

Proposed conceptual framework for assessing VET for bricklaying/masonry

Institutional		Qualification		Labour market	
Governance	Vocational education	Qualification	Knowledge, Skills, Competence	Utilisation of labour	Currency of qualification
Statutory regulation Social partnership Employers/trade associations involved (type, size etc.) Public/private training providers Role of collective agreement Process of recognition of occupational qualifications Sources of funding Changes in governance Key players NQF/EQF	Entry qualification level Type & length Subjects Location Integration of theory with practice Scope/breadth Pedagogical approach Continuing VET Completion / drop-out rates Modularisation Accreditation of prior learning Formal, informal, non-formal learning Changes in VET	Types of qualification Completion/drop-out rates Inputs/ outputs Curricula Learning outcomes Occupational standards How do these relate to - vocational education? - qualifications? - performance? - competence? Assessment/ attainment Innovation Transferability/ permeability Related qualifications Certification APEL	Understanding/role of: Competence (task-based, occupational, procedural, social, personal) Knowledge (theoretical, practical, occupational, industrial) Skills (cognitive, practical, social) Integration of K, S, C Assessment of K, S, C Level of autonomy Level/ scope of K, S, C Transferable skills	Understanding of sector, occupation, job Scope/ type of activities Degree of specialisation Progression Mobility Use of migrant labour Related occupations Health & safety risks Entry/access Changes in occupation/ activities Tools/equipment used Type of employer and sector of activity Employment status	Status of bricklaying Proportions/ profile of people holding the qualification Value of qualification/ skills on the labour market Value for HE/FE entry Link between pay and qualifications/skills/ output Earnings Wage structure Labour rights Changes in currency
Voluntarist	Training	Job/task-based	Functional	Job/firm-specific	Performance of skills
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Social partnership	Education	Comprehensive	Multi-dimensional	Occupational mobility	Qualifications

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS

This section seeks to define the concepts of the framework, each time describing the two models identified in a previous research project: the occupational model dominant in many European countries, and the skills-based model prevalent in England. It is important to note that these two models are positioned on two ends of a continuum and do not represent a simple dichotomy.

Governance

The institutional framework that governs the development and regulation of VET, qualifications and skills. The two contrasting approaches that have been identified are the social partnership model and the voluntarist model. The former is characterised by a strong statutory framework setting minimum standards, and the co-operation between the social partners and educationalists in developing qualifications, ensuring the representation of employer and employee interests. By contrast, the voluntarist approach is characterised by a weak statutory framework and the absence of collective interest representation of employers or employees. In this model, the state intervenes, for example by imposing targets for qualifications, while seeking to encourage employers to provide training. The system is designed to be employer-led, notably through the development of qualifications that seek to reflect immediate employer skills needs rather than the long-term interests of employees.

Vocational education

The type of provision of vocational education through which qualifications are acquired. An 'education' and a 'training' model can be discerned. In the education model, VET prepares students for a broadly-defined occupation, providing a broad knowledge base and enabling students for working life within that occupation. VET is seen as a continuation of school education, preparing students for life as a citizen as well as for an occupation, containing elements of general and civic education. What can be termed the 'training' model reflects a concern with the output of labour as in the English NVQ system. VET is concerned with the preparation for a particular job or set of tasks, containing a weak notion of general education and minimal underpinning knowledge. Key to differentiating the different models is the breadth and depth of VET and the degree to which it relies on informal learning.

Qualification

In line with the Cedefop definition, an official record or achievement which recognises successful completion of education or training, or satisfactory performance in a test or examination. At one extreme, in the skills-based model, qualifications constitute the formal accreditation of existing skills based on the 'competent performance' of specified tasks, regardless of how this has been achieved. Qualifications may or may not be linked to a curriculum. VET programmes in this model are criticised for neglecting the developmental process of learning while focusing on the criteria for assessment. In the occupational model, qualifications are awarded on the basis of completion of a comprehensive and regulated VET programme. A key factor is again the breadth and depth of the qualification and the ways in which it relates to other related qualifications within the sector.

Competence

Competence relates to the individual worker's performance in the workplace. The distinction is between a multi-dimensional and a functional model of competence. In the multi-dimensional model, competence denotes the potential of the individual worker to integrate knowledge, know-how and social and personal abilities to deal with complex and unpredictable situations. Competence is developed through curriculum-based VET including a broad knowledge base, enabling the reflective worker, able to make autonomous decisions within a broad occupational field. By contrast, in the functional model, as epitomised by the NVQ system, competences relate to narrowly defined tasks, are cumulative and based on minimal underpinning knowledge. A key issue relates to the extent of transferability of skills/competences within the sector and with other sectors/occupations.

Utilisation of labour

This refers to the ways in which labour is being deployed in the labour market. In the occupational model, workers are commonly expected to have an understanding of the labour process and of the sector as a whole, of their position and role within it and in relation to other occupations. They fulfil a wide range of activities beyond the practical task of laying bricks, are knowledgeable of the process, from preparing and co-ordinating the work to delivering the finished work. Bricklaying in the skills-based model is firmly embedded in the medieval model of trades, denoting the ability to perform a narrow range of activities related to the task of laying bricks. Bricklayers are typically employed for a particular job with a high degree of specialisation and with low levels of autonomy.

Currency of qualification

The value of qualifications on the labour market. In the occupational model, a qualification is an important precondition for labour market entry. Qualifications are based upon broadly conceived occupations and developed in negotiation with the social partners. Holding a qualification signifies that a person has completed a regulated and recognised VET programme and is therefore competent within that occupational field. This provides the basis for occupational labour markets. Different qualification levels are linked to wage grades established by the social partners. By contrast, in the skills-based model, labour is typically employed for a particular job or tasks rather than a broad occupationally-based qualification with its associated potential. As a result, pay is commonly linked to performance and the job-in-hand rather than the qualification. In the same vein, work experience commonly counts for more than do qualifications. This is also reflected in the wage structure and collective agreements which rarely relate to qualifications.