

## Competences for competence orientation

### The TrainCom learning platform (linking workplace learning to VET pathways)

The implementation of CBVET requires competences and a sensitive, qualified staff. Moreover, it implies a strict and structured relationship between training developed at the workplace, and basic skills and theoretical knowledge focused by professional schools. Teachers in VET Institutions must dialogue with in-company trainers, and of course in-company trainers have to be capable of managing experiential and reflective learning settings. Both teachers active in VET institutions, and in-company trainers or HR Managers must share concepts underpinning competence orientation.

The TrainCom Learning Platform has been conceived and designed first of all to provide a common basis of discussion and learning for all the relevant actors in the scenario. It aims at making them sensitive on the issues related to competence orientation. Moreover, it is addressed to in-company trainers, in order to make them aware of specific abilities needed for acting as coaches and facilitators. Qualification of the training staff is one of the challenges faced by German companies engaged in reforms of the dual apprenticeship. Normally an initial qualification in this field is foreseen: being a master craftsperson or a technician is a general pre-requirement, but also a pedagogical qualification, correlated to a certain amount of work experience, is an obligation. Companies like Audi develop in addition a specific training to enable their trainers exploit the methodology of self-directed learning. Trainers are asked, in a certain sense, of experiencing the same approach, based on workplace learning and accompaniment. They work as “Assistant Trainers” for 2 or 3 years (near-the-job training) and they attend 4 short modules:

- „How to create competence oriented learn- and work assignments“(2 days)
- „How to facilitate learning processes“ (2 days)
- „Projects in vocational training“ (½ day and on-the job)
- „How to give feed-backs“ (½ day)

Furthermore individual training and coaching “on demand” is foreseen, in order to let these trainers develop their personal, social, methodical or professional skills.

The TrainCom Platform can play an interesting role in this framework, as far as it is conceived as a means for consolidating self-directed learning processes in managing CBVET approaches. The project was expected to develop formative methods and tools (valuing e-learning) aiming at promoting learning outcomes orientation in VET, approaching the description of curricula and the design of in-company training and assessment. Some crucial questions have been dealt with:

- which teaching/learning arrangements are suitable to promote competence orientation?

- how can the role of teachers and trainers as a coach and adviser be characterized?
- what can competence assessment procedures look like and which requirements (qualitative standards) do they have to fulfill?
- how can teachers and trainers be supported during the arrangement of competence oriented training? How does an internet based learning program have to be designed?

Despite progresses made during the last years CBVET largely represent in many VET landscapes and institutions a practically unknown object. Resistances are still strong, and the lack of confidence of teachers and trainers with workplace learning, experiential and reflective methods in VET is a reality. The platform largely represents a means for making teachers and trainers more sensitive and aware of the potentialities of CBVET. It's also a space of exchange, providing examples of practices, methods and tools useful for activating CBVET. It doesn't replace a proper qualification pathway, leading to cover functions like the ones presented above. However it can pave the road for in taking a professionalization process.

### Added value and limits

The effectiveness of the TrainCom Learning Platform, as well as spaces for improving it, have been focused by an initial on line evaluative survey , which will provide also in the next future interesting feedbacks concerning project deliverables and their exploitation / development.

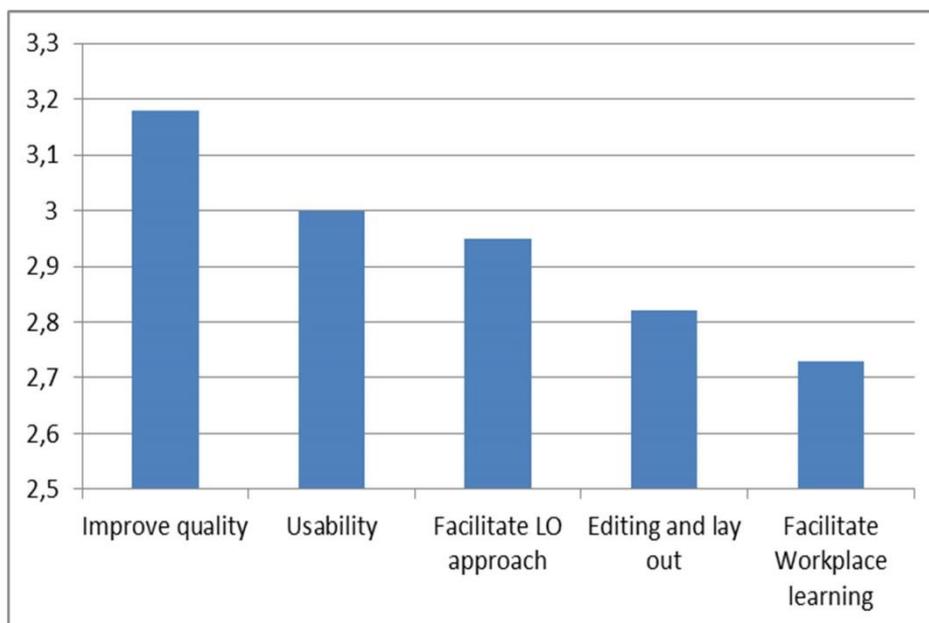


Figure: The TrainCom Learning Platform under the lens: best features of the model (Source: own diagram/research)

In a scale from 1 to 4 the Learning Platform scores as an average good result, considering its main features. The great majority of respondents, no matter the country, are convinced that they will continue to use the Platform in their organisations, in order to improve the quality of training design and management, making it closer to the needs of a modern VET system. The usability of the platform – a simple and understandable approach – is most appreciated. For sure the tool reaches one of its goals, facilitating the adoption of a learning-outcomes-approach, by teachers and trainers who sometimes pay difficulties in actually implementing mainstream principles of competence orientation. Spaces of improvement are at the opposite detected considering the layout of the Platform. Also the exploitation of contents in order to develop workplace learning arose as a limit, particularly underscored by respondents less familiar with methods and tools characterizing the dual apprenticeship, like Spanish interviewees.

The TrainCom Learning Platform scores good notes also considering some indicators evidencing potential success factors. It is evaluated as extremely coherent with EU Mainstream policies, and particularly relevant for making teachers and trainers aware and sensitive towards reforms stimulated at this level. Structure and contents of the platform fit the needs of potential users, bringing in some new ideas, even if in a context of solid principles, already practiced by professionals engaged in companies. From this point of view, the platform seems to give an answer to the needs of socialization and sensibilisation of teacher and trainers with CBVET.

The evaluation of the experts makes visible the correlation between judgements and differences embedded in the diverse learning cultures. Divergences are still playing a fundamental role in paving the road – or at the opposite hampering – the adoption of a competence based approach to training design. As far as CBVET implies strict relationships between workplace experience and learning in the construction of competences, the countries of the dual system are naturally ready to adopt this philosophy, but more reluctant to integrate other principles, such as the unitization of training design and moreover the flexibilization of competence assessment. On the other hand countries which are discovering just now the potentialities of embedding learning at the workplace need to develop a consistent experience and readiness in training design and management according to CBVET principles.

### The next steps

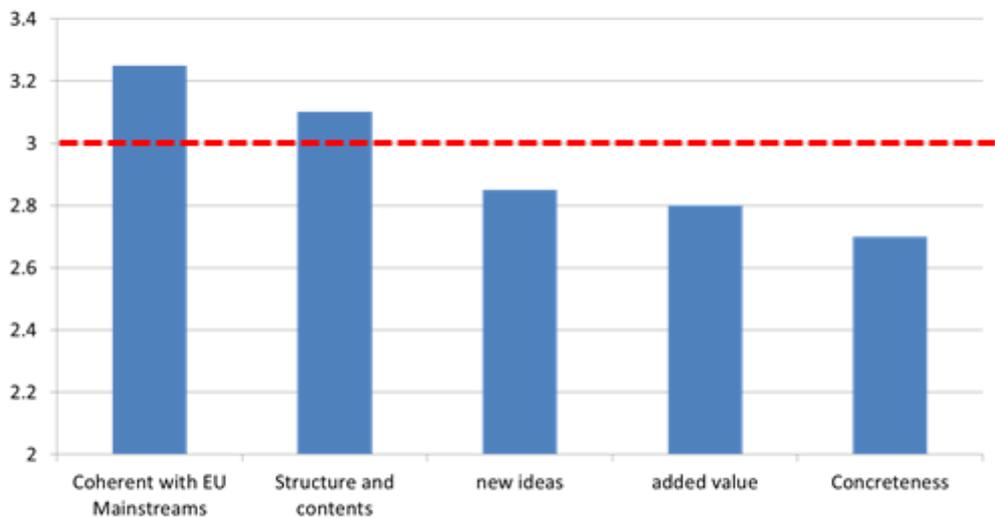
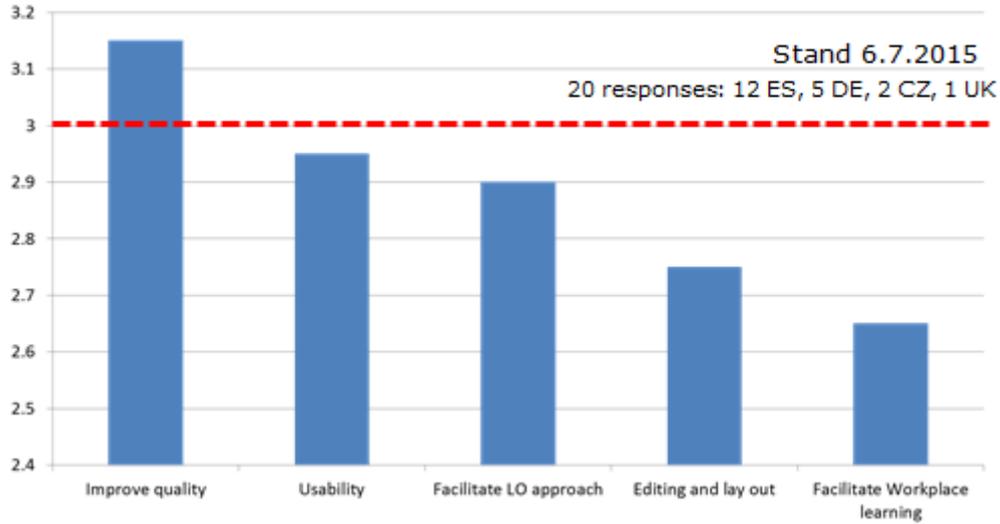
The heritage of TrainCom project is for sure coherent, and valuable in a perspective leading to the actual implementation of CBVET as a mainstream for reforming and improving VET systems all over Europe, using the experience of the dual system as a reference, but safeguarding richness and diversity of learning cultures. CBVET principles can be applied in countries characterized by structured workplace learning or a mix between learning in schools or colleges and experience at the workplace. It provides a framework for designing learning at the workplace in an

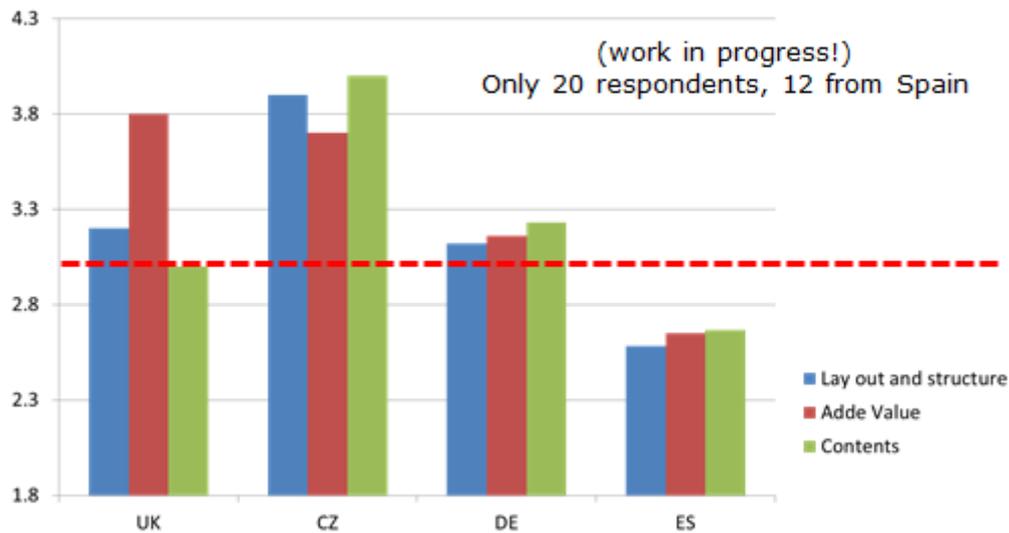
innovative way – such as in the German experiences taken into consideration in the article – but at the same time it helps design structured and flexible learning path, well anchored at work processes, also in full time VET schools and colleges.

TrainCom leaves us a consistent set of resources usable in a lifelong learning perspective, including:

- peer reviewing as a method for continuously improving the quality of VET, at different levels (macro, considering systems, and micro, considering teachers, trainers and VET institutions)
- the Platform, both in form of Guidelines and as a library / repository of tools for planning, managing, assessing learning.

The lay out and attractiveness of the Platform, could be made more appealing in time, but safe-guarding the clear and easy fruition of contents actually characterizing the tool. The project paves the road to the development of further results, at the origin of future activities of the project partners.





### Strengths

- **Usability:** easy to be navigated and exploited
- **Information and contents:** rich, clear, to the point...
- **Structure:** clear, solid, logic, inspired by coherent theories
- **Examples** and schemes, leading from theories to practice

### Limits:

- **Lay out and editing:** old fashion, too texts, not adequate fonts...
- **A "German centered" approach** (also some missing translations made the difference, as well as reference practices almost limited to Germany...)
- **Limited set of proper tools**, just methodological suggestions and reference practices (useful, but...)
- **Lack of interactivity** (potentially hampering the formative exploitation of the Platform: actually a repository....)

- Improve the **lay out and attractiveness** of the Platform: make it more appealing, actually we pay the risk of being skipped by potential users!
- Improve **language and communicative approach**, also using images, pics, videos...
  - Exploit web 2.0 logics and **create flexible fruition possibilities** (references and methods adaptable to diverse settings to learning cultures)
  - Focus on tools, **expanding resources**, setting up a **learning engine** and better link tools and examples to training
  - Develop **interactivity**

