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Using the VQTS model for
enhancing permeability
between VET and HE

For using the VQTS model for enhancing permeability between VET and HE it is necessary

- to create an Organisational Profile of the training institution
- to create the Individual Competence Profile of a certain student

Background

The VQTS approach assumes

- that comparing core work tasks or work requirements in a certain field in different countries is easier than comparing certificates or curricula of VET programmes from specific national systems.
- Furthermore it is assumed that the development of vocational competences can be described without referring to VET systems but by using a competence development model related to a certain sector.
- The process of developing Organisational Competence Profiles can be understood as a translation process of curricula by using the Competence Matrix as a common reference tool.
- According to the holistic description of work tasks the dealing with the descriptions of competence areas requires an interpretation against the background of the respective training and work context. It is necessary to think in terms of competences instead of subjects.

How can the VQTS model be used in the context of permeability between VET and HE?

- Tool for enhancing transparency
- Development of trust in the accreditation process
- Translation and comparison of curricula: this is easier if the training programmes are already described in terms of learning outcomes
- Identification of equivalences and differences of learning outcomes
- Tool for recognition of prior learning: the VQTS model provides a structure for the recognition of learning outcomes from formal, non formal, informal learning

- Tool for establishing or strengthening partnerships between VET and HE providers – VQTS model can be the starting point for developing competency standards, adjusting curricula, developing learning paths for students progressing from VET to HE

Aspects to be considered when using the competence matrix:

Work task orientation of the Competence Matrix: It might be easier to develop Competence Profiles of VET programmes: Reasons for this are:

- Vocationally competence (“berufliche Handlungskompetenz”) is in the focus of the Competence Matrix, which is acquired by students in VET at an earlier stage and on lower levels than by students in HE
- Vocationally orientated competences are not that relevant in the courses at the beginning of the HE studies (study programmes at the universities are strongly aligned to the teaching of a theoretical foundation within the first terms and hardly teach professional [engineer-] competences, but rather elementary knowledge and skills are in the centre).

To enhance cooperation between VET and HE it would be a possibility to emphasize the value of professional competences for „studying ability“ and the „engineer-scientific competence in describing it in the context of the agreements for example in the memorandum of understanding (MoU).

Visualising overlapping areas: The possibility to make overlapping areas visible depends on the orientation of the courses of study/curricula at the universities (of applied sciences):

- Strongly subject-related curricula are the reason that competences described by means of the Competence Matrix cannot be shown
- Overlapping areas could be identified if HE curricula would show a stronger bias towards professional work and competences (e.g. the curriculum of the bachelor studies “Electrical energy engineering” at the Syddansk University in Denmark - organized in project manner)

However, all competence areas and steps of the competence development do not necessarily need to be included in Competence Profiles of HE programmes because, in this context, the only relevant area is the overlap between outcomes of prior learning and learning outcomes of the HE programme.

Tuning VET and HE:

The possibility to increase the compatibility between VET and HE programmes depends mainly on two factors:

- legal possibilities in the respective countries for recognising prior learning
- readiness of the HE institutes for the acknowledgement of professional competences as part of (engineer-)scientific and labour market orientated competence

In some countries with a given legal basis recognition of VET in HE is mainly based on experiences with graduates of certain VET programmes and it is done in an informal way. In this context the „ability to learn“ seems to play a major role. It is reasonable to use the Competence Matrix as communication tool for either fostering mutual trust or establishing cooperation and partnership between VET and HE.