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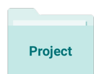


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# "Professionalism" as a path for the reform of VET systems[1]

Contribution to a Book-proposal within COST A11 – WG 4,

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### Abstract

"Professionalism" in vocational education and training is analysed concerning its relation to steering and co-ordination in VET systems. Based on concepts of Neo-Institutionalism the role which professionalism can play within a generalised framework for co-ordination of education and employment is analysed.

Conceptually the prevailing "techno-naturalistic" concept of the relations between qualifications/competences and "real" requirements is rejected in favour of a "constructivist" perspective; and the range of perceived co-ordination and steering mechanisms is expanded beyond the bureaucracy-market dichotomy, including additional mechanisms, namely networking and neo-corporatist organisation.

As co-ordination and steering has to be seen a complex interplay of a -- more or less integrated -- series of interactions, strategies, and policies, including diverse actors, there is a broad range of roles for the various categories of VET-professionals. The structure of division of labour among them, evolving from segmented to more complex patterns, turns out as a crucial feature for professionalism.

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## Introduction

"Professionalism" in vocational education and training is analysed concerning its relation to steering and co-ordination in VET systems. A basic premise of this analysis is that the shape and degree of professionalism *does matter* with respect to the performance of coordination mechanisms between VET and employment. However, there has been not much research in this area, the policy debate is frequently based on abstract reasoning and crude assumptions rather than on

[1] A first draft of that chapter was presented at the International Conference for "Teaching and Learning within Vocational and Occupational Education and Training", 21-24.September 2000 in Göttingen.

comparative evidence. This contribution takes some steps towards an analysis of *how professionalism matters* in those processes and mechanisms, and furthermore, *how it could matter* in case it were strengthened towards a more fully developed concept of professionalism. A main point is, to look at coordination between VET and employment in terms of a complex system of interactions among the various actors involved, interactions which in fact are crossing the boundaries between more or less distinct systemic entities.

The argument is developed in three steps. First, research about professionals in the field of VET and HRD is analysed to find out the main categories of professionalism in those areas. Professionalism is seen as a diverse and not well understood phenomenon, being concurrently in flux as an object of political strategies and interventions. Second, the structures and relations among those categories are reviewed with respect to lines of differentiation and divisions of labour. A stylised picture of the Austrian system is shown based on qualitative research. Third, professionalism is related to concepts and mechanisms for steering of VET systems and coordination to employment, making a special account of proposed strategies for professionalisation.

A main result of that analysis is that strategies of professionalisation are, and must be, deeply embedded in the broader concepts of VET policies, especially, of how the relation of VET and employment is conceived of. The distinction of a "techno-naturalistic" perspective is distinguished from a "constructivist" one, arguing that a sustainable strategy of professionalisation would have to be based on the latter, which in turn also could have an impact on the improvement of coordination of VET and employment.

## 1. Professionalism

There have been long standing theoretical debates about the concept of professionalism especially in Sociology. More recently, related kinds of questions have been raised in more practical analyses concerning the development and use of professional expertise among practitioners, and the relation of expert knowledge and learning in organisations. Nittel (2000) has made a distinction of three aspects of the "professional complex", with distinct theoretical references: *professionalism*, meaning competent performance of an occupational field and referring to an action theory perspective of work performance; *professionalisation*, meaning the collective processes of establishing a degree of visibility and power for an occupational group; and *profession*, meaning a certain established category of occupations, referring to macro level theories of society concerning functional differentiation and overall structures of division of labour. Those meanings do not necessarily combine to a holistic theoretical and empirical view, thus the former categories may be used for professional fields other than professions. However, the reasoning in this contribution concentrates on the questions of how the status of a profession may be achieved in VET, which developments in this direction can be observed, and how professionalism in this meaning may affect the mechanisms of coordination of VET and employment.

Initially, high-status occupations with considerable power were described as professions, with the following characteristics usually being attributed (cf. e.g. Torres 1991, Alisch et al. 1990):

- specific expertise or knowledge base, which tends to be closely related to a specific scientific discipline;

- a system of regulation and control, within which the processing of a specific occupational area is reserved specifically for this profession by the state, and which is subject to auto-control;
- a specific code of ethics which provides the basis for auto-control, and in conjunction with that a special system of values;
- a type of self-organisation which also regulates access to the profession, and special training as well as certain practical requirements.

It is easy to see that professional groups of educators fulfil very few of these criteria, "VET professionals" usually even less so than other categories of teachers and trainers. The consequence of this was that teachers were classed as a *semi-profession* (Etzioni 1969; cf. also the early twist of meaning of the term into "bureaucratic professions" by Leggatt 1970, p. 160; see also Hodkinson/Issitt 1995, 8).

Since then, attention in theoretical discourse has shifted to focus more closely on the process of creating and developing professions, definitions were made more flexible, and the dissociation from other forms of occupations is seen in a less absolute, more fluid way (Abbott 1988). It is particular discussions about the definition and control of a certain occupational field and the institutionalisation of a specific knowledge base as a basis for legitimisation of occupational autonomy which have come to the foreground (Di Maggio and Powell 1991). More recently, in line with the development of neoliberalism, the relationship of professionalism and managerialism has come up as an important question of analysis (cf. Exworthy/Halford 1999).

Two aspects should be stressed in the development of and research into professionalism for our purposes: Firstly, the connection between professional work and work in bureaucratic organisations, and, secondly, the content of professional work.

- Professional work in the strictest sense of the term was originally seen in contrast to work in bureaucratic hierarchies as exclusive, and consequently the spread and predominance of Taylorism and the Fordist model in the sixties and seventies led to an image of "de-professionalisation", with some people even talking of the "proletarisation" of professions. Professional forms of work, however, proved more able to survive than had been predicted by this research, with the new production concepts and the post-Fordist paradigm in particular stressing re-qualification and re-professionalisation - nowadays it is the relationship between professional work and bureaucratic hierarchies which is being studied. "The dominance of bureaucratic hierarchies is over", writes Lynne Zucker (1991, p. 160) in her study of the interplay between "bureaucratic authority" and "expert authority". Different forms of complementarity and interplay which can be studied in more detail in the system of vocational training and coordination between training and employment have taken over from the dichotomy and exclusion between hierarchy and profession.

- The second aspect, the content of professional work, was largely ignored by classical sociological research into professions. Michael Eraut's book (1994) about the development of professional knowledge and skills is a milestone with direct reference to the teaching professions. A link to innovation research is provided by the study of professional work in management in relation to the development of learning organisations and the learning processes in the interplay between tacit knowledge and codified knowledge. Professional work stands out particularly due to the great importance of its implicit components, which implies

particular conditions and also difficulties in shaping formal training for learning these qualifications.

The main assumptions guiding the following analysis are that the VET-professionals potentially do have a key role within the complex mechanisms and systems of coordination between VET and employment, and that the actual capacity for the performance of that role depends to a high extent on the structure and shaping of VET-professionalism. Those structures are analysed with concern to the main categories of VET professionals and their division of labour, in order to work out some structural relations to the mechanisms of steering and coordination of VET-systems and to elaborate on possible pathways for professionalisation.

## 2. Main categories of VET professionals and their roles, as compared to HRD practitioners

The starting point for the analysis of the main categories of "VET professionals" is a comparative review of research in the field of the vocational training system (VET) on the one hand, and in the newly emerging field of human resource development (HRD) on the other.[2] The complexity of the vocational training system should be taken into account: firstly, its relative autonomy in relation to the other sectors of education (elementary and higher), and, secondly, its overlapping with the employment system, which brings it in a more or less direct relationship with ongoing HRD-activities. The professional categories responsible for vocational training are spread across the different organisational spheres of VET, they work in formalised state or private educational establishments, in companies, are self-employed, etc.

Contrasting vocational education and training (VET) and Human Resource Development (HRD) can be productive for the purpose of understanding jobs, roles, tasks and positions[3], since we can draw on a more developed analysis of roles and positions in the HRD field, as compared to the VET field. The research about professionalism in HRD is conceived of as a kind of model or counterfactual for VET professionalism, as it starts from a holistic perspective of roles to be performed in that field, bringing together the various functions involved, which are normally much more segmented and scattered in the VET field. Especially the above mentioned relation of professional functions and managerial functions is solved in a gradual manner in the HRD concept, as compared to the tendency to make a deep split between them in VET, where the managerial functions are in fact allocated more or less to the political level.

### 2.1. HRD practitioners: their roles, positions and tasks in Europe and the US

In contrast to the dominant role of teachers and trainers in vocational training, the classification of HRD practitioners covers a much broader spectrum of roles. That

[2] Interestingly, the literature about professionalism in education does frequently not make reference to that newly emerging field of HRD, which can be conceived of as an outstanding example of a systematic attempt for professionalisation in a certain field of activity.

[3] A distinction is drawn in literature between two approaches to the analysis of elements which make up job profiles: the more European approach (task analysis) which refers to activities, and the more American approach of role analysis which refers to outputs. Carrying out tasks or roles requires specific competences which represent a level of analysis unto themselves. Certain professional positions can be made up of specific combinations of tasks or roles which demand specific competencies for them to be performed (cf. de Rijk and Nijhof 1997).

field may also be studied as an example of how a certain occupational group has been developed towards professionalism. The activities leading up to the construction of the *American Association for Training and Development* (ASTD) were an important step towards the professionalisation of the HRD field, with systematic investigations and developments of the roles and functions of HRD practitioners being undertaken since the eighties. In the nineties, this approach was put to good use on a broader European scale, particularly through the activities of the University of Twente.

The classification of HRD roles in the USA (McLagan and Suhadolnik 1989, p. 20) is important in this context, the professional *roles* being a basic conceptual element in establishing the professional field:

1. Marketer
2. Needs Analyst
3. Researcher
4. HRD Materials Developer
5. Organisation Change Agent
6. Instructor/Facilitator
7. Programme Designer
8. HRD Manager
9. Administrator
10. Individual Career Development Advisor
11. Evaluator

Various studies considered the usability of this classification in the analysis of European HRD practitioners (cf. de Rijk et al. 1994, Valkeavaara 1996, 1998, Odenthal and Nijhof 1996). Similarities and differences emerged with the US structure, which in turn can be seen to be in motion (McLagan 1996)[4]. The European surveys, which are possibly distorted by sampling errors and the small sample size, tend to coincide on a high dominance of the following four roles, with the Instructor/Facilitator role being ticked by 85-95% of respondents:

- Instructor/Facilitator
- Programme Designer
- Organisation Change Agent
- Needs Analyst

The other three roles in the above order were ticked by 50% of respondents in Germany, and they were also frequently mentioned, although in different configurations, for the other European countries looked at. The following roles from

[4] The 1989 role structure is revised for a new study of HRD roles in the USA, which on the one hand takes more account of organisation development and consultants, and on the other hand suggests more complex role definitions which are more closely related to organisational dynamics: e.g. HR Strategic Adviser instead of the different roles of Marketer, HRD Manager and Administrator; or HR Systems Designer and Developer and Learning Program Specialist instead of HRD materials Developer and Program Designer; new roles are Organisation Design Consultant and Performance Consultant, the original specialised roles of Evaluator and Needs Analyst are absorbed into the more complex new roles; only two of the original roles remain unchanged (Instructor/Facilitator and Researcher), and two more are still couched in similar terms (Organisation Change Agent, but with a stronger emphasis on the outside as Consultant; and Individual Career Development Adviser but with a sharper separation between development and career as Individual Development and Individual Career Consultant (cf. also Odenthal and Nijhof 1996, pp. 88-89). A European project also analysed developments in large companies in the direction outlined by the ASTD, showing that an overall shift from the more “practical” roles in training towards the more “strategic” roles linking HRD to corporate needs can be observed (Tjepkema et al 2000, 85-86). Based on a literature review and the observations in the European corporations, gross communalities were found in Europe and the US, at least in large companies, whereas Japan seems to differ more clearly concerning the organisational context of HRD, the visions and the strategies.

the ASTD classification were much less frequently ticked by participants (e.g. in Germany by a maximum of one third of respondents), and can be seen as more highly specialised roles in Europe:

- HRD Materials Developer
- Marketer
- Individual Career Development Advisor
- Evaluator
- HRD Manager
- Researcher
- Administrator

Once again, there are different degrees of emphasis on these various roles from one European country to another: in Ireland and England the roles of HRD Manager and Administrator were regularly ticked, whereas in Germany HRD Materials Developer, Marketer and Individual Career Development Advisor and Evaluator are the most frequently encountered specialised roles; in Italy Individual Career Development Advisor and Evaluator were mentioned comparatively rarely; in England Research and HRD Materials Developers play a comparatively more important role.

Another perspective to analyse the occupational field of HRD practitioners are the *positions* in terms of the job titles performed in the enterprise sector. The most important positions comprising the different roles proved to be:

- Trainer
- Advisor
- Training or HRD Manager
- Director or Head
- Personnel or Executive Manager
- HRD Coordinator, Counsellor
- Researcher

More detailed analysis of the most important roles and tasks performed within the different positions reveals a large degree of overlapping between the job titles in terms of roles (see the two diagrams based on Odenthal and Nijhofs' survey 1996, and de Rijk and Nijhof 1997).

Closer consideration of the empirical distribution of roles amongst German HRD practitioners produces the following picture (see Figure 1): there are four overlapping types of job titles, each of which has to carry out similar tasks: Trainers (41%), HRD Managers, Counsellor-Coordinators (20%), Advisors, Director-Heads (26%), Personnel or Executive Managers (4%). All these headings have the *instruction/facilitation* and *programme design* roles in common, carried out by more than two thirds of practitioners. These can be seen as a core function. Trainers also act as *organisation change agents*, whilst HRD Managers and Counsellor-Coordinators in addition to their core functions also perform *needs analysis*. Advisors and Director-Heads perform *all the roles mentioned* (the small group of Personnel or Executive Managers also performs the role of HRD Manager, which would appear to be redundant). A study from the beginning of the 1990s (Arnold/Müller 1992) has given a similar picture. An important distinction was drawn between full-time personnel within enterprises on the one hand and part-time personnel and external trainers, which have become the main force of further education in enterprises. The profile of full-time personnel, especially that of the trainers, is even more complex than observed in the HRD-studies. As an example, the full-time trainers are performing also needs analysis, whereas this role tends to be performed by HRD-

managers or Counsellors according to the quantitative studies. Arnold/Müller (1992; see also Nittel 2000, 180-181) point to an ongoing process of enriching the educational personnel towards the performance of management functions and of supporting organisational and cultural change in the enterprises.

**Figure 1: HRD roles and self-reported job positions of German HRD personnel**

The most important tasks performed by European practitioners in the course of their work were also surveyed (see Figure 2). Here, once again, there is a lot of overlapping between tasks. Six out of ten categories of tasks are regularly mentioned in more than two headings of job positions, including two tasks in four headings (design and develop HRD interventions; deliver HRD interventions), and two tasks in three headings (consultancy/advise and manage/develop the department). Only four of the ten categories of tasks were more regularly ticked specifically for certain headings (recruitment, management development, research, report/publish).

**Figure 2: Self-reported tasks and job positions of European HRD personnel**

In conclusion, two task areas or roles provide the focus of activity for European HRD practitioners: Training/Facilitation and organisational change agent. On average, for the four European countries, a quarter of respondents indicated these roles as being the most important; in Germany the most important role focused more heavily on Instructor/Facilitator (41%) than on change agent (13%). Despite the high proportion of direct teaching activity or learning support, the activities of HRD personnel are quite closely tied in with the organisational development processes. For example, there are no major differences between internal and external HRD practitioners as regards their professional activities. A recent study about HRD professionals in large learning oriented organisations across Europe confirms the predominant role of training activities by HRD personnel, whereas in some organisations HRD professionals operate as change agents, starting and supporting the change process towards a learning organisation." (Tjepkema et al. 2000, 9)[5] The authors suppose that their "outcomes might indicate that HRD practices to some extent fall behind HRD visions."(ibid., VII) Even in the learning oriented organisations studied, one of the main inhibiting factors for innovation of HRD towards those visions was a lack of clarity on HRD's role (beneath the well known lack of time for learning, and for performing HRD tasks on the part of managers, and a lack of motivation on part of managers, or employees; ibid., VII, 43-45).

## 2.2. Categories of professionals in VET

The division of labour between different professional profiles in the area of formalised vocational training (VET) as compared with these occupational roles and headings in the HRD field, can be analysed on the basis of some empirical studies about the different categories of teachers and trainers in particular. The comparative CEDEFOP study on *Teachers and Trainers in Vocational Training* (CEDEFOP 1995a, p. 15, 1995b, p. 12, CEDEFOP 1997) initially distinguishes between three basic types of "VET professionals":

- Technical and vocational teachers;
- Full-time trainers; and
- Part-time trainers and temporary trainers.

[5] Seven countries were covered by the study: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, U.K.

Distinct *functions*, which are attached to the five basic stages of the training process, are put forward as an additional basis for developing particular professional profiles. "In those countries where training is more developed and has a longer tradition, it is possible to establish a second means of classification based on the function fulfilled by the teacher or by the trainer (…) there are five basic stages in the training process, around which new occupational profiles are emerging: mainly needs analysis and design, organisation of the training, the design and drawing up of the didactic material, the training itself, and evaluation. Around these functions, new areas of expertise are becoming apparent. They are related to education and training management and the organisation and planning of teaching." (CEDEFOP 1995b, pp. 12-13)[6].

A somewhat modified classification of six different functions in the vocational training field, which is more closely related to professional categories in vocational training systems is provided in CEDEFOP 1997:

- "tutoring (tutor, coach, guide, master);
- teaching (teacher, trainer, instructor);
- counselling (counsellor, consultant);
- development (developer, designer);
- management (training manager, principal, director);
- policy-making" (CEDEFOP 1997, p. 15).

A comparison of the two types of classification, that in the HRD field on the one hand, and that in the VET systems on the other, reveals one fundamental difference: in the HRD field we are dealing with complex profiles, which are often directly related to management and guidance functions, whilst in the VET field there is a segmentary division which is typical of Taylorism and Fordism. Teaching and support functions tend to be quite distinct from the other functions such as analysis, planning, development, design, evaluation, etc. The more organisational tasks are usually carried out outside the actual training organisations within the administrative superstructure, often even outside the education sector in the area of the political and corporative organisations of interest groups. This pattern corresponds to the model of bureaucratic organisation.

Studies on teachers and trainers in vocational training in the countries of the European Union produce a basic pattern in which the areas of vocational training schools as well as apprenticeship and other forms of vocational training, the latter being more deeply rooted in the employment system (e.g. labour market training), overlap with the HRD field. In the school sector, there is a great deal of regulation, supervision and information, but much less in the other areas. Thus, for example, it was not possible in the CEDEFOP-studies to find comparative figures for the different categories of trainers and tutors. Some important findings from the comparative CEDEFOP "cartographic" studies were:

- The *division of VET professionals according to the three basic types* of teachers, full-time trainers and part-time / temporary trainers was clearly found in most of the different countries (there is little information about tutors, a category which seems to merge with that of trainers).

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[6] This functional analysis, based on the training cycle, also underlies the British approach to skill development from the time of the Industrial Training Boards until the developments in the Training and Development Lead Body (CEDEFOP 1995a, pp. 157- 158, p. 171).

- The *teacher category is closely related to the structure of the respective vocational training systems*. In many countries those systems are highly regulated, differentiated or fragmented, and this structure is reflected in the structure of teachers and their training system (particularly obvious in France, for example). If the vocational training sector is less regulated, there is a greater diversity as well as a less pronounced structuring in the educator area (e.g. in England, where at the same time the clearest linkages of VET and HRD are to be found)

- Usually *educators tend to be bound very specifically to a subject*, which can be either general, or occupational, or technical. There are often various more or less hierarchical levels of educators, sometimes linked with types of schools at different levels. Moreover, in the area of vocational training subjects there are more theoretical (higher value) and more practical (lower value) categories of educators with different training pathways. Training of staff for the general subjects usually takes place at higher education level, whilst this is less often the case for staff for vocational training subjects. Educators for practical subjects often have vocational training on the middle level (skilled worker). Thus a rather rigid structure of VET professionals exists in various countries.

- In most countries *educators for professional subjects*, most of whom have had to go through relevant training at higher education level, are required to have several years' *practical experience in industry* (England is an exception, for example, where there is no regulated professional training for these staff, as is Italy). In many countries there are ongoing discussions as to whether the emphasis of teacher training for professional subjects should be placed more on the pedagogical or on the practical-occupational side. This type of discussion is taking place in Germany, for example, and also in Switzerland for the staff in (part-time) vocational training schools (cf. Bader and Hensge 1996, Ruetzel 1996, Straumann 1996).

- Whilst there is a good level of information in the teacher field, *the information base for trainers is very poor in all countries*.[7] A distinction is often drawn between trainers within companies on the one hand, and trainers in extra-school institutions for vocational training, which usually fall within the scope of responsibility of labour market policy, or labour market authorities. Occupational training programmes for disadvantaged young people are carried out in this area in project form, but the institutions are planned for both young people and adults. Specific rules on qualifications usually apply to these trainers, but it is rare to come across any specific training requirements (in Italy, for example, there are exhaustive job descriptions in the framework of collective contractual regulations).

- A further category of trainers who are covered by regulations are the *in-house company trainers in apprenticeship systems*. In this field once again, a large proportion of trainers do this as a sideline without being trained, and trainers are expected to lean more heavily towards the practical side, with pedagogical requirements playing a back-seat role. In Germany, for example, a large percentage of employees - one in six according to estimates - is involved in training, but most of them minimally so and as a sideline (around half of all trainers only for a few hours, and less than 10% devote more than half their working hours to training; cf. Neubert 1996; a similar situation is to be found in Austria; cf. Lassnigg/Steiner 1997).

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[7] In some reports it is clearly pointed out that the education system "does not officially recognise the trainer function" (e.g., Finland in CEDEFOP 1998). The category of trainers provides in fact a direct relationship to the HRD field, and the studies indirectly point to a prevailing tendency to neglect that field.

- The *structures for training and further training of trainers tend to be vague and complex*, and are often rooted in the market economy sector. Although efforts are made in the training establishments linked to labour market policy to take as much account as possible of economic requirements, there are all the same considerable differences between the training establishments and the in-house training processes. (Per-Erik Ellstroem 1999 describes these differences between a "factory culture" and a "learning culture" and the tensions related thereto using a comparison between training on the labour market and the Swedish "employer-sponsored training").

- One important characteristic of teachers and trainers in the vocational training sphere is that *they belong to two professional categories*: on the one hand their own area of expertise, and on the other their role as educators. Usually the lion's share of their training has been with reference to their field of expertise, with training for teaching activities amounting to very little[8].

## 3. Patterns of division of labour among VET professionals

The roles of these various categories of teachers and trainers in the overall pattern of division of labour for "VET professionals" has been so far studied even less than the relations between the categories themselves. This section approaches a more systematic general overview about those patterns, starting with the presentation of some results from a more in-depth study of the Austrian situation, which is complimented by a review of results from other countries.[9] These results at least can give an initial impression of the complexity which reigns in this field.

### 3.1. The Austrian picture as an example: "old" and "new" professionals

Some basic patterns in this field can be sketched out using a stylised picture of the different types of "VET professionals" in the Austrian VET system (Lassnigg and Stoeger 1999, Lassnigg 1999a). By comparing different areas from the whole scope of vocational training including HRD, a kind of overall and inclusive professional structure is generated, within which we can draw a distinction between "old" and "new" professionals. The "VET professionals" in the formal vocational training system can be broken down into four categories of "old professionals":

- Teachers, trainers, tutors;
- Administrators, principals, managers;
- Politicians, lobbyists;
- Researchers.

There are three important areas of VET and HRD, which lie outside the traditional formal VET system, and can be seen as the basis for emerging categories of "new professionals":

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[8] This corresponds to a certain extent to the paradigm of teachers in higher education as conceived in Humboldt's principle of "Education through Science": "anyone who has a scientific grasp of his subject can also teach it" (orig. German; Thonhauser 1995, p.115; cf. also Stinchcombe 1990).

[9] This section owes very much to the work in the project "New forms of education of professionals for vocational education and training (EUROPROF)" which was carried out in the Leonardo da Vinci programme (European Commission ID 3366).

- Adult education (incl. further training, labour market and publicly supported in-service training);
- HRD in the company sector and on the market for consulting;
- a new area of intermediate organisations (centres for innovation) which have no direct training function as such but play an important role in providing incentives, triggering innovation and playing a coordinating role.

Those areas are clearly gaining importance, and the professional categories of people working within them, cannot be subsumed among the traditional categories of VET professionals, moreover they are normally not even subsumed among that field of professional competence.

The most important characteristics and aspects of the division of labour among VET professionals can be indicated by a stylised comparison of the HRD roles on the one hand, and the categories of "old" and "new" professionals in the Austrian example on the other (cf. Figure 3).

Firstly, the distinction of the four categories of "old professionals" broadens the traditional focus which tended to concentrate on educators (teachers, trainers, tutors) alone, as the wider organisational professional categories are included. In so doing, it becomes clear that the professional demands in the area of VET also cover a broader scope of functions and categories than it would appear when viewed from the point of view of professionalising the teaching profession.

Secondly, the cross-classification of VET professionals and HRD roles shows that in spite of their different field of application (economic organisations) and different aim (implementation of company strategies) the latter can still reveal important aspects of professionalisation in the education sector. What emerges in particular in the formal education system is the segmentary distribution of the various roles in different contexts (administration, politics), and it becomes clear that there is overlapping with the development of learning organisations: firstly, training organisations can themselves be conceived as learning organisations, and secondly training also plays an important role for the development of learning organisations in the business sector.

The distinction between the contexts of the formal education sector on the one hand, and the HRD field, adult education, and the intermediary organisations on the other hand sheds light on the different configurations of "old" and "new" professional profiles: roles are matched in a segmented manner to the various vocational categories amongst the "old" professionals, with teachers teaching, administrators administrating and developing, politicians taking decisions, researchers carrying out research, etc.; on the contrary, the "new" professionals have more complex role profiles (only in adult education is there a similar segmentary division of labour between teachers - most of them part time, and often in parallel working in the initial education system - who in most cases also are developing their programmes, and a distinct, though quantitatively very restricted group of people in management).[10]

[10] The issue of professionalisation in adult education is a long standing focus of debate and policy action not only in Austria. In Germany, for example, the development of full-time professionals in adult education has been a main focus during the public policy initiatives during the sixties and seventies (Nittel 2000). This development, which has implied the strengthening of management functions and many other key roles that fit well in the categories of the HRD-roles and positions definded by ASTD.

There are also some similarities concerning the pattern of roles between certain categories of "old" professionals and certain areas in the "new" context: between teachers-trainers-tutors and adult education; between Administrators/Managers and professionals in the HRD field (with the difference that the latter are more active in the direct teaching-learning processes), and between politicians-lobbyists and the professionals working in intermediary organisations.

**Figure 3: Stylised pattern of roles and professional categories in Austrian VET**

This stylised pattern, which needs to be analysed in greater depth by further research warrants a few additional comments. Administrators-managers have a complex role profile and concentrate a very important strategic function in their field. This corresponds to the bureaucratic model, but it should be stressed that this category of "de facto" professionals is not usually taken as such. With the exception of more recent attempts at professional preparation of school heads, there is next to no training for these categories. Legal training continues to play an important role in administration, and to some extent this is a case of promotion positions for teachers, which are still often filled according to political criteria. The organisational context of the "new" professionals is less bureaucratic and demands more complex profiles, which are necessitated by the fact of working in a more flexible environment. Linking learning functions with organisational activity in development and planning raises the question as to how useful similar combinations might be amongst the "old" professionals.

## 3.2. Conflicts and linkages in the division of labour

As opposed to the conceptual integration of an overall professional structure in VET and HRD, the described categories of "VET professionals" live and work in different "worlds", are not particularly coordinated and sometimes even work against each other. There are certain lines of conflicts among them, and there exist certain linkages too, each influencing the co-ordination and steering mechanisms of the VET-system.

There are, for example, lines of conflict between the different players in the apprenticeship system, between employers' representatives and employees' representatives, and between the public and the company part, with vocational training teachers, company trainers, administrators and decision-makers all being involved. In-house trainers, who make up the largest group of "VET professionals" in apprenticeship training and are obviously at the very centre of the vocational training system, generally tend not to be defined as "VET professionals", because their training activity usually takes place on an informal and part-time basis, beneath their "normal" work - most of them would not consider themselves to be "VET professionals" either (Lassnigg 1999a, Lassnigg and Steiner 1997, Lassnigg and Schneeberger 1997).

A further line of conflict exists between schools providing initial training and adult education organisations. In this area, a bureaucratic system confronts a system organised according to the market and the collective provision by the social partners. Apart from the actual genuine differences, this also gives rise to a lot of prejudice which is often blown out of proportion in public discussions. There are lively discussions, for example, about regulating adult education more strictly, countered by arguments about bureaucratisation and cost increases (cf. Ofner and Wimmer 1998, p. 164-167, Lassnigg 2000).

Given the extent of regulation and bureaucratisation and the lines of conflict and problems of coordination at political level, *top-down* processes of steering and coordination come strongly into their own (this line being reflected in the notion of teachers as a semi-profession), and it is not easy to find examples of *bottom-up* mechanisms, which would in fact be the scope for exercising a broader professional expertise going beyond the teaching-training expertise. However, this observation may be partly a product of perspective and visibility. Looking at the formal mechanisms of the decision-making processes in particular, *bottom-up* processes are less visible, as they tend to exist on an informal basis, in the preparation of decisions finally taken in other positions, by participation in working parties for drawing up materials, through rolling different functions in different categories of players into one (personal union), etc. These types of "personal union" are of particular importance and can be shown on the basis of two examples:

Example 1:

In the apprenticeship system, most of the companies are either small or very small. Normally in these companies the owner, the company manager, the person responsible for training and probably also the trainer him or herself is one and the same person. In the past, these people tended to have gone through apprenticeship training themselves. This meant that at the same time as acquiring their own professional skills they also implicitly picked up the training practices of the time. Another example in this field is that the members of professional organisations, who at the lower and fragmented level of regions and crafts are also responsible for steering apprenticeship training, also come from this group.

From the point of view of "VET professional" profiles, these links clearly show on the one hand what interconnections really can exist between vocational training and employment in the company sector, even if this may not become apparent from a formal consideration of professional categories. On the other hand, these linkages also raise questions about the professional identity and the professionalism of these "VET professionals". It is a question of using and developing this resource of "practical experience" on the one hand, and of the professionalisation of training functions on the other.

The example of "personal union" in the apprenticeship field makes it clear that this system basically rests on ways of passing on tradition, both in terms of training and also in terms of company practice as a whole. How can there be innovation within this model? The essential link here will no doubt come in the form of innovation of company practice, driven by external factors. Not only would "pedagogical professionalisation" in the traditional sense of the term be of no use here whatsoever, but it would actually be completely out of place. At the same time, it is absolutely clear that trainer-entrepreneurs have a key role to play in the further development of this sector.

If the situation in apprenticeship training in small companies is linked to the concepts of innovation dynamics and the learning organisation, but also with the importance of the knowledge base, the production of knowledge and the difficulties related to the productive organisation of informal and implicit learning processes, it becomes clear that the basic resource of apprenticeship being a combined process of practice and learning still faces major challenges. Progress will depend on the extent to which it is possible to create learning organisations and to link informal and implicit learning processes with formal and explicit ones, as is being attempted through model trials in Germany, for example (cf. Dehnbostel and Uhe 1999, Dybowski et al. 1999, Dehnbostel et al. 1998). The essential question here is whether it is

professionalisation along the lines of “formal pedagogisation” through a strenghtening of the extra-company and formalised public elements of training (extension of compulsory part-time schooling, provisions governing the content of training and resources, etc.) which is sought, or whether apprenticeship training can be successfully linked with HRD processes, or this type of process actually established in the first place. And for the part-time vocational training school, how can the mechanisms of informal learning be applied and utilised ?

Example 2:

In the vocational training school system, once they have qualified in their professional subject, teachers of professional subjects are expected to spend several years gaining practical experience before they can enter the teaching profession and then complete training in parallel to their work. As a result, a considerable proportion of these educators are professionally active in their own specific field as independent company owners or as employees, in parallel to working part-time at the school[11].

The example of parallel employment in the vocational schools raises the question as to the extent to which practical experience can be used for the purposes of school learning and teaching processes, and also for school organisation. Several factors are of relevance: firstly, the quality of practical experience, i.e. how much usable impetus does it actually provide for school practice; secondly, the school’s absorption capacity for such impetus, bearing in mind the formal types of organisation, i.e. to what extent do provisions governing curriculum implementation or the structure of hierarchical relations of authority actually leave scope for this impetus; thirdly, the absorption capacity in terms of social relations in the school, i.e. the extent to which relations between teaching staff allow informal exchange of knowledge in different dimensions.

The professionalisation of “VET professionals” in the traditional sense of the term would mean that pedagogical qualifications, in particular for the Training/Facilitator role would be beefed up. This can be seen directly through the discussions on the educational level of training (university, institute of higher education, intermediate level) and about strategies of “front-end” training of educators (teaching qualifications before specialist qualification) versus “add on” training of educators (teaching qualifications in addition to basic specialist training). In straightforward terms, the thrust of a basic “front end” training strategy aims at bringing educators in the vocational training field into line with teachers in general education, and developing a general professional profile, which is oriented towards teaching activity[12]. The effectiveness of these different strategic lines, which is often discussed in very abstract terms in the field of education policy, could be investigated through studies comparing the different models which have long been in application, considering their broader contexts[13].

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[11] In exceptional cases, top managers also perform teaching activities; in filling top positions in schools, it is also feasible that this type of experience could be drawn on. (cf. Lassnigg and Stoeger 1999).

[12] The concept of “front-end” training also contains further distinctions depending on whether the vocational and the pedagogical components are arranged in parallel or consecutively. The description of the profile “*Senior Teaching Post at a Vocational School*” (German: Höheres Lehramt an beruflichen Schulen; cf. Bader 1995) is an example of the focus on professionalisation for a general teacher profile. The general professional profile for the teaching profession was established in the following terms by the German Educational Board’s (Bildungsrat) structural plan in 1970: teaching, educating, advising, assessing, innovating (Deutscher Bildungsrat 1972, p. 127).

[13] An example could be a comparison of the different training models in the Austrian context for the economic-administrative field (“Economics – Teacher Training Course”: university, “front-end”, consecutively, practical requirement) and for the technical-commercial area (“Vocational Teacher Training College”: relevant basic subject studies, practical experience in the occupational subject field, recruitment for teaching profession, short non-university day-release teacher training); initial tentative comparisons in the framework of the EUROPROF project (Lassnigg and Stoeger 1999) pointed out important differences regarding the development of a knowledge base for

## 3.3. Observations and perspectives from other countries

The experience and results of research into the division of labour between the different categories of VET professionals were processed in the EUROPROF project and reveal some similar basic patterns and tensions (cf. in summary in particular Attwell 1997a, Heidegger 1997; cf. also Brown 1997, Heikkinen 1997a). The two "worlds" of vocational training in the school and education sector (VET) and the HRD field in the employment sector emerge in rather clear fashion, and there is a converging trend in the distribution and awareness of the different roles. Graham Attwell (1997a, p. 261) describes a simultaneous process of convergence and divergence for both sides - VET and HRD - which has the following characteristics, to the effect that "for both, their main role is becoming the management of learning":

- extending the role of "VET professionals", mainly through increased activity in the field of further education (developing new programmes for new groups of learners);
- greater involvement in processes of organisation learning (linking learning with labour processes);
- increased concern for training and further training of the unemployed (counselling, development and organisation of new programmes);
- new roles in the management of learning processes as a result of decentralisation processes in vocational training;
- increased emphasis on context-related learning and learning in the workplace leads to a shift of activities from traditional teaching activity in the classroom to activities involving the shaping of learning processes in practice (mentoring, coaching, simulation, support, etc.).

A few examples of specific developments could serve to illustrate this general trend. Studies in France have revealed that role extension is occurring not only in schools, but also in the area of further training (de Bligniere 1997). In the early seventies activity focused on teaching in the training organisations, in the late seventies it was extended to include the functional analysis of jobs, training needs analysis, and the implementation and evaluation of training in companies. Alongside this extension towards activities of training management, a countertrend involving the specialisation of individual new roles is now taking place. Reforms in vocational training in Spain since the early nineties have meant in particular that new players have been more involved in the administrative and political fields (social partners, regional administrations, labour administration, etc.), and have done away with the monopoly of the vocational training school system which was seen as increasingly inefficient (Cellorio 1997). Similar trends towards greater involvement of external "VET professionals" from amongst the social partners and the regions can be seen in many countries including Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, the United Kingdom, etc., accompanied by relatively pronounced professionalisation (Nielsen 1996, Santema 1997, Heikkinen 1997a, b, Shackleton et al. 1995).

One important question concerns the position and duties of teachers in the vocational training schools, as well as trainers in companies. Teachers are often seen as a

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innovative practices; a further possibility would be to compare the German, Austrian and Swiss training for teacher training provided in (part-time) vocational schools, where there are some major differences.

central category, which should act as the “spearhead of change and progress in teaching and learning processes” (Attwell 1997a, p. 258; Papadopoulos 1994). It is generally felt that an extension and adaptation of their role and function would be desirable, but there are considerable contradictions attached. On this point, the studies in the EUROPROF project refer to different experiences in various countries. Vocational training policy in Finland tried to extend the teachers’ activity profile, but this did not prove entirely successful. Anja Heikinnen (1996 p. 11) quotes the dissatisfaction of one educator: “*…it seems that teaching has become peripheral*”. At the opposite end of the scale, a study in the Netherlands shows that teachers are very much involved in non-teaching duties and see this in positive terms. “*A large degree of willingness to make secondary education more professional is evident from teachers’ replies to questionnaire items on non-teaching activities. Most would like to work more closely with their colleagues and local industry and take the needs of individuals and groups of students more into account. There is also broad support for in-service training as well as participating in new development projects*.” (Stoel and Streumer 1996, p. 16). At the same time, however, it also says that “*…most teachers teach traditionally*” (ibid., p. 16).

These differences possibly reflect the different positions and role definitions which teachers have in the respective vocational training systems, they may, however to some extent also reflect the sense of (some) teaches of their professional identity being grounded in their teaching responsibility (cf. Halford/Leonard 1999, 111-112). For example, the developments in Finland are seen within a marked situation of tension between the traditional strong and central role of teachers and the technocratic top-down reform politics of the eighties and early nineties (Heikkinen 1997b, pp. 216-218). The growing significance of informal and work-based learning means increasing importance and increasing demands for in-house trainers. At the same time they are usually in a weak position, usually work part-time as trainers, and have little or no professionalisation in their training function - although there is more marked professionalisation in their “own” profession. This even applies to Germany, where this role is most highly professionalised. This relation of tension seems to be very pronounced across the board within this group, and is sometimes seen as the path towards the “pedagogisation” of labour processes: “… instead of creating a separate group of VET professionals, pedagogical knowledge should increasingly be a component of everybody’s ‘professionalism’, especially those working in jobs involving planning, management and development” (Heikkinen 1997a, p. 125; CEDEFOP 1996).

A summary of the general shortcomings in the VET professionals’ training system levels the following criticism (Heidegger 1997, pp. 18- 19):

- there is no integration of VET and HRD;
- there is no connection between vocational training and reducing unemployment;
- there is insufficient interaction between the different categories of “VET professionals”;
- the possibilities and contributions for shaping the professional position are not valued;
- pedagogical skills are usually kept separate from occupational subject areas;

- occupational competence (know how) and knowledge (know what, know why) are usually kept separate;

- prospects in planning and management are often fundamentally different to the points of view of vocational training practitioners;

- theory and practical application are kept separate with both sides being incorporated in different positions/persons;

- the development of cooperative learning environments is not taken into account.

Thus the basic structures and problems of division of labour amongst "VET professionals" are mirrored and reflected in their training. Correspondingly, in studies into the possibilities for professionalisation of the vocational training field "quite strong suspicions and tensions between some groups" (Heikkinen 1997a, p. 130) came to the fore, which also emerged in the Austrian example.

## 4. Steering and co-ordination of VET-systems and pathways towards professionalism

The framework in which the development of professionalism can be related to the mechanisms of steering and co-ordination in VET systems can be outlined by the following basic ideas (see for a more thorough discussion: Lassnigg 1999, Lassnigg 2nd report):

- Coordination of VET and employment is commonly perceived as problematic, however, the mechanisms actually at work are seldom analysed explicitly. Rather we have abstract concepts, the most important being the bureaucracy and the market, but we have a lack of more specific analyses of how co-ordination is going on in real systems.
- If we look at real systems, we see very complex arrangements of actors and their interactions, including the market and bureaucratic control, but also going beyond that, including various strategies at the levels of individual actors (micro) and organisations (meso), some amount of policies by regional, national and supranational actors (macro), etc.
- More concretely, an analysis of co-ordination between VET and employment should consider interaction between the following categories of actors at different levels of societal aggregation (micro-meso-macro: individual, organisational, national and supranational):
  - the household (parents, students)
  - the education training providers, which may be seen as the basis of the VET professionals (schools, education and training establishments, teachers, trainers, etc.)
  - the employers and enterprises and their organisations
  - the employees and their organisations
- A crucial point in the analysis of coordination mechanisms or systems is that so far mainly the micro level (educational and labour markets) and the macro level (large bureaucratic systems) are referred to, and the level in between has been more or less neglected (at least in terms of systematic analysis).
- However, this meso level of organisations and their interrelations seems to be a key dimension for the understanding of steering and co-ordination in VET systems. It is this level where the relationships of enterprises and VET organisations are taking place, where the markets are being structured, and the

regulations from the macro level are being implemented. It is also this level of real systems where the main influence of the VET professionals may be settled. As a consequence within this framework we have to analyse the actual policies, mainly at that meso level, when we will try to get a picture of the potential of the VET professionals as the protagonists of the VET systems for co-ordinating VET and employment.

- The question why there should be such kinds of policies cannot be addressed here more deeply, because it is fiercely debated in complex discussions about market failure and policy failure, and the like (cf. Booth/Snower 1996). In fact we can see many kinds of policy proposals from several origins which are trying to contribute to co-ordination, which, however, are not tied together in a systematic fashion, and which often do not take account of the VET professionals (sometimes they even try to work against them).
- Finally, if we want to understand the potentials of the VET professionals in the co-ordination mechanisms, we have to address the question of how the qualification profiles emerge and how those qualification structures are to be conceived in the various education and training systems. We can make a distinction between a "technical-naturalistic" view saying that qualification profiles emerge "naturally" in the economy, related to the qualification demands evolving during the work design and work processes in the enterprises on the one hand, and on the other hand a "institutional-constructivist" view. The latter would say that qualification profiles or qualification structures are a kind of *symbolic institutions* which are, and must be constructed by social processes and social actors. As a consequence from the "constructivist" view we have to analyse that processes of construction of qualification structures, and to ask which role professionalism may play in them.

The forms of division of labour in the different categories of "VET professionals" which have been outlined above have clear repercussions on the shaping of steering and coordination mechanisms, as well as on the level of professionalism. Because of the segmentary distribution of roles against the background of tension between bureaucracy and market, decision-making and steering structures are often complex and confused, and there is unequal distribution of possibilities for exerting influence, which are also not transparent. Because of the different professional structures and the hierarchical relations among qualifications, the decision-making and steering structures also tend to be confused and broken up into a multitude of sectors.

Even the development of the individual's "own" professional or subject-related knowledge base is tied in with this structure, which can be codified in a different way and to a different extent, which further can involve different degrees of practical orientation, and can also have different links with the established knowledge base, such as university disciplines.

This duality of complexity and fragmentation in the decision-making and steering structures can also cause cleavages to appear in the coordination system between different levels, e.g. between occupational fields and systems, or between the regional and national level. Overall, the distribution of roles between the "VET professionals" will reflect the basic structural elements in the vocational training system, so that changes in job distribution also affect the structures. A "professionalisation" policy is therefore anything but peripheral in terms of training policy as a whole, although this is usually not (explicitly) taken into account[14].

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[14] In their discussion of New Labour's educational policy strategy, Young and Guile (1997, p. 210) show, for example, that "the report makes no explicit reference to VET professionals", although the proposals would be difficult to achieve in the absence of professionalisation in this field; a further example are the recent attempts at reform made

Past reforms in vocational training have often attributed a passive role to the central categories of educators, as do many contemporary attempts at reform. In the technocratic tradition of the sixties and seventies, an attempt was made to change their work through the development and organisation of new teaching plans, curricula, or other rules governing work organisation[15]; and also the dominant proposals of today which are quite strongly influenced by the public choice paradigm aim at indirectly changing the behaviour of educators by strengthening external influences, for example through quasi-market structures.

## 4.1. Consequences of recent reforms on teacher professionalism

Geoff Whitty et al.'s study of ongoing market-oriented reforms (1998, pp. 12-14), which has drawn on a lot of relevant literature, produces the following stylised picture in terms of the consequences of reform for the various "stakeholders" in the system:

- school heads are becoming a central figure, their role becoming more that of "corporate director", "business executive", or "entrepreneur", in contrast to the discourse about "new managerialism" with flat hierarchies it is noted that "…the gap between the manager and the managed grows" (p. 12);

- for teachers, there is the "greatest divide between school management texts and empirically informed research": instead of autonomy and professionalism, work is becoming more intense, collective agreements are being undermined, and organisational power is being challenged;

- for pupils and classwork, it is noted that the reforms have not raised standards, and that traditional aspects of teaching have been strengthened ("increasing fragmentation and unitisation of the curriculum", "marginalisation of non-assessed fields", "more rigid compartmentalisation of students", "a new 'hidden curriculum' of marketisation" (p. 13);

- for the political steering and administration of schools, a "highly delimited" involvement of external "stakeholders" was noted, with unequally strong representation of people with "professional business-related expertise" when compared with "lay members without that expertise", and trends towards "commodification of parents"(p. 13).

It may well be that the results are a bit overstated, but they nevertheless square with de Moura Castro and Cabral de Andrade's (1997) assessments about the internal logic of the bureaucratic interpretation of educations and training systems, as well as with the expectations which can be deduced from the institutionalist analysis of educational institutions. Sinclair et al. (1996) present similar results for the USA and Great Britain; for vocational training policy in Greece, the high priority attached to reducing costs with no regard for quality is flagged (Patiniotis and Stavroulakis 1997).

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by the Austrian Government, which further watered down the professional status of in-house trainers in apprenticeship training (Lassnigg 1999b, p.31).

[15] The most extreme version of this strategy is "…to make the learning process 'teacher proof'…" (Haddad et al. 1990, p.57) through central control of curricula and the communication media.

## 4.2. Proposals for professionalisation in VET

Various questions emerge from different contemporary proposals for "professionalisation", which are connected to the structures of division of labour amongst "VET professionals".

A first strategy stems from the study of "VET professionals" in Finland against the background of the traditionally strong position of teachers in vocational training. This strategy picks up on Anja Heikkinen's question: "A European VET profession - or many?" (Heikkinen 1997b, p. 213) or "maintaining the differences" versus "amalgamation into one, integrative VET profession"? (Heikkinen 1997a, p. 126) This question picks up on the existing division of labour between the various categories of "VET professionals", the distribution of status between them, and their different prospects and duties, as well as the conflicts between them, and asks whether there are enough points in common to warrant an all-embracing professionalisation process. An essential aspect therein is the historically central position of teachers as protagonists of vocational training, and the contrasting of the vocational conception with the educational conception of vocational training. These two conceptions are related to the tensions between vocational professionalism and professionalism as an educator: "…an occupation of vocational educator had emerged, mediating between work life and education" (ibid., p. 215). The professionalism of educators is seen as a guarantee of the *educational* conception of vocational training, "…it created a common background for the conception of vocational education - a paradigm of vocational education - among teachers, administrators, players in industry, students and parents." (ibid., p. 215). Educators are simultaneously seen as a link between the different "worlds", and they possess considerable powers of definition for vocational training in their respective field. The most recent reforms focus on this point, and criticise the "…so terribly many inward-looking institutions….they do not even want to know what is happening somewhere else…", as one of the administrators put it (ibid., p. 216). On the other hand, the in-house HRD field is felt to be undeveloped, the trainer function to be "marginal and ignored" (Heikkinen 1997a, p. 123), staff development of little status, low priority, and not very up-to-date from the point of view of method (Heikkinen 1997a, p. 124-126). A personnel developer is quoted in summary form: "business is always business: the economist always beats the training manager in the enterprise, in hierarchy and decision-making…training is no king in working life yet - it is quite the reverse" (ibid., p. 124).[16] Maintaining the different categories of "VET professionals" and improving their cooperation on the basis of mutual understanding of their respective roles is suggested as a strategy for professionalisation, since "…the underlying rationale is that the core of VET professionalism is occupational expertise, practical knowledge and a living connection to industry and occupational life" (Heikkinen 1997a, p. 129). "New planning and coordinating mechanisms should be developed which would not destroy the educational core in vocational education." (Heikkinen 1997b, p. 218). An important element in professional development is "professional autonomy for self-definition" (Heikkinen 1997a, p. 132). In the field of company activities there is a call for the widest possible diffusion of pedagogical knowledge, and further training in administration, planning, research, politics and the representation of interests is seen as an important task.

[16] This view is to some extent reinforced by the European HRD study cited above, which sees much work left to be done to upgrade the HRD functions in the enterprise sector, even in large learning oriented organisations (Tjepkema 2000, 91-95).

Michael Young and David Guile (1997) have developed a professionalisation strategy for the United Kingdom, predominantly against the background of informally organised vocational training. This strategy is aimed at developing the profile of a "professional of the future", building on the traditional elements of professionalism, and tacking on additional elements. This produces a profile of the "VET professional" as a "connective specialist" (ibid., p. 210). The traditional elements are:

- technical competence;
- underpinning knowledge;
- practical experience;
- ethic of responsibility.

The new, additional elements of professionalism which stem from the new challenges, are:

- research and innovation capacity;
- customer/client awareness;
- flexibility (polycontextual, boundary-crossing skills);
- telematic-based learning.

This profile certainly represents a further development of "VET professionalism" in the United Kingdom, in which expansion of the NVQ concept which has been criticised for being too narrow, coming to the fore. "The current pattern in the UK mirrors closely that of the provision of VET itself…(i.e. it is uneven and fragmented); furthermore there are signs that it could become trapped in the competence dogma of NVQs." (Young and Guile 1997, p. 206)[17]. Organisational roles are however not part and parcel of this profile. On the question concerning the mechanisms for implementing this profile, reference is made to the building of an infrastructure for vocational training as a political task, within which tasks are allotted to the providers of educational activity, the companies and social partners, as well as the political institutions (Young and Guile 1997, p. 210- 211).

A further strategy was proposed within the framework of the EUROPROF project in the shape of a general framework for the development of a European "community of practice". Whilst initially the project was aimed at integrating the numerous different roles within a broad professional profile (Attwell 1997b, p. 6), the study of structures in the different European countries highlighted the high degree of fragmentation of different categories of "VET professionals", but also a trend towards convergence. Since direct formal integration and cooperation do not appear to be a realistic option, a general framework of "cornerstones" for the training of "VET professionals" is being suggested as a step towards professionalisation, which will provide a basis for reform in the individual countries and systems, and also a basis for the development of a European Network of players in research and practice. The following aspects have been put forward as cornerstones for this framework for the development and further development of training for "VET professionals" (Attwell 1997a, p. 263-264):

- training programmes at university level, including career guidance and mechanisms for continuing professional development in practice;
- training in participation in shaping production processes (anthropocentric production);
- training in social innovation and entrepreneurial skills;

[17] In the United Kingdom, attempts at professionalisation link up with the HRD field, because on-the-job learning processes traditionally play a major role in vocational training (cf. also CEDEFOP 1995a).

- linking pedagogical training with vocational training, taking work process knowledge into account;
- training in functions of vocational training planning;
- multidisciplinarity, particularly linking VET and HRD;
- possibilities and points of departure for mobility in Europe;
- training in implementation of research activities;
- cooperation with organisations in the world of work, and the social partners;
- efforts towards learner-centred training programmes, and cooperation between different organisations, both national and international;
- efforts towards situated learning and rich, context-oriented learning environments.

## 5. Steering, coordination and professional profiles

What conclusions can be drawn when the analysis of "VET professionals" is compared with the conceptual framework of the coordination system, the division of labour and professionalisation in this field?

a) The development of training organisations in the direction of learning organisations is certainly not feasible with the traditional structure of segmentary division of labour. Neither does this structure appear to be particularly well-suited to the strengthening of links between the informal learning processes in companies and the formal ones in the formal training organisations. If the analysis of the roles and positions for HRD personnel is taken as an example, then there is a great variety of starting points for professionalisation processes in the overall field of "VET professionals" - it seems highly unlikely that a generally "correct" path or a "correct" general profile of VET professionals exists. We can conclude, anyway, that the traditional strategy of professionalisation, which would mean professionalisation of the teaching profession (as, e.g., more recently proposed in Hargreaves/Evans 1997) by development of the specialised knowledge base for their reserved occupational area, and the strengthening of their autonomy in terms of self organisation guided by a special code of ethics, does not turn out to be feasible for VET professionals, as it would reinforce the emphasis on teaching, and in turn strengthen the split from the other roles and functions, especially planning, development, decisions making, etc.

b) To develop a field of professionalisation which combines or amalgamates VET and HRD professionals, and at any instance takes up the trainers as a crucial professional category, seems to be an important element in a professionalisation strategy in VET. The more soft recommendations for improvement of the NVQs in the U.K. given by Hodkinson/Issitt (1995) which are conceiving teaching as a kind of reflective practice, and work out some important dimensions of professional practice give useful hints for the development. On the other hand there are some visions in HRD which are focused on the spread and integration of learning into corporate strategies, and which propose the development of stronger linkages between internal and external activities and infrastructures may be taken as another important element of a professionalisation strategy, which is common in the proposals discussed above.

c) Turning to ideas for constructing occupational realities through the institutionalisation of vocational training, control of the appropriate knowledge base is a strategic element which must also be taken into account in the development of professional profiles. For "VET professionals", the particular problem arises as to linking the pedagogical or HRD knowledge base to the contextual knowledge base in the occupational field within which the activity takes place. The type of linkage of

these elements as well as their weighting is very different from one approach and strategy to another.

d) Concerning the relationship of professionalism and education and training reform, we may finally point to a kind of paradox: the VET professionals seem to be a crucial force for the further development of VET systems, however, as they are linked so tightly to the existing structures, professionalisation will hardly work as an instrument for reform (and this, in turn, reduces the chances for reform). Furthermore, the involvement in the construction of the symbolic institutions of qualification and occupational structures seems to be a crucial issue for the development of VET as well as for professionalisation. This runs against the "technical-naturalistic" view of qualification demands, which poses its main pressure on analysis of and passive adaptation to those demands. Involvement in the development of meso level policy strategies linking the VET side and the employment side seems to be a core activity for promoting professionalism. To overcome the above mentioned paradox, those activities may be based on the categories of "new professionals" situated in HRD, or in innovation centres and the like. So, professionalism is clearly one path for reform, however, one which is not easy to follow, nevertheless it is probably necessary to be followed.

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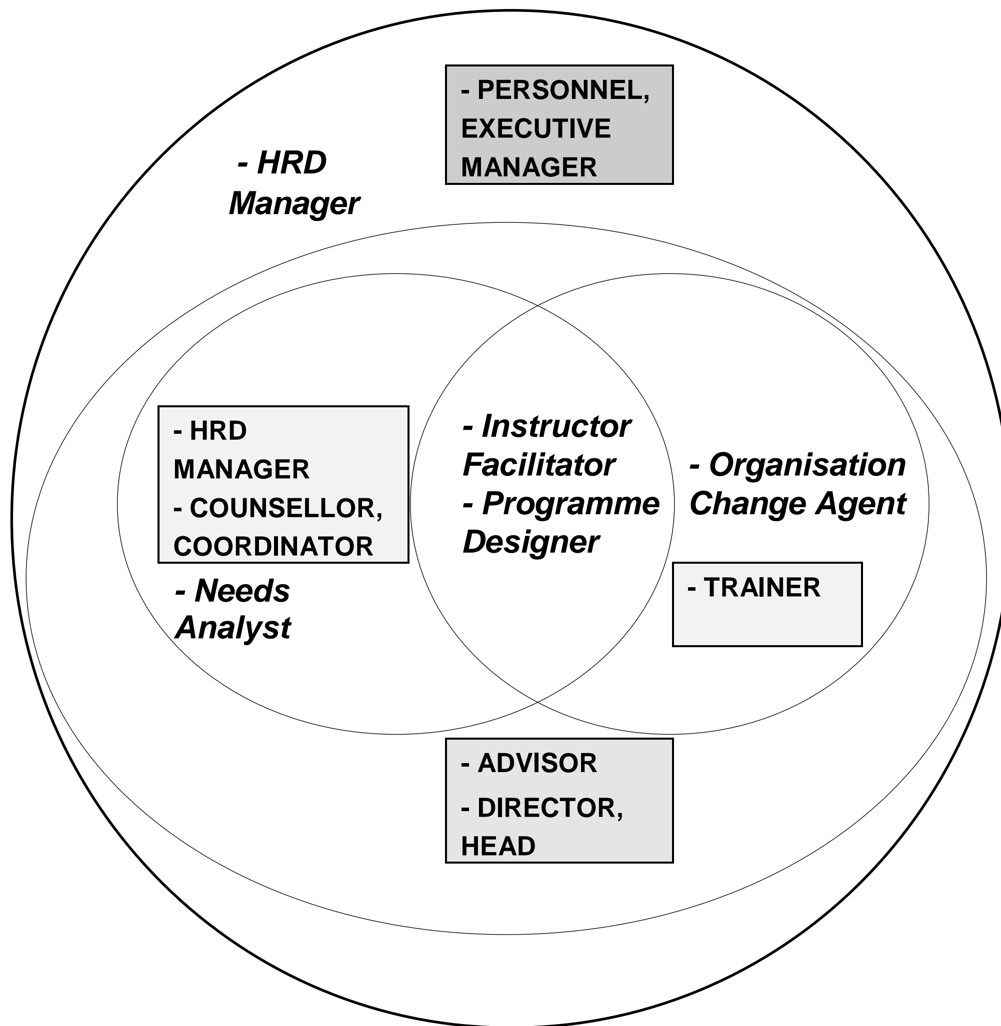
**Figure 1: HRD Roles and self-reported job positions of German HRD personnel**

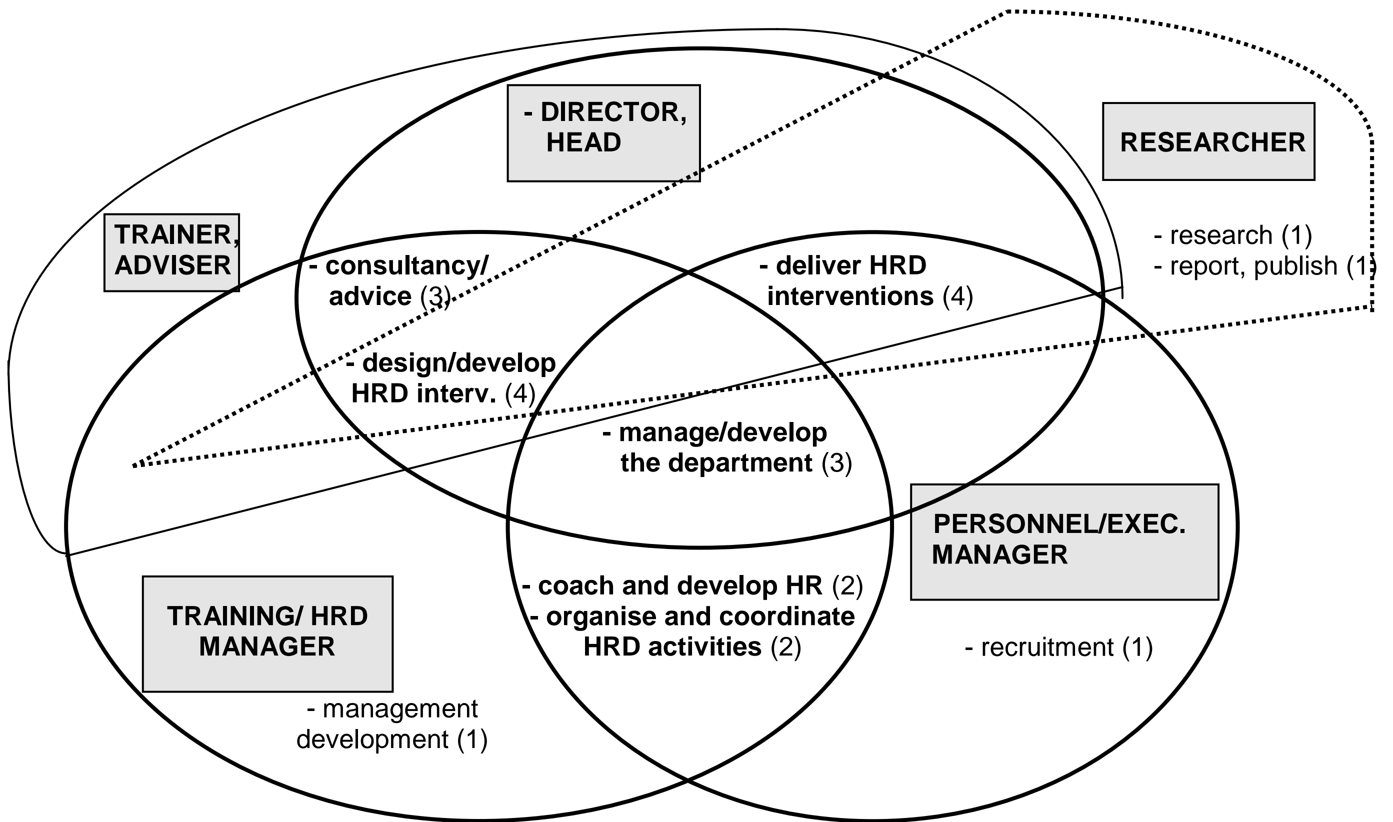



Legend: JOB POSITIONS

- *Roles*

Source: Odenthal/Nijhof 1996, 69, Tab. 4.23 (Design of figure by the author)

**Figure 2: Self-reported tasks and job positions of European HRD Personnel**




Legend: JOB POSITIONS

**- self reported tasks** (# indicating No. of job positions which have that task in common)

Source: de Rijk/Nijhof 1997, 8, Tab. 3 (Design of figure by the author)

**Figure 3: Stylised pattern of roles and professional categories in Austrian VET**

| | "OLD" PROFESSIONALS | | | "NEW" PROFESSIONALS. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | VET System[a] | | | | Other Frameworks[b] | | |
| | Teachers Trainers Tutors | Administrators Principals Managers[c] | Politicians Lobbyists | Researchers | Adult Educ. | HRD | Inter-Med. |
| **Common roles** | | | | | | | |
| - Instructor/ Facilitator | XXXXX | X | | | xxx | xxx | |
| - Programme Designer | XX | XXXXX | XX | X | xx | xxx | X |
| - Org. Change Agent | | XXXXX | XX | (X) | | xxx | Xxx |
| - Needs Analyst | | XXXXX | XXXXX | XX | x | xxx | Xxx |
| **Specialised roles** | | | | | | | |
| - Materials Developer | (X) | XX | | | x | x | |
| - Marketer | | (X) | XXXXX | | x | x | Xxx |
| - Indiv. Career Devel. Advisor | X | | | | | x | |
| - Evaluator (Inspector) | | XXXXX | XXX | XX | x | x | Xxx |
| - HRD Manager | | XX | | | | x | |
| - Researcher | | | | XXXXX | | x | |
| - Administrator | X | XXXXX | | | x | x | |

[a] The counselling function is mainly performed outside the VET system within the labour market organisations; within VET the teachers perform these activities.
[b] Personnel in HRD, further education (F-E), intermediary institutions (INT).
[c] The functions of development are performed mainly in this category.



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