influencing policy and the delivery of education and training, on behalf of their sector, to ensure that these needs are met. They are also responsible for gathering labour market information and intelligence and for workforce development planning. Those occupational areas that are not covered by a SSC will have their skills maintained by the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), with input from the appropriate former NTO.

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Recognition of Prior Informal Learning (RPL) Project has developed national guidelines for the recognition of prior informal learning within the context of the SCQF. The guidelines are the outcome of a national debate on RPL and their purpose is to support the implementation of RPL provision across all post-16 education and training sectors as part of the lifelong learning agenda in Scotland. Developing effective mechanisms for recognising prior learning is an essential element of the successful implementation of the SCQF.

The guidelines will form a section of the SCQF Handbook and will cover all prior informal learning which has not been previously assessed or credit-rated. This includes prior learning achieved through life and work experiences (paid and voluntary), as well as prior learning gained in non-formal contexts through community-based learning; workplace learning and training; continuing professional development and independent learning.

Core Skills

Employers and higher education now give more weight to core skills (key competencies) which are important in the workplace, in study and throughout all aspects of life. The five core skills which are incorporated in Scottish qualifications are:

1. working with others
2. problem-solving
3. communication
4. information technology
5. numeracy

From 2000 every person receiving a Scottish Qualifications Certificate has been able to obtain credit for Core Skills achievement through a Core Skills profile. Pupils receive their first Core Skills profile when they are 16, and are to add to and build on this as they continue through education and training.

Vocational Training providers

Further Education Colleges

The main providers of further education and vocational training in Scotland are the 43 Further Education Colleges (now known simply as “colleges”) providing education and training to around 500,000 students each year, young people and adults. The college sector is the largest provider of lifelong learning in Scotland.

Scotland's Colleges provide easy local access to learning opportunities and are strongly rooted in their local communities, towns and cities. They are located at over 4,000 sites. They promote wider access for all, working with employers and other partner organisations to deliver innovative learning and training opportunities to help individuals, communities and employers maximise their potential and develop into lifelong learners.

The colleges vary considerably in size and the range of courses which they offer, and cater for both full-time and part-time students, with part-time students in the majority. The student profile in Scotland's colleges has changed significantly in recent years in that 58% of students are now over the age of 25 and the average age is 32.

College Courses

A typical college offers a wide range of courses from access level to highly specialised vocational education and training, providing not only continuing education beyond school, preparation for further study and/or for entry into the labour market, but also meeting the needs of the Scottish workforce. The level of provision ranges from essential life skills and provision for students with learning difficulties through to degree level and post-graduate work.

The courses are mainly vocational, including both theoretical and practical work, leading to awards recorded on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC), Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), and advanced vocational courses, classed as higher education courses, leading to the award of a Higher National Certificate (HNC) or a Higher National Diploma (HND). Students also have opportunities to work toward industry-specific Awards accredited by other nationally recognised Awarding Bodies, eg. City & Guilds. Many colleges have also developed close links with particular universities or other higher education institutions to which some of their students may transfer after gaining their HND.

Colleges can construct programmes to suit the needs of specific industries or the particular needs of local employers.

At non-advanced level, several different types of course meet the needs of industry and students:

- vocational and general education for post-16 students and trainees;
- link courses for school pupils;
- industrial pre-employment training, serving specific employer needs or the requirements of the Local Enterprise Companies;
- off-the-job training for employees, including those on training schemes such as Skillseekers; and
- vocational and non-vocational evening classes.

Building on well-established links, colleges now offer many up-dating and re-training courses for local industries.

College/industry partnerships: Assessment for Work-based learning

The assessment and certification of work-based learning depends on agreements between industry or individual firms and local colleges. There are several models of industry-college partnership for this purpose:

- training may be jointly planned by a college and a local firm and delivered partly in college and partly at the work-place, with the college lecturers taking responsibility for monitoring performance and standards;
- training may be more flexible and include a number of open learning modules as well as work-based units, supported by college staff;
- some employers prefer simply to contract training out wholly to the local college, which thus becomes a kind of apprentice training centre;
- the arrangement for a college or colleges to train apprentices may be negotiated by a particular industry, perhaps through a Sector Skills Council;
- a similar arrangement may be negotiated by a consortium of several local employers.

Whatever the arrangement, much of the assessment of performance is carried out in the workplace, as well as in the college.

Employer engagement with colleges

Colleges have close relationships with employers in their areas, who are represented on their Boards of Management. The colleges depend for a considerable part of their work on employees being sent for training and also on employers for those parts of courses which take place in the workplace.

A recent publication on employer-related activities in Scotland's colleges reports that employers were engaged in course development through participation in liaison or advisory groups, course boards and programme review boards. In addition to providing work experience, employers were involved in advising on content and course development along with sector skills councils and training bodies. In relation to student support, employers were most likely to contribute as guest speakers; a small number of respondents reported that employers were involved in coaching and mentoring of students and helping them with target-setting and review.

Private training providers

More and more companies, irrespective of size or the particular market in which they operate, are examining ways of developing the skills of their staff. Many firms, especially large firms, are able to provide in-house training and re-training courses, organised by their own training officers and certificated by the firms themselves. Increasingly, validation and certification of such courses is carried out by the Scottish Qualifications Authority or other Awarding Bodies.

There is also a strong and diverse network of private and voluntary sector providers who often operate from smaller private training centres and who deliver a wide range of vocationally-oriented courses for both young people and adults. These providers are particularly important in Scotland's more rural and remote areas where there are no colleges. The Scottish Training Federation is the main representative body of learning providers in Scotland.

Additional Vocational Training Programmes

There is a range of Government funded national training programmes which are managed and delivered by Scottish Enterprise (SE) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) through their networks of Local Enterprise Companies (LECs.) Many of these programmes are also delivered in colleges.

Skillseekers

Skillseekers is a vocational training programme open to young people between 16 and 25, who have left school and have a job or who are looking for work, although the Enterprise Networks currently prioritise funding to 16-19 year olds. The main elements of Skillseekers are training leading to a recognised qualification up to SVQ Level III (typically at SVQ Level II), an individual training plan, and employer involvement. The programme has helped to increase employer participation in training and 80% of Skillseekers participants are now employed while undertaking their training.

Get Ready for Work

Get Ready for Work is open to 16 to 18 year-olds, with all trainees being paid a training allowance. It is an individualised holistic skills programme with four strands – life, core, personal and vocational skills, and aims to improve employability. Those taking part in the programme, many within colleges, get the chance to try out “work tasters” and work placements. Students can progress to the mainstream Skillseekers programme, Modern Apprenticeships, further education or employment.

Pre-Modern Apprenticeships

Work is currently underway with the Enterprise Networks and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to re-design Skillseekers, introducing pre-apprenticeships to

link with vocational learning in schools, address core skills and provide better progression routes to Modern Apprenticeships or further education.

Modern Apprenticeships

Modern Apprenticeships are training programmes offering those aged 16 and over the chance of paid employment linked with the opportunity to train for jobs across a wide range of industries. There are 77 different types of Modern Apprenticeship presently available in Scotland, and all follow a minimum SVQ level III supplemented by further training in core skills.

All the Modern Apprenticeship frameworks are developed by the industry or sector in which they will be implemented and therefore encompass all the skills required to become a craftsman, technician or manager in that area. Many Modern Apprentices also attend colleges or training centres to study the theory relating to their chosen occupation. A Training Agreement for each apprentice is drawn up with the employer and the Local Enterprise Company, and funding is directed from the LEC either directly to the company (if it is providing the training) or to the training provider (college or private). Adult Modern Apprenticeships are also available.

Training for Work

Training for Work (TfW) is a voluntary programme for unemployed people. Jobseekers aged 25 and over who have been unemployed for six months or more can apply. The programme aims to improve work-related skills through training and structured work activity in line with assessed needs and linked to local labour market vacancies. Private training providers, voluntary sector organisations, local authorities, colleges and employers provide the training.

Government initiatives

The Scottish Executive has a number of strategic policy initiatives in education:

- a *Curriculum for Excellence*, published in 2004, sets out the principles and aims of the education of 3-18 year olds as being to develop “*successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.*” These broad descriptors aim to ensure a coherent and progressive curriculum which has young people's interests firmly at its centre. The purpose of *A Curriculum for Excellence* is to improve the learning, attainment and achievement of young people in Scotland, through a breadth and depth of opportunities. One such opportunity is the new *Skills for Work* courses currently in their second year of piloting.
- *Determined to Succeed (DtS)* is the Executive's strategy for enterprise in education which was launched in March 2003 in response to a review of enterprise in education. It calls for a change in the way pupils learn, teachers teach, and the education and business communities interact to ensure that young people can relate their classroom learning to the world

of work. It aims to improve the development in young people of the skills, knowledge and attitudes that prepare them for the future labour market as employers, employees and entrepreneurs; and for life more generally. Through some 20 recommendations, *Determined to Succeed* commits to providing for school pupils from Primary 1 to S6 opportunities for enterprising and entrepreneurial education, work-based vocational learning (with a relevant qualification for pupils aged 14 and over) and appropriately focused career education. It is the responsibility of Scotland's 32 local authorities, in partnership with other organisations, to deliver appropriate opportunities in their schools.

- *Lifelong Partners* provides a formal framework for collaboration between secondary schools and further education colleges to provide young people with the opportunity to benefit from a wide range of educational opportunities and equip them with a variety of skills that prepare them for life, the workplace, and the community. School pupils can get better access to colleges for part of their curriculum, the college staff can go into schools, and private training providers can work with schools and colleges. For some pupils, vocational education can provide the context which best engages them.

Work Experience for School Pupils

Work experience is widely recognised as playing a core part in delivering work-based and work-related learning within a secondary school's enterprise in education programme, as described in *Determined to Succeed*. It can also help young people to become *successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors* to society and at work, as outlined in *A Curriculum for Excellence*.

School pupils are entitled to undertake a period of work experience from 1 May in their S3 year if they are going to reach school leaving age either during their S4 year or at the end of the Christmas term of their S5 year. The recent publication "Determined to Succeed: Enterprise in Education - Work Experience Guidance 2006" offers all partners responsible for overseeing work experience advice, support and guidance.

Extended work experience

Extended work experience is increasingly used as a means to re-motivate and maintain the engagement of young people who are disaffected with their current curriculum. In some cases, a longer period of work is offered with the remaining time being spent in school concentrating on language and mathematics along with other subjects. A small minority of disengaged young people, or those who have serious attendance problems, can spend all of the week at a work placement. It is important that such young people receive any additional support required to ensure their personal and skills development. This sort of work experience can act as a catalyst to possible progression to employment once young people reach the minimum school leaving age.

School-College Partnerships

All secondary and special schools in Scotland now have partnerships with at least one college for young people in S3 and above. College options are made available to school students and work placements are built into vocational courses and extend learning and teaching. Most school-college partnerships take place in the college environment but there are some models where the college comes to the school and other models where schools work with private training providers. Schools would like many more of these types of courses, as the programme is deemed to be a success that pupils really enjoy, but demand for these courses outstrips supply.

Evaluation of School-College Partnerships

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) will evaluate school-college partnerships by including samples of partnership activity in school inspections and subject and college reviews.

The indicators within the HMIE Guide *How good is our school?* reflect the developing context within which schools now operate and include guidelines for the self-evaluation of these school/college partnerships. There are 8 areas and 8 key questions, covering courses and programmes, attainment and achievement, teaching, learning, meeting needs, guidance, links and self-evaluation.

HMIE recommendations are:

- to utilise colleges' experience of fully evaluating programmes
- the self evaluation exercise should incorporate evaluations of the pupils and staff
- an analysis of retention statistics, critical success factors and destination data should be undertaken annually to help inform improvements and used in preparing an annual self-evaluation report on the programme
- an annual quality report prepared by staff utilising the data from the first two stages described above, could be submitted to headteachers

Skills for Work courses

Since August 2005 the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the Scottish Executive Education Department have been piloting new Skills for Work courses. These new qualifications encourage young people to become familiar with the world of work. They provide a variety of practical experiences that are directly linked to the vocational area chosen. The courses are mainly for pupils in third and fourth year of secondary school and are intended to provide pathways to employment, training or further education. For many young people, an early chance to work on practical skills that relate directly to jobs will provide real benefits.

Young people taking one of these new Skills for Work Courses will normally spend some of their time at a local college or other training provider but this is

costly in terms of time and resources as the school has to meet travel and staff costs. However it will mean the pupils learning in a different environment, meeting new people and facing new challenges. Another model is where the college lecturers teach the courses within the school, but one disadvantage with this model is that pupils do not have access to the college environment and resources.

The young person's achievement is assessed throughout the Course rather than by final examination. The assessment involves a range of different tasks, including practical assignments, short tests and keeping personal records. The Course will appear on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate in the same way as any other National Course.

Over 4,700 learners are participating in the Skills for Work pilots. Courses are currently being delivered in 71 centres (mainly colleges) working in partnership with 254 schools and a number of employers and private training providers. The phase 1 courses (Construction and Engineering, Construction Crafts, Early Education and Childcare, Sport and Recreation, Hairdressing, Rural Skills, Financial Services) have been reviewed and the phase 2 pilot courses (Engineering Skills, Hospitality and Catering, Health and Social Care) will be made available for mainstream use from 2007–08 onwards.

Evaluation of Skills for Work courses

Evaluation of the pilot to date (*Review of the First Year of the Pilot SQA* December 2006) shows strong support for Skills for Work. In the process of completing these courses learners develop a range of generic employability skills and attitudes valued by employers. The learners are actively involved in producing evidence to show that they have acquired the knowledge and skills from each of the areas covered by the course. The learning environments, the focus on experiential learning and the opportunities to develop employability and Core Skills in these courses will help young people develop their capacities to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors, as outlined in *A Curriculum for Excellence*.

Other work-related vocational learning opportunities

In addition to Skills for Work courses, schools offer a range of other work-related vocational learning opportunities which involve pupils, generally from age 14, in spending time at college or in a training centre working towards a relevant vocational qualification.

A new course in Fashion Brand Retailing is currently being piloted and involves Sixth Year pupils attending university for one full day a week and working towards a University Award at SCQF Level 7 (equivalent to Advanced Higher.) The course gains students credit for one unit of a related university degree course and provides a strong foundation for further learning or employment in the sector.

Key findings

There are some major differences in the French and Scottish Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems:

- at upper secondary level where French school pupils have a choice of progression routes and move to a separate school accordingly, whereas in Scotland they stay within the same school
- in the routes available for taking initial vocational qualifications in France, where the awards of a CAP (vocational aptitude certificate) or BEP (technical school certificate), although identical awards when achieved, are obtained by a different balance of theory/general education and the number of hours spent within the workplace
- in Scotland pupils have to pass the “Employability Skills” part of their training, as well as their more practical skills, in order to gain certification. In France, although these skills are assessed as “professional attitudes and behaviour,” this *savoir-être* part is not compulsory for certification
- French employers pay a training levy to help fund initial vocational training. When an employer takes on an apprentice the tax is reduced and there is therefore a financial incentive. Employers’ involvement in Scotland is on a voluntary basis as tax leverage is not possible.

However, there are many areas of similarity, including at the apprenticeship stage where the apprentice is in paid employment, as a Modern Apprentice in Scotland and having signed the “apprenticeship contract” in France. New initiatives include the “discovery” programme in France and the Skills for Work programme in Scotland. In both countries there is recognition that:

- the 14-16 age group is a crucial stage for choosing a career path and future employment
- careers guidance plays a key role at all stages
- young people must have progression opportunities
- employers are demanding core skills and employability skills
- continuous professional development in lifelong learning and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL in Scotland/VAE in France) is key to success

Furthermore, there are many areas of mutual interest and concern:

- young people leaving either of the two school systems with no qualifications. There is a problem in Scotland with young people leaving school with few or no qualifications and ending up Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs.) All interested parties within Scotland are putting policies in place to try and combat this issue
- finding sufficient places for work experience and getting more employers involved, especially from SMEs
- evaluating and assessing work experience, and analysing whether the way in which we evaluate in all areas motivates or de-motivates our pupils
- keeping up with the changing needs of industry and the economy

- parity of esteem for vocational and academic qualifications. A cultural barrier exists in both countries, and it is often difficult to persuade parents and school teachers that vocational options are a positive outcome for young people. We have to ensure that taking a vocational subject becomes an aspiration for young people of all abilities.

Conclusion

This work is set within the context of the co-operation agreement between France and Scotland and also the current consultation on ECVET (the European Credit system for VET), which gives us an excellent opportunity of learning from each other and working in partnership. It is also set within the context of the increasing focus across the European Union on the economic importance of the development of a workforce with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to compete in a world of globalisation.

The Franco-Scottish VET Expert Group has already discussed some of these crucial issues, and is now planning the next steps in the sharing of experiences and joint project work. One specific collaboration is to work on developing a joint framework for evaluating workplace training placements in both countries.

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