

The Bricklaying Project was presented to the ETUC Working Group on 'Lifelong Learning' on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2010 ETUC headquarters in Brussels. The meeting was attended by delegates from a large number of EU states and addressed by Mr Jordi Gotor, Director of DG EAC 1, and Joao Delgado, Head of Unit DG Education and Culture. Professor Linda Clarke presented the Bricklaying Project, including an account of the obstacles confronting the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework in the case of bricklaying – conceptual and real. The presentation was well received and raised many questions, in particular concerning the different nature of bricklaying (broad or narrow scope of activity), different qualification levels, the possibility of establishing Zones of Mutual Trust and the mobility of bricklayers.

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# The EQF and apprenticeship: the case of bricklaying

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## Leonardo-da-Vinci: Bricklaying qualifications, work and VET in Europe

- Examines bricklaying qualifications in 8 European countries
- Developing a framework for the comparative assessment
- Assessing possibilities and problems concerning the implementation of EQF/ECVET

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### **The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**

- intended to be a framework for comparison of qualifications across the EU
- aims to enhance mobility of labour
- based on learning outcomes
- eight levels – 3 descriptors: knowledge, skills, competence
- Open Method of Coordination (OMC), voluntary framework but countries are encouraged to get involved
- Zones of Mutual Trust (Coles & Oates, 2004)

### **Problems with EQF & ECVET**

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#### **EQF**

- Learning outcomes
- Conception of competence i.e. 'Autonomy and Responsibility'
- Does not include scope or breadth of qualifications

#### **ECVET (European Qualifications and Credit Framework)**

- Is outcome based
- Has 8 levels like EQF
- QCF also linked to credits → fragmented qualifications
- How should QCF levels be matched with EQF ones?

## Structure of the EQF

Academic Levels	Knowledge	Skill	Competence
Level 1 – e.g. upper primary			
Level 2			
Level 3 – e.g. Abitur			
Level 4			
Level 5			
Level 6 – e.g. bachelor			
Level 7			
Level 8 - doctorate			

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### Learning outcomes – different conceptions

- **English NVQ –**
  - based on performance of narrowly defined tasks to a certain standard; little integration of theory and practice
- **Many continental countries, e.g. Germany**
  - Designed to develop occupational capacity
  - Based on a broad base of occupational knowledge + general and civic education
  - Learning outcomes as standards

\*\*EQF seems to define learning outcomes in the English sense

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## Different conceptions of competence

- **As responsibility and autonomy:** EQF deals with former = positioning in managerial hierarchy – not elements of self-management
- **As multi-dimensional competence of action-taking** (*Handlungskompetenz*)
  - Integration knowledge, practical know-how, and social and personal dimensions of competence
  - Exercise of professional judgement and discretion
- **Competence-based QFs** (e.g. France, Netherlands)
  - Broadly defined competences, based on the integration of knowledge, skills and competence

**NB Continental notions** involve application of systematic & local knowledge to practice (including self-direction of activity)

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## Scope or breadth of qualifications:

### Bricklaying example

- Different scopes of activity as major factor in variation
- Many continental countries:
  - broad scope of activities, using a variety of materials (bricks, concrete, prefabricated)
  - concern with ability to plan, carry and evaluate work

### Example Denmark (Level 3+):

- Bricklaying, flooring, tiling, roofing, jointing and rendering, façade cladding, and scaffolding
- Non-manual: reading from technical drawings, setting out, ordering materials, applying health and safety regulations, communicating with clients....

**England (NVQ2):** largely confined to laying bricks and blocks: conform to general workplace safety and efficient work practices; move and handle resources; erect and set out masonry structures + 1 optional

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## Occupational vs Skills-based VET systems

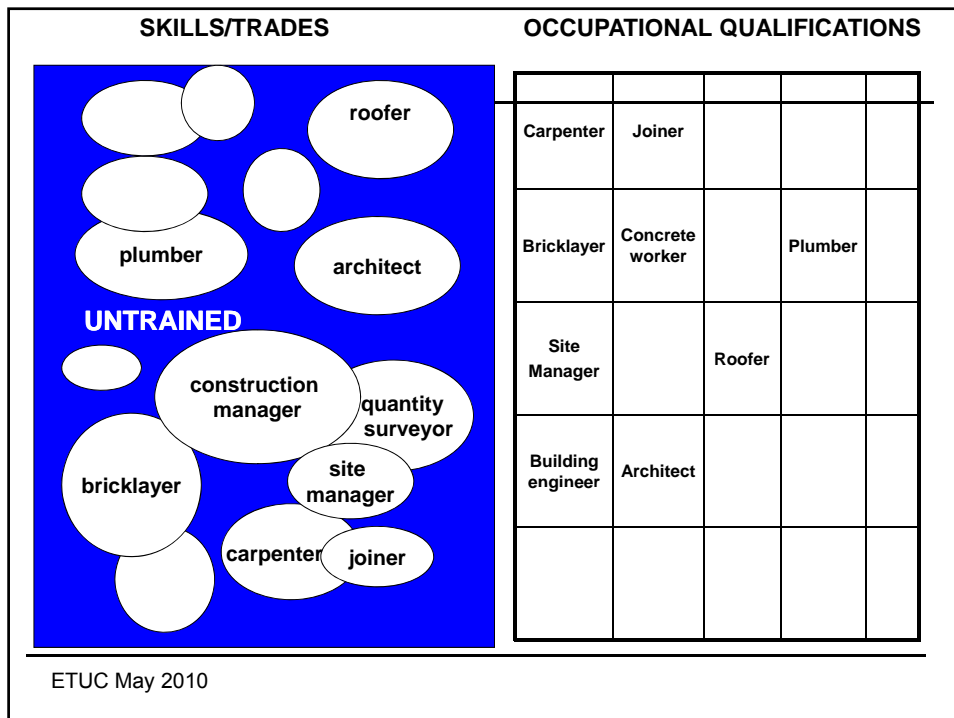
### **Occupational:**

- statutory framework
- social partnership
- recognised qualifications
- comprehensive nationally recognised VET programmes
- multi-dimensional competence
- 'occupational capacity'
- occupational knowledge
- general and civic education

### **Skills-based:**

- weak statutory framework
- marginalisation of stakeholder interests
- narrow skills sets, remedial functional skills
- functionalist-behaviourist conception of competence
- minimal underpinning knowledge
- neglect of general and civic education

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## Occupational versus skills model: bricklaying

	England	Netherlands	France	Germany
Qualifications	NVQ 2	Vocational school	CAP (apprenticeship)	Dual system
Governance	SSC	Strong government framework/ Social partnership		
Labour Market	Skills Narrow specialisation Low progression	Broad occupational capacity Broad scope of activities Medium/high career progression		
Competence	Skills	Multi-dimensional		
	Functional	C-based qualifications: Specification of competencies		Input
Education	Training + NVQs On-the-job learning	Education		
		Competence-based		Input

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## The English Bricklaying Qualification

**Skills-based model:** individual skills sets, meeting specific employer needs (minimal underpinning knowledge)

→ Apprenticeship framework:

- NVQ
- Diploma (technical certificate)
- Key skills: literacy, numeracy, IT

### Problems

- *Lack of integration* NVQ with educational elements
- *Weakness of social partnership arrangements*
- *Narrow scope* (e.g. rural areas & SMEs need concreting, plastering and drainage)
- *Low level:* 4,831 bricklaying apprentices in England, vast majority on Level 2; few progress to Level 3 (20%); high drop-out rate (50%)
- *Currency:* high degree of informal learning (OSAT); unrelated to collective agreement

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## **Problems with English bricklaying qualification**

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- *Knowledge specification*
  - General knowledge only functional skills
  - Industrial knowledge only Health and Safety, environmental protection
  - Know-how = largely laying bricks
- *Competence*
  - whether work done to given level of skill (being competent) irrespective of whether knowledge applied to practice
- *Applying theory to practice:*
  - NVQ assesses what can do up to threshold level but cannot show what may be able to do in future
  - Danger of reproducing ‘yesterday’s skills’

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## **Occupation Model e.g. German Dual System**

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- *Social partnership-based:* assessment, scope determination
- ‘*Occupational capacity*’ as *Beruf* : formal social status
- *Regulated & comprehensive training:*
  - college + workshop + workplace
  - *Stufenausbildung*) not modular; 2-tier:
    - 1 of 3 sub-sectors for 2 years (*Hochbau, Tiefbau, Ausbau*)
    - qualification (Level 3 +) after 3 years, high success rate
- *Content:* theoretical & practical knowledge necessary to undertake defined and broad range activities
  - industrial knowledge (VET law, labour law, social partnership, health & safety, environmental protection)
  - occupational knowledge and skills
  - social competences
  - general & civic education (economics, politics, German, sports)

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## German Maurer *Beruf Qualification*

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- *Principles:*
  - *Autonomy:* planning, carrying out, evaluation
  - *Permeability*
- *Handlungskompetenz:*
  - holistic and multi-dimensional competences
  - developing individual capacity & changes in labour process
- *Systematised combination knowledge, skills, competence*  
i.e. uniting intellectual and manual
- *Link between occupations and education*  
→ mapping 16 construction occupations onto sectoral structure
- *Currency:*
  - occupational labour market i.e. importance of qualification for labour market entry (82% of bricklayers have qualification)
  - collectively agreed graded wage structure (6 levels) linked to qualification levels
  - broad scope of activity: newly built, renovation, restauration, working with variety of materials

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## School Based Systems

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*France and Poland:*

- representative of school/education-based VET system, though French case atypical in that apprenticeship is dominant within bricklaying
- social partnership strong
- Both countries characterised by holistic and broad nature of the qualification and particular concepts of competence

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## Mixed Systems

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*Netherlands/Denmark:*

- more trade-based (unlike France/Germany but like England)
- strong apprenticeship
- Educational elements and social partnership both important, though Danish at higher level and with broader scope than Dutch (Level 2)

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### Conclusions 1: the qualifications

- skills-based (level 2)
  - task-specific, employer-defined
  - minimal educational input
  - not a precondition for labour market entry
- occupational (level 3)
  - notion of competence development
  - recognised entry route to the labour market

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## **Conclusions 2: Scope of the occupation**

- skills-based
  - restricted range of tasks, focussed on outputs and performance
  - bricklaying as a trade
  
- occupational
  - broader underpinning knowledge

## **What does this mean for EQF?**

notion of competence

- scope of activities
- understanding of learning outcomes
- Zones of Mutual Trust? Regional? Levels?

## **How effective is OMC without regulation?**

- health and safety considerations?
- is bricklaying different from lorrydriving?