

**The Effectiveness of Labour Market Oriented Training
for the Long-Term Unemployed**

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ABSTRACT

This research project concerning the effectiveness of labour market oriented training for the long-term unemployed focuses on the question of what works and does not work in training for this target-group. More specifically, it focuses on the process variables -that is the organisational, curricular and instructional characteristics of training programmes- that might make one training programme more effective if compared with another training programme.

Among the trainees that have been 'interviewed' (during the case studies and the survey), there is a rather low percentage of dropouts. Also the number of trainees that

found a (steady) job is rather high. With overall 'staying' on at the employers where the practical training took place, being the most important channel for getting a job. There are however, differences between countries in this respect, which seem to relate to the extent of formalisation of the labour market (especially the role of the employment service). Both in terms of output and outcome the training courses seem to be successful.

Concerning the impact of course characteristics on finding a job, once the training has been completed, some interesting patterns can be detected. On the one hand, it appears that providing counselling and guidance or not, does not make a difference. This probably is due to the fact that nearly all training organisations claim to provide some guidance and counselling. Concerning the type of guidance and counselling provided, there is however an impact on outcome. Providing guidance and counselling on personal (welfare) issues, providing guidance and counselling on further training and providing focussed guidance and counselling during the practical training/work placement period –that is: focussed on solving problems like conflicts or on technical advice on work related tasks and problems- do increase the chance to find a job. On the other hand, some of the factors influencing the output (that is the chance of dropping out), have impact on the outcome as well. Modularisation as such does not make a difference, but the extent to which the course has a fixed duration does. Gearing the duration of the course as much as possible towards the individual capacities does not increase the chance of finding a job, as might have been expected. On the contrary: a fixed duration of the course –similar for all participants- seems to contribute to the chance of finding a job. In addition to this, the relation of practical training and job search training with the outcome is interesting. The closer practical training is to the reality of working life and the more job search training is situated at the end of the course, the bigger the chance of finding a job. This might look like rather cynical results, in the sense that these two process variables also influence dropout. However, there is a (high) probability that the dropouts that responded on the survey are those that left the course towards the end and not the early dropouts (which is more or less corroborated by the indications from the former trainees on the time spent in the training course). In this respect it concerns dropouts that leave the course during the transition stage. Whether or not this should lead to the conclusion that the training as such does not make a difference on dropping out or staying in, is, however, questionable. Apart from the role of practical training and job search training, the influence of the amount of flexibility and the guidance and counselling remains. In this respect it would be quite interesting to gain more understanding of what might cause early dropout.

1. Synthesis

Background and objectives

This research project concerning the effectiveness of labour market oriented training for the long-term unemployed focuses on the question of what works and does not work in training for this target-group. More specifically, it focuses on the process variables -that is the organisational, curricular and instructional characteristics of training programmes- that might make one training programme more effective if compared with another training programme.

More specific aims and objectives have been:

- to develop a possible model which can explain the effectiveness of labour market oriented training programmes for the long-term unemployed on the basis of a literature review and on the basis of qualitative case studies;
- to revise the model on the basis of the results of the case study;
- to test the revised model in a more large scale survey research, identifying the organisational, curricular and instructional characteristics of the training programmes that influence their effectiveness;
- to develop a monitoring instrument on the basis of the outcomes of the research which can support managers and trainers of such training organisations in monitoring the quality and effectiveness of their training courses.

Scientific description of the project results and methodology

The project encompassed the following major research activities:

- an inventory of the existing training programmes for (long-term) unemployed in each of the participating countries, resulting in so-called background reports;
- a further development of the initial conceptual model (on the basis of a literature review);
- comparative case studies (according to a multiple case study design);
- survey research.

Inventory of existing training programmes

The general aim of the inventory was to get a better understanding of the types of training programmes for long-term unemployed that exist in each of the countries that participated in the project. Such a general overview was considered necessary to be able to make a better informed selection of training programmes for the case-studies and the survey that have to be carried out during the project.

Overall it can be concluded that the number of and variety in initiatives focussing on training and re-integration of the long-term unemployed is rather large (within and between countries). Some of the labour market programmes or training measures have a rather long history, originating from the sixties or fifties or even earlier (e.g.: the training for self-employed and the employment service training in Flanders or some of the Centres for Vocational Training in the Netherlands), while other initiatives are from a more recent date, having been set up to combat the increasing unemployment at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s. The latter category appears especially to encompass the more local and experimental initiatives.

In attempting to classify the various schemes and initiatives, two relevant dimensions emerge. The first dimension concerns the amount of centralisation (or decentralisation/local autonomy), the second dimension concerns the locus of delivery (or mode of delivery).

Concerning the centralisation-decentralisation dimension, whether one perceives a training measure as being centralised or decentralised does depend on the perspective one takes. An example can clarify this. The Norwegian AMO-courses can be said to be highly centralised in the sense that their overall curricular content to a large extent is defined at the national level (either modules from the upper secondary programmes or centrally approved courses as laid down in the catalogue at the Labour Directorate). Nevertheless, the Labour Market Authorities have a strong decentralised structure. These authorities have an important role in deciding which of these courses will be offered in a specific area and by whom and also have an important role in deciding who is going to enrol in a specific course. A similar reasoning could be applied to the situation in the UK where both the Training for Work (TfW) programme and the ESF co-funded training are national centralised programmes, with the latter being more prescriptive in its regulations than the TfW programme. However, certainly where the TfW programme is concerned, centralised regulations are rather minimal, and it is the Training and Enterprise Councils who operate the programme and decide which training courses are provided and by whom. The actual supply of training courses can therefore differ greatly between TEC-regions.

The focus of the centralisation/decentralisation (or standardisation) of the programme content (and not its actual operation) appeared to be the most relevant for the further development of the project (especially from the point of view of the extent to which the total 'population' of training provisions for unemployed can be known). Applying this dimension, the following categories can be distinguished:

- national programmes encompassing courses which are provided on a national level (that is: courses which are similar or more or less comparable irrespective of the region or place where they are provided) (e.g.: AMO-courses in Norway, the training provided by the Centres for Vocational Training in the Netherlands, the VDAB courses in Flanders, the initial vocational training in Greece, the P-47 courses in Denmark, and the VTOS in Ireland);
- national framework programmes, within which actual course decisions and provision are more or less decentralised (or devolved to a lower administrative level, like regional committees), and where courses are not by definition comparable between regions (e.g.: the ESF co-funded training and TfW initiatives in the UK, the continuous training courses in Greece, the AMU-courses in Denmark; the community employment initiative in Ireland and the Training Centres for Women in the Netherlands);
- decentralised provision of training, characterised by a variety of local initiatives (e.g.: the co-operation of local networks in Flanders, the LAMU-courses in Denmark, and private initiatives in the Netherlands).

The second dimension, as said, concerns the locus (or mode) of delivery. What is quite apparent from the descriptions of existing training measures, is that overall training

measures aimed at the unemployed (with the exception of the more generally oriented (adult) education initiatives as mentioned in Belgium and the VTOS scheme in Ireland), include some practical training. At the same time it becomes apparent that there is substantial variation in the size of the practical component (in terms of the percentage of total time spent on the programme) and its location, ranging from most time spent in the training centre with some practical training in enterprises, up to fully on-the-job. Concerning the latter, this mainly refers to the work placement or employment programmes. However, in these programmes it is not always clear whether or not training is part of the measure and to what extent (as is the case for the Melkert jobs in the Netherlands and the co-operation for social workplaces in Flanders). Though on the basis of the general programme descriptions it is not always clear how much time actually is spent on practical training in enterprises (since this might differ between specific courses, or might differ for individual trainees), overall one can distinguish the following types:

- mainly school based courses, with only a small percentage of total curricular time spent on practical training (either within the training centre or within an enterprise);
- mixed type courses, in which a more substantial part of the total curricular time is spent on practical training in enterprises, or in which school based and work based training are alternated;
- mainly work based courses, where the majority of the curricular time is spent on practical 'on-the-job' training;
- fully work based training or work placements.

The application of these two dimensions, lead to the following 'classification' of training programmes for unemployed.

Table 1: Provisional classification of 'training' measures for the long-term unemployed

	(mainly) school based	mixed	mainly work based	work placement
'national courses'	VTOS, AMO	VDAB, VIZO, CV, P47, IEK, AMO	Schools for Apprenticeship	
national framework programmes	adult basic education, education for social promotion	TfW, ESF, AMU, KEK, UTB, SST, VVS	Weerwerk, Public Centres for Social Welfare	CE, KAJA, 'Melkert' jobs
decentralised initiatives	distance education	SLN, LAMU, training under urban policy, CBB		Co-operation for social Workplaces, local Employment Agencies

Legenda:

VTOS = Vocational Training Opportunities scheme (Ireland)

AMO = Norwegian training for unemployed

VDAB = Flemish Employment Service
VIZO = Flemish training centres for the self-employed
CV = Dutch Vocational Training Centres
P47 = Specific type of course for unemployed run by the Danish AMU-centres
IEK = Greek initial vocational training centres
TfW = Training for Work (UK)
ESF = ESF funded training for the unemployed in the UK
AMU = Danish training centres providing training for (un)employed persons
KEK = Greek continuous training centres
UTB = Danish courses for unemployed run by the AMU centres
SST = Specific Skills Training (Ireland)
VVS = Vocational Training Centres for Women (Dutch)
SLN = umbrella organisation for local initiative for the training of unemployed (Flanders)
LAMU = longer AMU courses for unemployed
CBB = Centres for Vocational Orientation and Preparation (Dutch)
CE = Community Employment (Ireland)
KAJA = Norwegian work placement scheme

Further development of the conceptual model

A focussed literature search in the available bibliographies and databases was performed for further underpinning of the conceptual model (focussing on countries participating in this project). Although there appears to be a substantial body of work on long-term unemployment and training of (long-term) unemployed, theoretical or empirical work concerning the relative contribution of the programmes' organisational, curricular and instructional characteristics and the interdependencies between these characteristics is much less developed (cf. Nicaise & Bollens, 1998).

In general we know that on the one hand, the background characteristics of the trainees are related to the effectiveness of the training programmes (cf. Lee, 1990; West, 1996), and that, on the other hand, the selection procedures and criteria, used by employers in hiring personnel, are of influence on the extent to which former long-term unemployed will be able to find a job, once they have finalised their training (cf. Van Beek, 1993). Concerning the former, various research projects (in the Netherlands, but in other countries as well, cf. Nicaise & Bollens, 1998) have shown that in training courses with a mixed population (short- and long-term unemployed, women re-entering the labour market, and those who participate on behalf of retraining), the long-term unemployed have the smallest chance to conclude the course successfully, while women re-entering the labour market and those participating on behalf of retraining, are the most successful. These differences in success are partially explained by the relatively lower level of prior educational attainment of the long-term unemployed (cf. Den Boer, 1995). Ethnicity and the length of the unemployment period, prior to enrolment in the training course, also appear to be of influence, certainly on the outcomes. The longer the period of unemployment prior to enrolment, the smaller the chance of finding a job once the training is concluded (c.f.: De Koning & Van Nes, 1989). Also ethnic minorities have a smaller chance of finding a job after the training has been finished; it might be that in this case 'discriminatory creaming' plays a role (c.f.: Bavinck & Van der Burgh, 1994; De Koning & Van Nes, 1989; De Koning, c.s., 1988; De Koning c.s., 1993).

There is also evidence of differences between training programmes in their efficiency and effectiveness (e.g. from studies from the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway), which cannot simply be explained by sectoral or regional differences in the labour market situation. At the same time, the extent to which process characteristics are taken into account, is rather limited (Nicaise & Bollens, 1998). The question therefore is what causes these differences? If the training (process) as such, is interpreted as a black box (see figure 1), this question could be rephrased in terms of, “what makes the difference inside the black box?”

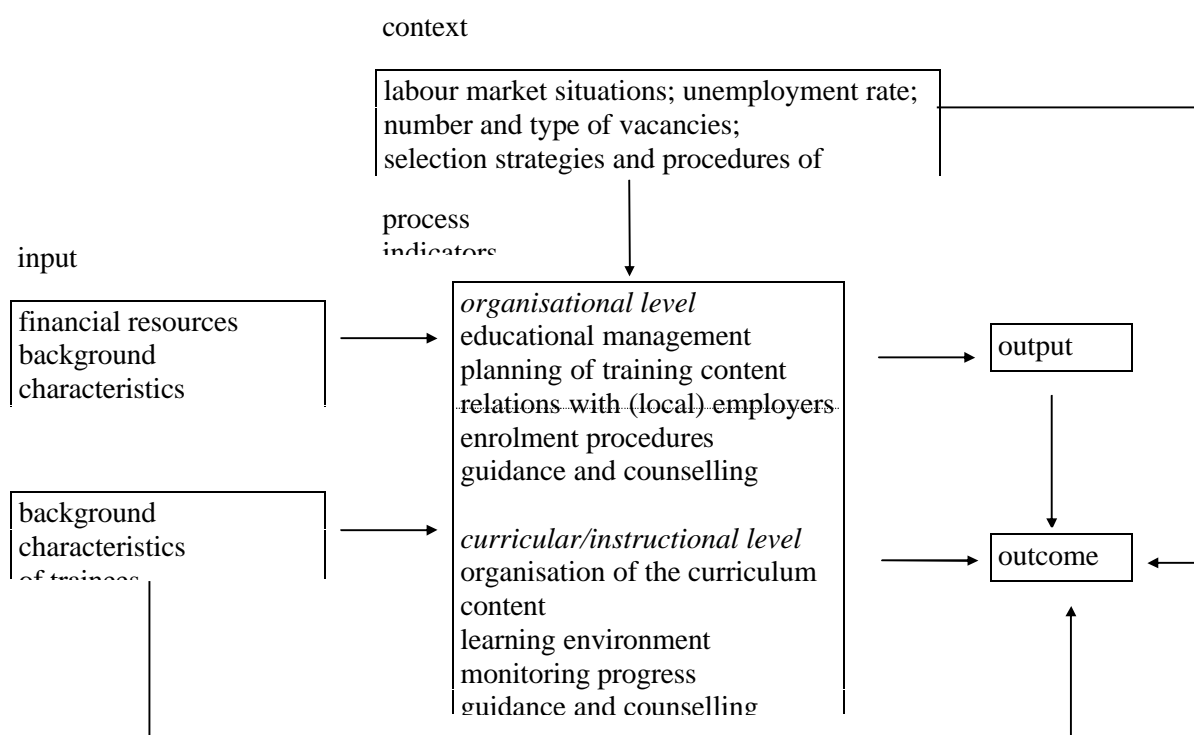


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the effectiveness of training for the long-term unemployed

As said, a concise literature review was undertaken, trying to find studies indicating what might make a difference. As far as literature could be found addressing this issue, empirical evidence for ‘influencing process variables’ was lacking (statement on what might make a difference being mainly based on non-tested hypothesis), or was based on more small scale qualitative research. In the few cases where it was attempted to test a more quantitative model, the conclusion was that only a few process variables contributed to the variance in output and outcome at the individual level.

Before going into the (clusters of) variables that might be of influence, it is therefore necessary to say that the conceptual model as depicted in figure 1 was partially based on the related area of school effectiveness research. This is not fully unproblematic. On the one hand, school effectiveness research does have a strong focus on primary education and (lower) secondary general education. It might be questioned whether results from

this area could be transferred to a completely different area of (vocational) training for the long-term unemployed. On the other hand, school effectiveness research itself seems to be a somewhat controversial area. Some scholars would rather like to discard this research approach referring to the too rigid quantitative methodology, which would not be able to take into account the “richness” of a particular organisational or instructional situation where various factors and processes are intertwined. Other scholars, however, argue that a more qualitative approach pertaining to case studies is not very robust evidence for what influences the effectiveness, nor can account for causal relations. Apart from this ‘paradigm debate’ it has to be acknowledged that it has taken considerable time, up from the Coleman report to fairly recently (cf. Scheerens & Bosker, 1997), before at least a basic consensus was reached on a set of process variables that do contribute to school effectiveness. This has been caused by inconsistent research findings and also (justified) criticism with regard to the methodological approach in analysing the data (which for various years has been based on correlational research design).

Nevertheless the mentioned (restricted) literature review indicated at least that the following (clusters of) variables might be of influence

- guidance and counselling;
- practical training within enterprises
- practical orientation of the course together with its duration;
- political context in which training programmes are run.

Comparative case studies

In the literature on qualitative research and especially on case study research, various types of case studies are distinguished, according to their scope and main function or focus. On the one hand a distinction can be made between case studies with a single-case design and case studies with a multiple case design. On the other hand a distinction can be made between exploratory, descriptive and explanatory case studies. Combining the two dimensions of scope (single or multiple) and function (exploratory, descriptive and explanatory), gives a 2x3 matrix, distinguishing six types of case studies. Which type might be the most appropriate, depends on the central research questions to be answered, the “theoretical and empirical” embedding of these research questions (more specifically the question whether or not there is knowledge available concerning the subject of the study on which it can build (and how much) or whether or not the study has to start from scratch) and more pragmatic elements like time and budget (Yin, 1993; 1994; see also Campbell, 1979).

The case studies in this research project actually had to fulfil a double role; or rather, the design concerned a mixed type of case study. They were needed both to test the feasibility and plausibility of the conceptual model and, at the same time, to seek to improve the model by exploring potential variables and relationships that might be of major importance for the effectiveness of training programmes for the (long-term) unemployed but were not (yet) included in the conceptual model. Therefore, the case studies should be of a mixed type: they were set up according to an exploratory-explanatory multiple case design.

A multiple case design allows to “test” the findings from one case study in the case studies which are performed later on (Yin, 1993; 1994). Each case can in this respect be considered as a (small) research project in itself, going through the successive stages of data collection, data analysis and reporting. Yin (1993; 1994) speaks of the ‘replication logic’ where “testing” the findings of one case in or against the following cases is concerned; this can either be ‘literal replication’ (literally finding the same results, especially in exploratory and descriptive cases) or ‘theoretical replication’ (if the testing of a “theory”, model or hypotheses is at stake, as is the case in explanatory cases).

Table 2: Overview of cases per country.

	First case	Second case
Flanders	Informatics (computer science and computer aided-design)	Family and elderly care
Denmark	Real estate care taker (UTB course)	Real estate care taker (AMU P47 course)
Greece	Environmental management/New Technologies	New training techniques with the use of computer
Ireland	Community Employment	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (leaving certificate)
Netherlands	Offset printing	Metal welding
United Kingdom	Information technology/computing	
Norway	Information technology/accounting	Mechanics and metal welding

Characteristics of training organisations and training courses

In general, it can be stated that the cases do show quite a variety in characteristics, linked to the rather great differences in national contexts (regulations with regard to training organisations and curricula, funding mechanisms, (local) labour market situations and changing labour market conditions). In this respect comparing cases sometimes raised the feeling of attempting to compare inequitable entities. It should, however, also be taken into account that it sometimes might concern somewhat atypical courses, in the sense that they have been chosen because of particular (known) features (e.g. Netherlands, Flanders) or in the sense that the particular courses are not necessarily representative for labour market training courses in general.

Apart from the differences in (national) regulations and funding arrangements, which partially determine the differences in organisational and curricular characteristics between the courses, it is quite clear that it is the labour market as such, which is particularly relevant for the effectiveness of the training in terms of its outcomes. Certainly when taking into account the present situation in some of the participating countries, where unemployment (and even long-term unemployment) has decreased during the last years.

Concerning the guidance and counselling that is provided by the training organisations, it is difficult to draw a more general picture. On the one hand, one could say that overall guidance and counselling seem to go hand in hand with evaluation and monitoring of trainees' progress. On the other hand, the extent to which guidance and counselling is provided (in a structured way) varies substantially. From no structured guidance and counselling (trainers try to solve problems of trainees as they come, in the Greek cases), to a structured system where guidance and (a computerised) monitoring (system) are strongly linked (e.g. the Flemish specialised informatics case and the Dutch welding case). Of course, these are more or less the extremes of a continuum. Various instruments are applied in order to provide guidance and counselling to the trainees (though not always perceived in this way and though not always evaluated positively by either the training staff and/or the trainees):

- appointing specific staff or specific tasks to trainers (e.g.: guidance counsellor, supervisors for practical training, group mentors, (class) tutors, placement officers);
- applying specific instruments (personal development plan, assessment procedures, computerised trainee monitoring systems, traject guidance, 'one to one reviews').

It seems that there is a certain relation between selection on the one hand, and guidance and counselling on the other hand. A relation in the sense that those training organisations that try to measure the extent to which trainees will be capable of handling the training course (both level and content) and to finalise it, by means of assessments before enrolment, are the training organisations where guidance and counselling is most strongly embedded in the organisation as such and at the curricular level.

It appears that the extent to which "sufficient" time of the training staff is devoted to guidance and counselling of the trainees (that is: sufficient in the opinion of the former trainees), influences their satisfaction with the course. That is their judgement about parts of the training course afterwards. At the same time, it does not seem to be of such influence that minimal provision of it results in substantial dropout from the course (this can at least not be concluded on the basis of the case studies).

In all cases a form of selection at the stage of enrolment appears, though the thoroughness (or toughness) and scope of this selection differs, ranging from (more or less extensive) testing, via more qualitative techniques in order to forecast the chance of success to finish the course or find a job and to attempt to grasp the match between trainees' interests and the course on offer. As said, a more stringent selection procedure does not need to be 'negative' as such, since it can prevent disappointments and a furthered disinterest in training. At the same time, selection does enhance opportunities for creaming certainly if there are few other options for referring those trainees to course offers considered more appropriate to them. There is a link between selection (or 'creaming') and the funding regime under which a training provider has to operate; the UK provides the clearest example in this respect, but indications can be found in other cases as well (e.g. Flanders, Denmark). Output related funding does not only enhance a certain tendency towards increasing selectivity, but can also contribute to 'pushing' trainees out of training, certainly if the output criterion as such is getting a job (irrespective of the question whether the job matches the training), instead of obtaining a qualification.

The relations between training organisations and employers differ rather strongly and are partly depending on the environment and institutional embedding of the training courses. Planning of the training courses from the perspective of the (perceived) relevance of the course to the needs of the local labour market is not per se a guarantee for finding a job once the course has been finalised. Though neglect of such needs is another extreme that will not be helpful for re-integrating unemployed people in the labour market. Apart from the issue of the level and quality of the course (as perceived by the employers or expressed by the qualification obtained), it appears that the expectations of either the organisers/providers of the course or the funders of the course are not necessarily the best indicators for determining whether there is a real need for the specific skills acquired. Establishing clear links with regional employers could contribute to a better estimate of the labour market relevance of courses. However, the strongest link between training organisations and employers seems to be the involvement of employers in the delivery of practical training, certainly if commitment of the employers with the training can be enhanced.

There is a substantial difference in the duration of the courses between the countries and within the countries (though in the latter case to a lesser extent). Given this variation it is difficult to draw firm conclusions with regard to the effect of the duration, though it does seem that rather short courses might be less effective in terms of finding gainful employment. However, the possible effect of duration is on the one hand mediated by the target group of the course and the intended level and content of the course, and on the other hand, contaminated by the (local) labour market situation and the particular needs of that market.

In some cases 'job search (training)' is emphasised. The question is whether this contributes to the realised outcomes in terms of the number of trainees that find a job. It seems that training in job search skills might become more important if recruitment strategies are more formalised. The extent to which these strategies are formalised or less formalised, seems to be related to the economic structures and the structure of the labour market, e.g. in terms of formalisation of demand and supply channels and the formalisation and acceptance of the (role of the) employment services. Where recruitment strategies are highly formalised and employment services and temp agencies play an important role in the demand and supply channels (in addition to channels as personnel advertisements), training in job search skills seems to be more important (and perhaps profitable) than in less formalised labour markets that mainly employ informal channels for matching supply and demand.

Overall it seems that the curricular and especially the instructional characteristics are of greater influence on the output and particular the outcomes of the courses than the organisational characteristics, though it is at the same time clear that the organisational characteristics set the stage for further developing particular curricular and instructional characteristics.

Former trainees

Concerning the motivation of former trainees to enrol, getting a job or improving the chances to get a job, together with a certain personal interest in the subject of the course, seem to be the most important reasons for enrolment. Reference to being pressured to

enrol for financial reasons (loosing benefits or gaining additional benefits) are hardly mentioned, though in several cases (Greece, UK) assumptions are being made (e.g. by the managers or the trainers) that such motives did play a role.

- Overall it seems that the practical training (either practical training within an enterprise or the practical assignments and exercise within the training centre) is valued most. Where a period of work placement or practical training was expected and not provided, this is perceived by former trainees as a drawback and one of the characteristics on which they judge the course negatively.
- Considering the issue what former trainees have learned or gained from the course, it appears that the job or occupation specific knowledge and skills, communication skills, increased self-esteem or self-confidence and acquisitions of job search skills are often mentioned by trainees.
- It is difficult to say in general which characteristics of the training course are being valued positively and negatively. There do not appear to be very clear cut patterns, and overall what is mentioned is rather course specific. Again practical training comes out as a positive point (together with guidance and counselling, if provided), and the lack of such training as negative. Numbers appear to be too small to really detect patterns in terms of the extent to which former trainees tend to be more positive on the training course as such if they succeeded in finding a job after the training was concluded and found a job that matches the training they received. Nevertheless, some indications can be given. Trainees from the IT-course in the UK and the two cases from Greece (where none of the former trainees had the opinion that they would not have found the job they held if they had not done the course) appear to be somewhat less positive on the course than former trainees from other courses. Considering the latter, those individuals in these cases that expected to find a job once the training was concluded but did not succeed (or found a job with no relation to the training undergone) also seem to be somewhat less positive.
- Concerning the extent to which former trainees succeeded in finding a job, it is quite clear that the cases where a “job guarantee” was given (or at least a certain (moral) obligation to hire the trainee once the training was concluded successfully) at the moment of enrolment have the “highest” score. But once again, numbers appear to be too small to draw any far-reaching conclusions. In this respect it is a pity, that most of the people interviewed (with the exception of the IT-course in England) are former trainees that finalised the course and that the number of dropouts is very small.

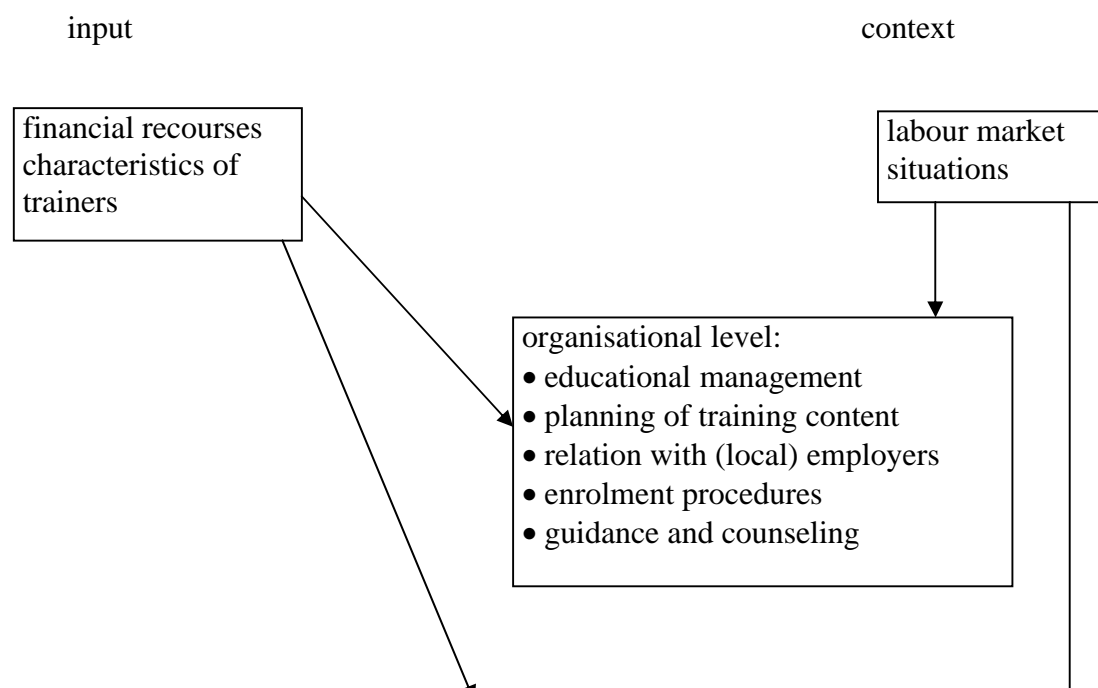
Two ‘sub’models

Given the results of the case studies, especially the estimated relative influence of the organisational versus the curricular and instructional characteristics, it was decided to develop two more specific models to be tested in the quantitative stage: an output model (what influences whether or not the course is finalised) and an outcome model (what influences whether or not a job is found). Both models are presented below.

The basic difference between the two models is the earlier mentioned assumption with regard to the respective influence on output (finalising the course) and outcome (finding a (matching) job or enrolling in continuing training). It is presumed that organisational characteristics mainly will influence the output via the curricular and instructional characteristics. Here it should be taken into account that ‘hard’ evidence cannot be

derived from the case studies given the overall qualitative character and the small variation in the output-measure. Nevertheless there are indications that organisational conditions (caused especially by funding conditions) do influence curricular and instructional characteristics in a way which at least makes it “easier” for trainees to decide to stop (e.g. as seems to hold for the UK case). At the same time, however, organisational characteristics might have a direct influence on output as well. On the one hand, there appears to be some interrelation between a certain ‘selectivity’ at enrolment (testing capabilities of candidate trainees) and the extent to which structured guidance and counselling at both organisational and curricular/instructional level is provided. This does, however, not exclude that “less selective” cases do provide guidance and counselling as well. On the other hand, it has been stated that the provision of practical training seems to be the strongest link between training and employers. This is more a curricular characteristic. But the link as such appears to become even stronger if the commitment of the employers reaches further than that (e.g.: involvement in planning the content; direct influence on the content).

Of course the labour market situation can influence the output as well. Here it concerns the so-called ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors often mentioned in relation to drop-out from secondary general or vocational education. The reasoning is that students are ‘pulled’ out of school, if it is easy to get a job (demand exceeds supply), while they are ‘pushed’ back into school if chances of finding a job are not good (supply exceeds demand and students use school as a (temporary) parking until prospects on jobs improve). Whether push and pull factors work in a similar way for (unemployed) adults is questionable. There is a substantial chance that trainees will leave the course if they can get a job or get a job offer of the training firm where they do their practical training/work placement. It is, however, doubtful that unemployed adults will use a training course as a ‘parking option’ if employment prospects are low. First of all, training programmes for unemployed do not function in that way; there are overall clear eligibility criteria. Secondly, enrolling in a course might be for various participants a big step to take. It appears to be more logical to presume that the trainees’ own estimation whether the training will be helpful in finding a job, will be a reason to continue or dropout. The clearer and better the perspective on a job, the bigger the chance that they will finalise the course. Though in decisions concerning dropping out or not, financial motives might also play a role (if applicable).



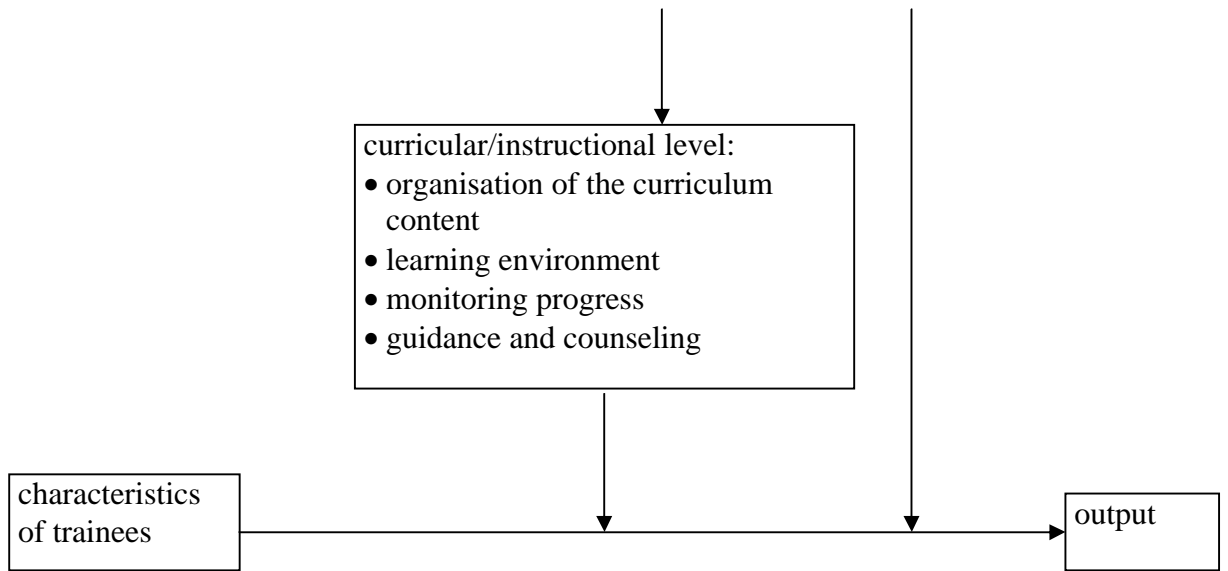


Figure 3: The output model

Concerning the outcome model it is presumed that in particular curricular and instructional characteristics might be of influence. It concerns characteristics like: providing practical training within an enterprise, the length of this training period (both part of the learning environment), guidance and counselling (especially during practical training and the transition to the labour market) and help with or training in job search (job search skills). These assumptions seem to be supported by the trainees' evaluation of the training courses. Given that hardly any dropouts have been interviewed, it is somewhat difficult to ground the assumption that output will influence outcome as well. Here there seems, however, to be evidence from other studies that those that do not finalise the course and/or do not obtain a qualification have more difficulty to find a job. It will be clear that whether or not a job is found will also depend on the labour market situation.

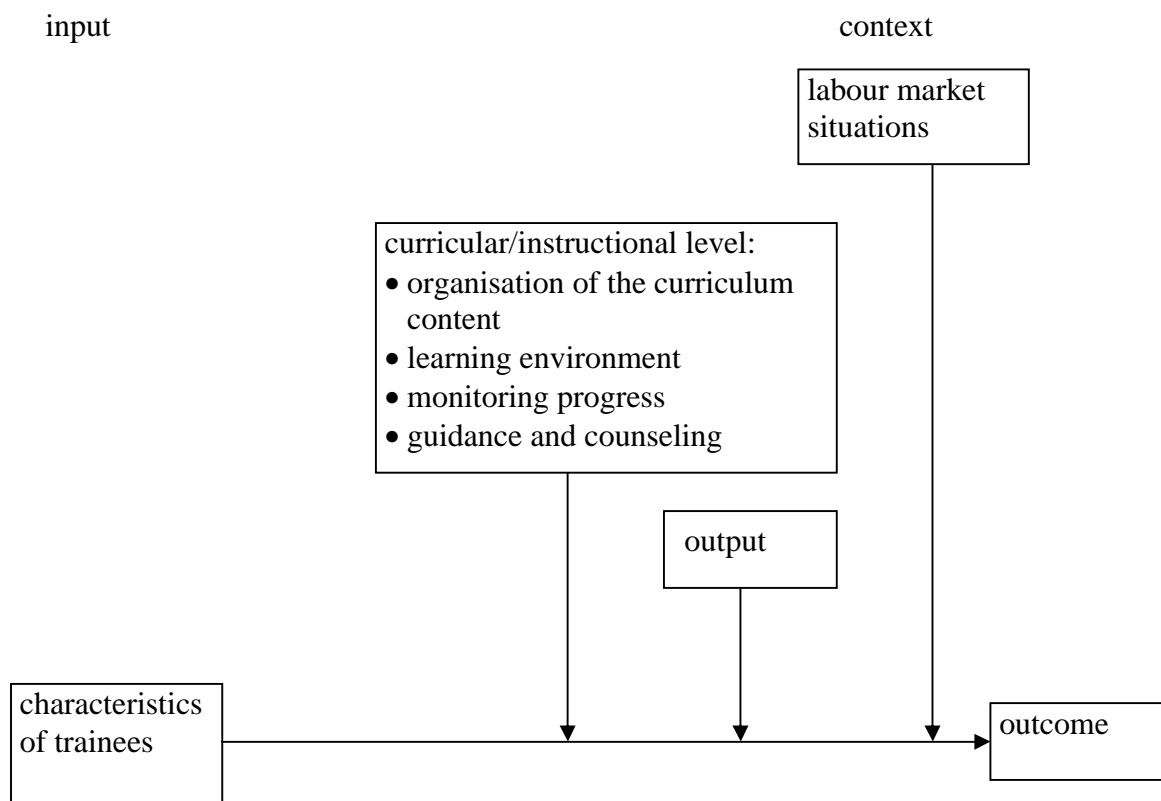


Figure 4: The outcome model

Survey research

Based on the experiences and results during the first empirical stage of the project, the comparative case study research, the second stage in which a survey should be conducted was prepared. One of the first activities in the preparation of the survey research consisted of drafting a methodology paper outlining the possible pitfalls in the proposed quantitative design, the general principles of multilevel research and the intended application of multilevel analyses in this project.

For the data collection, questionnaires were drafted that were suitable for administering by post (but if needed also could be used for administering by telephone). Questionnaires were developed for the following categories of respondents:

- managers of training organisations;
- trainers involved in the delivery of training courses that were taken by the former trainees;
- former trainees that had attended a course;
- employers that employed a trainee once she/he had finalised the course.

Former trainees

The dropout rate is remarkably low (also in absolute numbers): of all trainees only about 12% left the course prematurely. In this respect, the differences between countries are modest. The main reason for leaving the course was finding a job, followed by personal or health reasons (in the UK also the fact that trainees had the idea the course did not increase their chances of finding a job, played a role). However, it should be born in mind that the absolute numbers of dropouts per country are very small. This raises the issue of a possible bias in the sample (an issue that came up during the case studies as well). It could be that trainees that have been less successful (not completing the course, and maybe not finding work either) have been less willing to answer a questionnaire or to co-operate in an interview.

A rather high percentage of the former trainees found a job; about 66% of all trainees obtained a job after the training was concluded, of which the majority got a steady job. Of those who have not found a job (the remaining 34%), about 10% indicates that they have not been looking for a job. Of those that obtained a job, 44% claims to have found the job during the course; especially in Denmark and Greece this is the most common answer. This could indicate that work placements or traineeships during the course are good vehicles for getting into a job. Asked how they found the job, 29% does confirm that they stayed on with the employer where they had their work experience period. Among the trainees that did find a job, 30% found a job within three months after finishing the course, while about a quarter of the trainees had to search for three months or longer. Very few started their own business.

Among the channels for finding a job, staying on with the employer of the work placement is the most important. Other channels are own applications (especially in Ireland), informal channels (especially the UK), the employment agency (especially Norway) and through the training centre (especially in Belgium).

Among those that found a job after the conclusion of the training, 71% was still holding the same job at the time they were questioned. Among those that lost their job, the

majority (82%) had started looking for another job, and 63% of these succeeded in finding a new job. There are however, some differences between the countries. Among those who found a job in Belgium, only 59% still had that job when questioned. Among those who lost their first job, in Greece only 74% were looking for a new job.

As said, most of the trainees that found a job after finalising the course said that they staid on with the employer that also provided the practical training. The second most important way to find a job is an application letter. There are however, some striking differences between countries. The employment service seems to be most important for getting a job in Norway (while in Greece the employment agencies are hardly mentioned). Informal channels (friends, family, neighbours) seem to be relatively more important in the UK as a way for getting a job than in other countries, while temp agencies are relatively more important in Greece and Norway than in other countries.

Trainees were asked whether or not the job would have been obtained if the course had not been followed. Overall nearly half of the former trainees (47%) had the opinion that the course as such was not necessary for finding the job they obtained. This is particular the case in Flanders (nearly three-quarters of the former trainees). In contrast to this, 42% of the trainees did think the course had been necessary to get a job, with the Greek trainees being most affirmative (59%). The remaining 11% of the trainees stated that they did not know whether the course had been a necessity or not.

What parts of the course are considered as having been helpful for finding a job? Job related skills and the practical training (within an enterprise) receive the highest score; respectively 89% and 87% of the trainees considers these as having been (very) helpful. But also the job related theory and the general knowledge are considered as having been helpful; 82% of the trainees thinks that the job related skills that have been acquired have been helpful for finding a job and 84% of the trainees has this opinion about the general knowledge. The training in job search skills is in this respect the least valued; 61% of the trainees considers this as having been helpful, while 38% thinks that it has not been helpful.

In addition to the question whether the training was considered necessary to get a job, former trainees were asked about their opinion on the match between the content and level of the course and the content and level of the (first) job they obtained. Concerning the content of the job slightly over 40% of the trainees had the opinion that the job was the same as which they had been trained for, while nearly 27% said that the job was completely different (with the highest scores in Ireland and Greece). About 30% of all trainees had the opinion that their job was somewhat different than the job they thought they had been trained for (with the highest scores in Norway).

Concerning the level of the course, an interesting picture emerges. A quarter of the trainees states that the level of the course and their job are similar (with the lowest score in Ireland where only about 14% of the former trainees has this opinion), while about 37% of the former trainees state that the level of the job is higher than what they thought they were trained for. In the latter case this is not only mentioned most often by the former trainees in Flanders, but also those in Ireland. Slightly over 20% of the former trainees states that they cannot use the skills they have acquired during their

training in their present job (former trainees in Norway mentioning this most often) and a small group of just over 15% states that they have acquired new skills in their (first) job.

What makes training effective?

The key question of course concerns the issue what the training contributes to the improvement of the labour market situation of former unemployed persons. A precaution should be made here. On the one hand, there is relatively small variance in the effect measures. The number of drop-outs (both relative and absolute) are rather small, which makes it complicated to find clear relations between process characteristics and the 'output'. On the other hand, a substantial number of former trainees have found a job, with only slightly over a third that did not find a job. Though variance is higher in this case, it still is moderate.

It was expected that there would be a clear relation between trainee characteristics like previous level of education and motivation. This only partially holds. There appears to be no relation between the trainees motivation (scaled as an 'extrinsic' motivation and a 'intrinsic-situated' motivation) and the outcome in terms of finding a job. There is a weak significant relation between finding a job and the previous level of education, but not in the expected direction. The relatively higher educated have less chance of getting a job after the training than the relatively lower qualified. Age, motivation and the duration of the previous unemployment period, do not seem to make a difference; neither in finalising the course nor in finding a job.

Which course characteristics are related to dropout? As said, some precaution is needed in this area given the relative small variance in the "output" as such (few dropouts). This might explain why relatively few process characteristics at the organisational level seem to have impact on dropout. Nevertheless there are some instructional characteristics that appear to be related to leaving the course before its completion. Firstly the way in which the practical training is delivered. Chances of dropout seem to slightly increase if the extent of realistic design of the practical training increases as well. The closer practical training is to the real work practice, the higher the chance that a trainee will not finalise the course. This appears to be in line with the earlier postulated assumption concerning the "pull impact" of providing practical training within an enterprise. It also appears to be in line with the fact that finding a job is the major reason for leaving the course before its finalisation. Whether in the longer run the jobs found are steady, full time jobs, or temporary insecure jobs, is not known.

In addition to this, there are two other process characteristics at the curricular/instructional level that do seem to make a difference. Firstly, the amount of 'flexibility' in the organisation of the curriculum. It concerns the earlier mentioned distinction between flexible and non-flexible modularisation. Chances of dropping out seem to increase with an increase in the flexibility of the curriculum. At first sight this seems to be at odds with newly advocated instructional principles, where trainees' own responsibility for their own learning process is emphasised. However, several scholars have indicated that adults' motivation for learning is essentially 'situated' in the sense that the social contacts and the learning in a group are important for them (Boshier & Collins, 1985). 'Motivation', which is lost in highly, individualised learning

environments. It has also been stated that individualised learning, e.g. by means of modularisation, requires 'learning capacities' in terms of being able to plan and steer one's own learning process. Capacities which might not have been developed or foregone by those having acquired little previous education or those having left the education system at an early stage (Brandsma, 1994). From research into modularisation it is known that too much flexibility -in terms of individual planning and pace- might have adverse effects on learning achievements (Harms, 1995). Secondly, the issue of job search training. Though there is a significant relation between dropout and the provision of job search training, this relation is somewhat difficult to interpret. In general, it seems that whether or not job search training is provided, does influence dropout (chances of dropout increasing with the provision of job search training), but concerning the stage at which this training is provided relations are less clear, although it seems that job search training towards the end of the course does increase the chance that the course is not concluded.

To what extent do process characteristics at the organisational level influence output (as presumed in the output model)? It appears that selectivity at the enrolment does have some relation with dropout, though the relation is somewhat weak (modest significance). The less selective training organisations are, the bigger the chance of dropout. Concerning guidance and counselling (which in principle according to the model could be located at both the organisational and curricular/instructional level) an adverse and unexpected relation appears. If guidance and counselling is provided (in general) the chance of dropout seems to increase as well. This rather surprising result could indicate that guidance and counselling does not only help trainees to finalise the course, but might also contribute to an (early) acknowledgement that the course a specific trainee enrolled in is not the most suitable for that particular trainee. However, looking at the particular stage in which guidance and counselling is provided, it on the one hand appears that if less guidance and counselling is provided during the enrolment stage the bigger the chance of dropout, while on the other hand, the more guidance and counselling is provided during the stage of transition to the labour market, the bigger the chance of dropout as well. Guidance and counselling during the enrolment stage seems to corroborate the 'early acknowledgement' assumption. Guidance and counselling provided during the transition stage does not seem to fit with this. However, it is quite possible that those who reached that stage of the training are, to a certain extent, "pushed" out of the training, in the sense that they obtain help in finding a job and that the fact that a job is found is the reason that they leave the training.

The next question of course concerns the relation between process characteristics and outcome. Which process characteristics might influence the obtainment of a job once the course is concluded?

In line with expectations, it appears that the more selective the training organisation is in enrolling trainees, the more successful it is in terms of the number of former trainees finding a job. Certainly if in addition to the general eligibility criteria additional criteria and an entry test are being applied.

Concerning guidance and counselling, questions were posed with regard to the type of guidance and counselling provided and the stage at which guidance and counselling is

provided. Whether guidance and counselling as such is provided does not make a difference. However, how guidance and counselling is provided, at which stage and on what topics does have impact. Concerning the stages in which guidance and counselling is provided, it appears that the guidance and counselling during the enrolment stage does have a relation with the chance of finding a job, but not a linear one. The same holds for guidance and counselling during the course and during the transition stage. There appears to be a certain optimum between little guidance and counselling and too much guidance and counselling, though it is rather difficult to state exactly where the optimum lies. Providing hardly any guidance and counselling seems to decrease the chances of finding a job, while “too much” guidance and counselling seems to have the same effect. However, concerning the guidance and counselling during the practical training (within an enterprise) the relation is quite clear; the more guidance and counselling is provided, the bigger the chance of getting a job. It also appears that whether or not guidance and counselling on personal (welfare) issues is provided does have an impact; if provided it seems to increase the chances of finding a job, especially if provided by specialised staff (that is: counsellors employed by the training organisation or trainers that specifically got this task assigned). In addition to this it appears that providing guidance on other or further training enhances finding a job as well, though the particular direction of the relation between the two variables is not fully clear. Focussing guidance during the practical training period or work placement on either solving particular problems (e.g. problems with colleagues or problems of fitting in) and/or technical advice on work related tasks and problems, also enhance the chances of finding a job.

Where the flexibility of the training does have an impact on dropout, the relation with the chance of finding a job is somewhat more complicated. Modularisation as such does not influence the chance of finding a job; whether the modular structure of the training is flexible or non-flexible does no make a difference. However, it appears that the extent of individualisation of the training -in terms of whether the duration is fixed or dependent on the trainees’ capacities and learning pace- does make a difference. Participating in a training course with a fixed duration seems to enhance the chance of finding a job. In relation to this, it also appears whether or not individualised training plans are drafted at the start of the course does not have an impact either, but here it is necessary to indicate that developing individualised training plans at the start of the course (or before) does not occur much (mainly in the UK and Ireland, though it has been stated that some individual agreements occur in Greece as well, though these are not formalised).

Does practical training prove to be a vehicle for getting into a job? On the basis of the case studies it was presumed that practical training provided within an enterprise might help trainees into a job. At the same time, the “practical nearness” of the training appears to “pull” trainees out of the training. As expected it is not as much the issue whether or not practical training is provided that makes a difference, but the way in which it is delivered does have impact. The closer to the reality of the work practice, the bigger the chance of finding a job. In this respect, providing trainees with a practical training period or work placement in an enterprise does provide them with more opportunities to find a job.

Whether or not job search or job search training is included appears to make a difference as well. It is quite clear that job search training provided towards the end of the course does increase the chances of finding a job, while job search training provided throughout the course actually seems to decrease the chances of finding a job.

Among the trainees that have been 'interviewed' during the survey, there is a rather low percentage of dropouts. Also the number of trainees that found a (steady) job is rather high. With overall 'staying' on at the employers where the practical training took place, being the most important channel for getting a job. There are however, differences between countries in this respect, which seem to relate to the extent of formalisation of the labour market (especially the role of the employment service). Both in terms of output and outcome the training courses seem to be successful. The question of course is what and how did these courses contribute to the labour market position of individual trainees. On the one hand, if one looks at the extent to which former trainees think that the course was necessary for getting the job they obtained, it appears that nearly half of the trainees think that this is not the case, while slightly less trainees are convinced that the course was necessary. In between a quarter and slightly over a quarter of the trainees is convinced that the job is (absolutely) not what they have been trained for (according to respectively level and content). On the other hand, if one looks at the course characteristics that seem to contribute to either output or outcome, the following picture emerges. Concerning the output, it is clear that the major reason for leaving the course preliminary is finding a job (followed by personal or other health reasons or other reasons). There are actually three types of process characteristics that seem to contribute to dropout. Firstly, the extent to which the organisation of the curriculum is flexible. This refers to the modularisation of the curriculum where a distinction can be made between a flexible variant and a non-flexible variant. The more flexible the modularisation of the curriculum, the bigger the chance of leaving the course before its completion. Secondly, the way in which practical training is delivered. The closer to the reality of working life, the bigger the chance of dropout. Providing practical training within an enterprise –as work placement- appears to pull trainees out of the training. Thirdly, the provision of job search training, where the relation is not fully clear but there seems to be a tendency that dropout chances increase with provision of this specific training towards the end of the course. As such both the impact of the practical training and the job search training seem to be quite logical. The chance of finding a job will probably increase towards the end of the course, and with this the incentive to leave the course increases as well. Practical training within an enterprise often is provided towards the end of the course as well, forming a sort of transition stage between the training at the training centre, and the re-entry in the labour market.

Concerning the impact of course characteristics on finding a job, once the training has been completed, some interesting patterns can be detected as well. On the one hand, it appears that providing counselling and guidance or not, does not make a difference. This probably is due to the fact that nearly all training organisations claim to provide some guidance and counselling. Concerning the type of guidance and counselling provided there is however, an impact on outcome. Providing guidance and counselling on personal (welfare) issues, providing guidance and counselling on further training and providing focussed guidance and counselling during the practical training/work placement period –that is: focussed on solving problems like conflicts or on technical advice on work related tasks and problems- do increase the chance to find a job. On the

other hand, some of the factors influencing the output (that is the chance of dropping out), have impact on the outcome as well. Modularisation as such does not make a difference, but the extent to which the course has a fixed duration does. Gearing the duration of the course as much as possible towards the individual capacities does not increase the chance of finding a job, as might have been expected. On the contrary: a fixed duration of the course –similar for all participants- seems to contribute to the chance of finding a job. In addition to this, the relation of practical training and job search training with the outcome, is interesting. The closer practical training is to the reality of working life and the more job search training is situated at the end of the course, the bigger the chance of finding a job. This might look like rather cynical results, in the sense that these two process variables also influence dropout. However, there is a (high) probability that the dropouts that responded on the survey are those that left the course towards the end and not the early dropouts (which is more or less corroborated by the indications from the former trainees on the time spent in the training course). In this respect it concerns dropouts that leave the course during the transition stage. Whether or not this should lead to the conclusion that the training as such does not make a difference on dropping out or staying in, is however, questionable. Apart from the role of practical training and job search training, the influence of the amount of flexibility and the guidance and counselling remains. In this respect it would be quite interesting to gain more understanding of what might cause early dropout.

Major conclusions and policy implications

Building a possible effectiveness model

Given the results of both the qualitative and quantitative stage, what can be the overall conclusion? It is clear that we certainly did not build *the final model* concerning effectiveness of labour market oriented training for the long-term unemployed. The question of course is whether this could have been expected.

Results are somewhat disappointing in the sense that stronger relations had been expected between some of the process characteristics and the output and outcome criteria. For example with regard to the outcome, a stronger and more clear relation had been expected between the provision of practical training in an enterprise, and the extent to which former trainees managed to get a job. Certainly on such 'key variables' like the inclusion of practical training or job search training, the variance between the different courses is relatively small.

On the one hand it could be argued that a larger sample would have been needed (both the number of courses and the (total) number of former trainees). This might be somewhat problematic, though not totally unfeasible. Specific problems that occur concern on the one hand the already mentioned problems concerning tracing former trainees and persuade them to participate in a survey. There is a more fundamental problem, which might not affect all European countries, but some of them at least. It concerns the extent to which the population of training initiatives for (long-term) unemployed is known. Some countries do have a clear record or register of what is provided by which organisations, up to the level of the actual courses that are run, due to the central registration of such aspects (or at least the possibility to ask appropriate bodies for such information and combine them in an overview at national level; e.g. as seems to be the case in Norway and Greece). This, however, still does not exclude the possibility that there are local initiatives that can only be included in the population after running a survey on this. Other countries do not know the total population of training schemes and initiatives or can only 'construct' a population overview going to (more or less) great difficulties. In the latter case there are of course variations, running from knowing the major schemes (and/or providers) but having to survey them to detect the actual course offer, from a situation where a survey is needed among major founders/decision making bodies in order to get a basic insight into the population of training provisions for the unemployed (as was the case in the UK).

On the other hand, it can also be argued that a more concise conceptual model is needed, that is more focussed and contains fewer variables. In that sense the various analyses run on the data collected in this project can be perceived as a first step forward in this direction.

Effectiveness research into vocational training, as performed here, is still rather underdeveloped. In addition to their urge for further research into the causes of disadvantages on the labour market, with special reference to the accessibility of labour market programmes for particular target groups, Nicaise and Bollens (1998) point out that the question 'why' something is effective has been little addressed and needs specific attention. From a policy point of view this is an important question if not the

most important question. It at the same time often is one of the more difficult questions to answer. On the one hand, experiences with effectiveness research in initial vocational education and training in the Netherlands have learned that it is quite difficult to find specific process characteristics that influence the effectiveness of this type of vocational training and that what does seem to matter varies substantially between specific vocational programmes (cf. Van Batenburg, 1995; Brandsma, 1999). This might indicate the need for more differentiated effectiveness models that can capture the specific differences between programmes. On the other hand, there are indications, both from effectiveness research in primary education and some (Norwegian) studies concerning labour market schemes that effectiveness can change over time (decline, increase) and that changes in effectiveness are not necessarily caused by changes in effectiveness enhancing process characteristics. To state it more bluntly: once effective does not mean always effective. Pedersen and Møller (1998) state on the basis of some Norwegian evaluation studies, that in the short run participants in labour market training have a higher probability on employment than non-participants and that labour market training is more effective than work placement only, with the combination of training and work being the most effective. However, they also conclude that there are major differences in effects, not only between programmes, but also for one given programme if measured at different points in time. Moreover, studies with regard to long-term effects of the labour market programmes are inconclusive and sometimes contradictory.

Cynics might conclude that this indicates that it is not very useful to try to detect what makes the difference in effectiveness between training programmes. All the more since the findings of Pedersen and Møller seem to indicate that effectiveness of labour market oriented training might be more dependent on the general unemployment situation, than on the process characteristics (or the “quality”) of the training. The latter probably is true, but this does not implicate that any additional contribution from the training process as such should therefore be discarded.

Accessibility of labour market training

Given the characteristics of the trainees in both the case studies and the survey, especially their labour market situation after the course and the fact that relatively little dropout appeared, the possibility that the trainee data are somewhat biased cannot be excluded. It could be that those who dropped out of the course were less willing to co-operate either for reasons of not wanting to admit that the course was left prematurely or for reasons that one did not want to be reminded of the course (which might also have been the reason for drop-out). It can also not be excluded that those who did not obtain a job after finalising the course were less willing to co-operate as well. It therefore has to be taken into account that there might be a bias towards the relatively more successful trainees.

At the same time, some other traits of the trainee sample bring up more fundamental questions. It appears that the trainees involved in the courses that have been investigated in both the case studies and the survey are on average relatively more highly educated than expected on the basis of the assumption that most long-term unemployed belong to the least qualified. However, here it should be taken into account that there are differences between countries with the Greek ‘cases’ probably affecting the average. The initial vocational training courses included in the second stage in Greece are not

necessarily aimed at long-term unemployed, but more at young people who left the educational system without gaining access to higher education nor obtaining a vocational qualification. These young people often did however complete upper secondary education. It also appears that those enrolled in the courses are for a substantial part those that on average have been unemployed for six months (or even less). Though hardly any country has a clear-cut definition of what constitutes long-term unemployment, such an unemployment duration might for many not match their perception of long-term unemployment. Here it has to be indicated that the labour market training programmes or courses investigated in some countries (e.g. the UK and Norway) do apply eligibility criteria in which being unemployed for at least three or six months is required (whereas in other countries the criterion of unemployment duration stipulates an unemployment period of at least a year). If an unemployment criterion implicates that unemployed receive a training offer as soon as this period is reached (or even a few weeks prior to this), and do accept this, this can partially explain for the average.

Nevertheless, the background characteristics of the 'sampled' trainees do raise two more fundamental issues. Firstly, the accessibility of training provisions for long-term unemployed and secondly, whether or not and to what extent the "real long-term unemployed" are reached by labour market oriented training measures.

Concerning the accessibility of training provisions, the issue of creaming has been addressed several times. Nicaise and Bollens (1998) speak in this respect of inadequate upward mobility through continued education and training, which in their opinion is caused by three clusters of factors: legal, administrative and institutional barriers, creaming of candidates and to motivation of possible candidates to participate. Concerning the legal, administrative and institutional barriers they point out that particular eligibility criteria like length of previous unemployment, but more particularly the labour market status (being registered as unemployed or even being registered as remunerated unemployed), can deny certain groups of unemployed access to training schemes; e.g. those who for various reasons have not registered like re-entering women or those taking on chains of odd and insecure jobs, and those who cannot register since they do not meet the registration (or remuneration) criteria. Though it is not possible to state in which respect enrolment in the programmes and courses studied in this project has been affected by such barriers, it is clear that eligibility criteria related to labour market status are applied. The fact that national unemployment rates differ from unemployment rates according to the ILO definition (often to the advantage of the national rates) does at least provide an indication that national definitions of unemployment do make a difference with regard to who is considered as unemployed and who not, and therefore might also affect who is given access to training and who is not (cf. Gray, 1996).

Concerning the motivation of possible candidates to participate, Nicaise and Bollens (1998) underline first of all that investment in training is a risky investment, given the uncertainty of the returns participation may yield (cf. Brandsma, 1997, 1998). Though one can argue that in many cases participation in training for unemployed does not require a monetary investment of the participants, since most costs are born by public funding, time devoted to training can be perceived as forlorn time for finding a job. Certainly if unemployed have the impression that participation in training does not lead

anywhere or can even have adverse effects (as has been proven in some studies; cf. Anderson c.s, 1993). Moreover, training often is not the first priority for the long-term unemployed. In the short term, they may perceive direct employment as the best strategy of getting back in the labour process, training being only a postponement of obtaining gainful employment or even a barrier. Other, psychological, barriers, such as fear of failure, a negative self-image or fatalism, may also demotivate unemployed people to participate in training. Certainly if unemployed already did participate in training without realisation of their (high) expectation, there is a chance that they will perceive this as a personal failure or as a reinforcement of the belief that training does not pay off, to the further detriment of their motivation to participate in training.

These motivational issues might lead to a process of self selection, with the result that only the most motivated enrol in training. Once again, it is difficult to say to what extent motivational issues and self selection have affected the enrolment in the training programmes and courses included in this study. Apart from the fact that the 'intensity' of the motivation in terms of more or less (or most and least) motivated is very difficult to measure -certainly in retrospect-, information on the (potential) motivation of non-participants is lacking in this study. Comparing treatment and control groups on the basis of a matched pairs design has not been considered (deliberately) for methodological and practical reasons. Nevertheless, on the one hand it becomes clear that one of the 'learning effects' frequently mentioned (though maybe not explicitly intended by the courses) is the growth in self-esteem and self-confidence. On the other hand, trainees' motivation is an important, if not the most important criterion in the recruitment and selection processes prior to enrolment.

The latter refers to the third cluster of factors mentioned by Nicaise and Bollens (1998) (and various other researchers; cf. Lee, 1990; West, 1996), the creaming of candidates. Creaming as such is difficult to prove, unless one is able to link those enrolled to those being not enrolled but belonging to the target group and compare their background characteristics (an exercise with similar problems as the already mentioned paired matching). De Koning et. al. (1990) did to a certain extent succeed in such a linkage, and concluded that training providers were indeed creaming off the least disadvantaged of the target group. It was, however, unclear to what extent such creaming took place deliberately or not. From this project it becomes clear that some sort of selection at the entrance of a more or less rigorous form does take place and that expected success of candidates, in terms of finalising the course or finding a job or both, does play a role in this selection process (sometimes by means of various tests to 'measure' learning capabilities of candidates, but moreover by 'subjective assessment' of those deciding on enrolment). Some of the training organisations are very explicit and open on this issue, referring to the need to be selective given the output related funding regime they are subject to or to the specific relationships with (local) employers, which does not allow for 'failure' (or in other words, forces them to maximise their credit worthiness; cf. Nicaise and Bollens, (1998)). In this sense, too strong an emphasis on effectiveness in terms of realising set, quantitative targets, could in the long-term prove to be counter productive. As has been argued before, it is difficult to decide whether selection in order to optimise the match between trainees and their motivation, capacities and preferences and course content and level, should be judged as wrong as such. Mismatches at this level might lead to a decrease of motivation, early drop-out and disencouragement or even reinforcement of the disbelief in the benefits of training. However, if selection

does result in systematically pushing out the least advantaged, the question is whether this is not an undesirable societal effect (certainly in the long run). Nicaise and Bollens (1998) state in this respect:

“Some state that we simply have to learn to live with the trade-off between effectiveness and equity, arguing that it makes no sense to operate an adverse selection system and only provide training to the poorer candidates.”

This might be considered a rather cynical conclusion, certainly if alternatives tailored for and really reaching the bottom end of the labour market are lacking. Even though cynical, this statement does raise the issue of ‘effectiveness of training in terms of reaching the intended target groups and getting them back into work. But it also raises the more general issue whether training does pay off. At the individual level, one can to a certain extent answer this question affirmative. Looking at the results of this particular study, it appears that rather large percentages of the former trainees have found a job among which well over three thirds were still holding the job at the time questioned. However, less than half of the former trainees is convinced that the training was necessary in order to obtain the particular job, and according to the trainees’ opinion there is a certain mismatch between the received training and the obtained job. Does training pay off at a more aggregated level, that is the level of the society? It is much less easy to answer this particular affirmative. First of all, we have to acknowledge that little is known about the macro-economic effects of investment in training for the (long-term) unemployed. But the macro-economic effects were not the focus of this study either. There are however indications that the macro-economic effects of labour market measures for the unemployed are less convincing than the micro-effects. Studies concerning this particular issue indicate that the (net) effect of training at a macro level is reduced or minimised due to substitution effects and dead-weight losses (that is: either finding a job as a result of the training, but in doing so taking the place of another job seeker that would have got the job if training had not been received, or finding a job for which the trainee would have been recruited anyway, even if the training had not been received) (cf. Nicaise & Bollens, 1998; OECD, 1993).

Notwithstanding potential or measured micro or macro effects of training, one thing is clear. Training cannot and does not create jobs. The economic upswing in various European countries during the first half of this decade has resulted, though delayed, in the reduction of unemployment even among those considered long-term unemployed. Given the present economic forecasts the question rises what will happen if economic growth declines (as foreseen) or even turns into a recession? Will this mean that those who have returned to employment after training are the first to be hit by unemployment again? This will depend on various factors like whether the first job obtained was a steady job or not, whether those former trainees who lost their first job obtained another job and the characteristics of this job, but also on more general factors like the stability of both the economic sector and the enterprise in which the former trainees are employed as well as the overall vulnerability of the national economy to global economic cycles. It appears that two basic lines of reasoning can be distinguished in this matter. On the one hand, there are various (economic) scholars stating that due to the demographic development of ageing of the work force, it will be necessary to get unemployed and ‘inactive’ labour back into employment -preferably after sufficient

training- in order to meet demand for labour. If this demand is not met, economic decline will appear not so much as a result of economic downswings, but due to the fact that the labour market cannot match supply and demand. On the other hand, there are (economic) researchers that foresee that those with the most vulnerable labour market position (the least qualified, older workers and workers with an unstable working career) are the first to be hit by increasing unemployment rates. Some of the most cynical among them point out that, due to the lack of quality of the training that has been provided to the former long-term unemployed, these persons are apt to end up in the vicious recycling of qualifications (cf. Thijssen, 1997). With this (and with the quality of training) they mean that the training provided is too much focussed on getting people back into employment as quickly as possible, without taking into account the long-term employment perspectives of the training provided. In their opinion the level of the training is too low and the scope of the training is too narrow, often focussed too much (or 'customised' too much) towards specific vacancies that exist within certain enterprises or that are expected to arise in the short-term.

In principle both lines of reasoning once more underline the dilemma to be faced in designing labour market measures for the long-term unemployed, though in the case of the demographic arguments it will depend on the particular demand for labour to be met. If labour market measures intend to promote the re-entry of long-term unemployed and especially the least qualified among them in gainful employment with the prospect of employment in the long run and even the prospect of continuing training in the context of employment, the initial investment needed for training these unemployed should be substantial. At the same time, as can be derived from various literature sources, the least qualified long-term unemployed often are confronted with multiple problems and do not (necessarily) give priority to training.

Comparative research issues in the area of vocational education and training

Vocational education and training, and certainly (continuing) vocational training for either the unemployed or employed people, differs substantially between countries. Attempting to classify training activities and training measures in order to establish comparable data appears to be a very difficult undertaking (cf. Brandsma & Kornelius, 1998).

Comparative research is of course always somewhat problematic, but certainly if one wants to measure effects of particular training arrangements at an international level this appears to cause even more problems. Nevertheless it appears worthwhile not to stick to descriptive comparisons, but try to design ways to tackle the various incomparability problems in order to build and test new theoretical or conceptual frameworks.

Referring to the last statement in the previous section the question could be raised whether international comparative research in the area of vocational education and training and in particular in the area of training for the unemployed poses specific problems that are not encountered in comparative research in for example primary education or general secondary education. To a certain extent this appears to be the case. This does not mean that comparative research in the latter area is not complicated. But the VET-area (including the training for the unemployed) appears to have a much larger variation and differentiation between countries than e.g. primary education. It is rather complicated to take into account both the scope and intentions of the particular

training measures -as set by national labour market policies- as well as the labour market conditions (not only unemployment rates and employment perspectives, but also the functioning of national and regional/local labour markets).

Which improvements would be possible? With regard to the specific research area tackled in this project, at least three options for improvement might be mentioned that, however, do differ with regard to the specific focus. The three options concern:

- A more thorough classification of different training measures before one really launches into selection of cases/courses: this will need more time than the rather quick and restricted inventory this project started off with. It will also cause new particular problems, e.g. in the case that ‘centralised’ information is not available and trying to get an overall picture of the offer of training for unemployed might require a separate survey (as is the case in the UK);
- A longitudinal research design: this would at least cater for the problem that it is difficult to draw any conclusion of the possible effects of training in the longer run. Most cynical scholars often stated that much training for (long-term) unemployed focuses too much on the short term (which vacancies are expected within a couple of months) and focuses too narrowly on job-specific training instead of equipping trainees with sufficient (vocational) skills to maintain a position in the labour market. Such longitudinal research ideally should cover a period of 4 to 5 years after trainees leave the training. A ‘retrospective’ design as used in this study does not seem to be appropriate. It seems too costly to retrace former trainees long after they left the training (with the additional risk of producing skewed samples);
- A longitudinal design approaching trainees for the first time if they enrol at the training course: this might at least (partly) solve the problem of retracing former trainees. Moreover, attempting to establish some rapport with trainees at the beginning of the course might also increase the willingness to participate in the study, once they have left the training. Of course, new problems would emerge in such a design as well; e.g. practical problems of different or very flexibilised enrolment dates. In addition to this, a longitudinal study set up like this will be a rather lengthy study if one still wants to cover the 4-5 year period after the training is concluded, with still the chance of “loosing” trainees during the study.

From the perspective of further developing and elaborating joint comparative research in the field of (initial and continuing) vocational education and training and human resource development, a stronger focus on the specific problems and challenges one encounters in performing such comparative research in these fields appears necessary. Comparative research should be more than pure descriptions of national systems, developments and peculiarities put next to each other. International comparative research should go beyond such descriptive studies and try to embark upon studies which try to provide social scientific explanations for phenomena in education and training and for differences between countries in these fields. Such an ‘explanatory oriented’ approach might increase the mutual understanding of both our national systems and of what works in a particular situation (and not in another) and why. It should be emphasised that for a correct interpretation and good understanding of this type of comparative research, more descriptive and exploratory (national) studies can be of great value. The one does not exclude the other. But international comparative

research could attain value added if it could get past purely descriptive studies and move a few steps further.

Issues and implications for further research

A first issue concerns the “creaming” or selection at enrolment. As shown, selectivity does enhance both the output and the outcome. More selective training organisations seem to have less dropouts and more trainees getting into a job. Together with the earlier addressed issue of accessibility, this raises the question of what happens to those unemployed that are not admitted to the course. What are their chances of getting training and/or finding employment? Given the impact of training on the individual level, it seems to be of major importance to know what happens to those that have been denied access. The first question is whether there are alternative training options to which they can be referred or any form of a safety net which provides them with alternatives for training that has been denied. In the context of the last proposal concerning future research (previous section), it might be interesting and perhaps possible, to cover those that do not gain access to the training for which they submitted as well.

Directly related to this first issue is the question which training is needed to bring back the least qualified up to the level of skills with which they stand a chance of the labour market. In order to be able to answer such a question, first a basic understanding is needed of the size and structure of the group of least qualified. In this respect it does seem to make a difference whether it concerns those unemployed due to major economic restructuring (decline in particular economic sectors), due to obsolescence of skills or due to an overall lack of education and training (or insufficient quality of the education and training received). Such differentiations could be helpful, if not important, in setting out training strategies and designing particular training programmes. What kind of training is needed might differ (according to level and duration) depending on previous working and training experiences gained. Nevertheless, it is important as well that the training that is provided is sufficient to acquire skills that are recognisable and valued in the labour market. This directly relates to the earlier mentioned dilemma of designing training programmes that do fulfil this role, but at the same time take into account that lengthy training paths are not always the kind of training long-term unemployed seek for, given that their priority might be to obtain gainful employment. In this respect it might be worthwhile to explore the possibilities to design apprenticeship-like training structures for unemployed, which might kill two birds with one stone: training unemployed up to a level which is profitable in the labour market and providing them with work as well.

This brings up the issue of tailor made design of training programmes, as mentioned earlier. Tailor made design is not necessarily individualised training. As can be concluded from this study, individualised training is not by definition the best way to choose. Apparently the social aspect of training can be important as well (as has been more often found in studies into adult education). Tailor made in this respect means tailored towards the needs and characteristics of different types of unemployed. Or in other words, different training models for different target groups. However, given the present state of the art in our knowledge what might work and what might not, it might

need quite some 'experimentation' to find out which design is most suitable for a particular target group.

Finally, an important question to be answered in future research concerns the macro effects of training. At the micro level of the individual unemployed, training does seem to pay off. The question however is, what does the economy or society benefit from the investments in this training? Overall it is presumed that investment in training from an economic point of view is a good investment. Many policy documents link economic competitiveness and training to each other. The question is whether and to what extent such a link can be made for training of unemployed as well. Of course one can presume that if training gets unemployed back into work this will save on benefits. But from a policy point of view it would be logical to try to measure the size of such effects as well as effects in terms of possible changes in productivity, economic growth or the general health situation.

2. Background and objectives of the project

Unemployment remains an issue in Europe, even though there are substantial differences between Member States concerning the unemployment rates as well as the present decrease in (long-term) unemployment. It seems that the core of the unemployment problem lies in long-term unemployment. A relatively large group of young people and adults belong to the core of (long-term) unemployed, of which a part has not worked for years or even never got the chance to occupy a labour position. These unemployed find themselves in a problematic situation. Most of them have rather low initial qualifications or have qualifications that have become obsolete, (partially) due to their long-term unemployment. Some of them have never acquired any vocational qualification. Their chance of re-entering the labour force decreases as the length of their unemployment increases.

Against this background the question regarding the labour market re-entry of this target group, and the role vocational training should have in this, is of increasing importance. This appears to be reflected in the attention that is given to combating long-term unemployment and social exclusion at the European level, but also at the level of Member States. One of the measures most regularly employed seems to be labour market oriented training. There are however, doubts about the effectiveness of such training programmes. Partially these doubts concern the extent to which these training programmes cover those unemployed that are most in need of training; that is, the least qualified among the long-term unemployed. Overall, it appears that the least qualified still participate in relatively little training (c.f.: Brandsma, Kessler & Münch , 1995) and this appears to be also the case if labour market oriented training for the long-term unemployed is concerned. This might be caused by the mechanism of 'self-selection', through which the least qualified, due to a lack of self-esteem or former negative learning experiences do not even try to enrol in training programmes. It might also be caused by 'creaming'; training programmes often focus (implicitly) on those subgroups within a target-group, that are reckoned to have the best chances for successful participation and completion of the training (c.f.: Brandsma, 1995).

The doubts with regard to the effectiveness of labour market oriented training for the long-term unemployed also concern the outcomes of these types of training programmes. On the one hand, it appears that trainees do not always find work after conclusion of the training or they find work that they could have also done without following a training programme (c.f.: Brandsma, 1995; Den Boer, 1995). On the other hand, it appears that substantial numbers leave the training programmes before obtaining a qualification, though the reason for doing so might be that they obtain a job. Whether this is a steady job, is often not known, due to the lack of longitudinal studies.

This research project concerning the effectiveness of labour market oriented training for the long-term unemployed focuses on the question of what works and does not work in training for this target-group. More specifically, it focuses on the process variables -that is the organisational, curricular and instructional characteristics of training programmes- that might make one training programme more effective if compared with another training programme. This, however, does not implicate that the general (labour market and economic) context or the more specific contextual or input characteristics of these programmes are left out. It should be taken into account that (on average)

unemployment rates differ between European countries. In some countries the labour market situation is perceived as a 'labour market crisis' at relatively modest unemployment rates, at least from the perspective of the European average (e.g. Norway, Iceland). Other countries however, have been confronted with unemployment rates persistingly above the European average (e.g.: Greece, Italy). The same holds for the development of unemployment rates. Where some countries have seen their unemployment rate drop substantially over the last 3 to 4 years, with even a reduction in long-term unemployment, in other countries the situation has more or less remained the same or altered into a direction not known for years (e.g. Germany, where of course rather specific factors play a role).

It should be stressed that this concerns the official unemployment rates (on basis of registered unemployment and/or the ILO-definition), which does not reveal the hidden unemployment: those not actively seeking a job and those not registered or entitled to register as unemployed (not allowed to claim benefit; looking for a job of just a couple of hours, those claiming income support from other sources than the unemployment fund or the homeless). It can be expected that hidden unemployment will also differ between countries.

Nevertheless, the particular interest of this study is to identify the training characteristics that appear to make training more or less effective. Where effectiveness is defined as:

- finishing the course successfully, and where applicable obtaining a certificate or diploma;
- finding a job or enrolling in continuing training (see also section 3.2).

More specific aims and objectives have been:

- to develop a possible model which can explain the effectiveness of labour market oriented training programmes for the long-term unemployed on the basis of a literature review and on the basis of qualitative case studies;
- to revise the model on the basis of the results of the case study;
- to test the revised model in a more large scale survey research, identifying the organisational, curricular and instructional characteristics of the training programmes that influence their effectiveness;
- to develop a monitoring instrument on the basis of the outcomes of the research which can support managers and trainers of such training organisations in monitoring the quality and effectiveness of their training courses.

3. Scientific description of the project results and methodology

The project encompassed the following major research activities:

- an inventory of the existing training programmes for (long-term) unemployed in each of the participating countries, resulting in so-called background reports;
- a further development of the initial conceptual model (on the basis of a literature review);
- comparative case studies (according to a multiple case study design);
- survey research.

Based on the (preliminary) results of the project and on more general theoretical notions and concepts with regard to quality assurance and quality improvement in education and training, a monitoring instrument was developed as well, aimed at managers and trainers within training organisations for supporting them in monitoring the effectiveness and quality of their training programmes (development and content of this instrument is described in a separate document).

For each of these activities the methodology applied and the major results will be discussed in subsequent sections.

3.1 Inventory of existing training programmes

3.1.1 Methodology

The general aim of the inventory was to get a better understanding of the types of training programmes for long-term unemployed that exist in each of the countries that participated in the project. Such a general overview was considered necessary to be able to make a better informed selection of training programmes for the case-studies and the survey that have to be carried out during the project.

A description matrix was developed for the inventory of training programmes. The description matrix as such aimed at constructing a general overview for each identified programme according to a fixed format, which should enable all project partners to get a clear picture of programmes and/or courses run for the (long-term) unemployed in each of the countries and or the general features of these provided programmes/courses. More specifically the description matrix should provide the information per programme that was considered as being most relevant for the selection of the programmes or “cases” to be included in the case study phase of the project, e.g.:

- ‘content’: the sector or occupation for which the unemployed are trained;
- ‘level’: the level of educational attainment (expressed in terms of ISCED levels) at which the training programmes aim;
- ‘instructional characteristics’, such as amount of practical training, amount of classroom time.

The inventory (or description matrix) contained the following descriptors:

- Name and size of the programme (size e.g.: the number of enrolments per year/course; the overall budget for or investment in the training programme; scope of the programme; e.g.: national/regional/local, size of the ‘target group’ (all long-term unemployed or specific subgroups).

- Providers/organisers (the institution or organisation that organises and/or actual delivers the training programme).
- Funder (who provides the funding for the training programme; including mixed funding (e.g.: public and private) or funding through specific training schemes, like the ESF).
- Main target group (clarification of the group at which the programme mainly aims; e.g. is the programme open for all long-term unemployed or is it 'restricted' to specific subgroups (like women, immigrants, age categories).
- Occupation/sector (providing about the sector or (group of) occupation(s) for which the particular programme is training its participants)
- Content and intended level of the training programme (for "what" (which occupations or jobs) is the programme training and what is the intended 'outcome' level of the training programme in comparison with other forms of vocational education and training?)
- Instructional characteristics (the pedagogical intentions or the instructional model or philosophy underlying the training programme or applied by the training organisation).
- Evaluation/assessment (how is the training concluded; do trainees receive a diploma or certificate and if yes, what is the basis for granting this diploma or certificate?).
- Accreditation (whether or not the diplomas or certificates that are granted are officially (and nationally) recognised and an equivalent to diplomas/certificates in initial vocational education).
- Duration of the programme
- Special features (e.g. special intake procedures, counselling during training and/or job search; benefit/support for the trainee, follow up procedures, etc).
- Geographical location of the programme
- Historical development (getting some idea of the development of the programme as such; when was it started; did major changes occur during the last five years in its provision, funding, organisation or political context?).

3.1.2 Major results

It appeared that detailed information was not readily available for all aspects of the programmes. Certainly in the case of instructional characteristics, which to a certain extent appeared to be depending on the specific provider, it sometimes was difficult to obtain more detailed and clear-cut information. In this respect a pragmatic approach was taken for the inventory, in order to prevent the description of the different training and labour market measures undertaken in the participating countries from becoming a study in itself ('detailed' information per country is given in the differently printed blocks).

Overall it can be concluded that the number of and variety in initiatives focussing on training and re-integration of the long-term unemployed is rather large (within and between countries). Some of the labour market programmes or training measures have a rather long history, originating from the sixties or fifties or even earlier (e.g.: the training for self-employed and the employment service training in Flanders or some of the Centres for Vocational Training in the Netherlands), while other initiatives are from

a more recent date, having been set up to combat the increasing unemployment at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s. The latter category appears especially to encompass the more local and experimental initiatives.

Belgium (Flanders): The Flemish Community in Belgium has, like many other countries and regions, been confronted with a decline in employment during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Up from the early 1990s employment has increased, only followed up by a decline in unemployment from 1994/1995 onwards. The decline in unemployment as registered from 1994/1995 onwards is partially due to early retirement schemes, either expelling older workers out of the labour process, or no longer obliging older workers to apply for job vacancies. One of the characteristic traits in the development of unemployment during the late 1980s and early 1990s, is the fact that the relative unemployment among the higher educated increased more rapidly than the unemployment among the lowest educated. This gives expression to the fact that the general average level of education has risen considerably during that period and that the absolute number of lowly educated people has decreased. As said close to the mid-1990s unemployment stabilises or even decreases. However, the relative proportion of the long-term unemployed within the total unemployment increases, affecting the poorly educated the most. Those who have been unemployed for 12 to 24 months follow the general trend (that is a slow decrease in unemployment with the steadily increase of employment), but those being unemployed for over 2 years form an increasing proportion of the unemployed (with women being most in the disadvantage).

During the 1980s there is a slow shift towards actions specifically tailored towards the long-term unemployed. Until then, major actions were undertaken aimed at unemployed school leavers. Since the late 1980s, a specific target group policy has become more common in labour market policies in Flanders, alongside the more general existing labour market and training measures. In order to ensure sufficient provision of the various target group related actions for the long-term unemployed (both labour market and training actions), not only government actions have been set up, but also a wide variety of locally/privately initiated actions. The effect of all this is that presently there is a wide variety of employment and training activities, that can vary between localities, and at the same time are mainly set in operation during the early 1990s. The various initiatives can vary from totally classroom based training to fully work based training/work experience programmes. There are various initiatives of which only some are especially directed towards the long-term unemployed. The initiatives of a more general character are:

- distance education: this mainly concerns the provision of a distance form for studying courses equivalent to those in the general education system leading to the same certificates or diplomas, with relatively few low educated participating in it;
- education for social promotion with 300 local initiatives covering over 150,000 participants, constituting the main form of adult education and aiming mainly at providing educational routes equivalent to normal educational routes, providing evening or weekend courses (most of them not specifically vocationally oriented);
- adult basic education, mainly aimed at providing the basic numeracy and literacy skills for those lacking these skills.

However, the last provision does include a special course which aims at the encouragement of professional and educational 'ability to cope', preparing unemployed either for re-entering the labour market or continuing education or training. The duration of participation in adult basic education (in these specific courses) lasts on average for a period of one year for at maximum 5 hours per week. In addition to these more general measures, there is what is called second chance education. Overall second chance education is relatively small (according to the numbers of participants covered by it). Second chance education is mainly intended to obtain general or regular education diplomas for those who did not have the chance of doing so during their regular educational career. It mainly caters for part-time day education with a maximum duration of 6 years for an individual programme. There are also more vocationally oriented initiatives. One of the oldest concerns training for those who have plans to become self-employed or are already working as a self-employed owner of a small or medium sized

enterprise (the VIZO training after its Flemish abbreviation). The origin of the VIZO training goes back to the beginning of this century. As said these training programmes target at those that want to become self-employed or already are, as well as at young people under the school leaving age. Total training last for 2 years of which 128 hours is practical training organised in a modular form. VIZO training is not specifically oriented towards (long-term) unemployed and only few unemployed people participate in this training.

A second initiative concerns the courses organised and provided by the Flemish employment service, the VDAB courses. These courses are vocational and cover a wide range of different occupations and trades. The VDAB courses, which originate from the 1940s, are either provided by training centres under VDAB management, acknowledged training centres, at company premises or in a joint venture between VDAB and enterprises. The courses, which can last from a few months up to one year, are provided for both unemployed persons and employed persons (in the latter case it is possible that courses are organised for employees of a specific company).

A large initiative which was set up during the late 1980s, is Weerwerk (Work Again, if literally translated). It is a specific programme within the VDAB structures that focuses on the long-term unemployed, the poorly educated and those living on minimum subsistence. In 1994 is comprised about 625 local programmes covering for nearly 2300 full time equivalents of participants. Two out of three participants are women and well over 50% of the participants are poorly educated. The emphasis in the programme is not as much on training, as on intensive individual counselling aimed at re-integration in the labour market, though the programme does include general training and some specific preparatory training. If an employer takes on an unemployed person under this scheme on a temporary, subsidised contract, the employer is obliged to provide practical training to the participant. Given the emphasis on intensive individual counselling, there is no maximum duration to the programme. Support is given as long as needed. Participants either get into the normal labour circuit, into work experience projects or subsidised labour, into VDAB training or back into unemployment (concerning the latter, it is however known that Weerwerk participants appear to have a three times higher chance of finding a job than the long-term unemployed that did not participate in the programme). Each city and municipality in Flanders has (by decree) a Public Centre for Social Welfare, which caters for the minimum subsistence. Those living on such a social benefit, are also those threatened most with the chance of exclusion from the labour market. The programme run by these Public Centres focuses on the (re-)integration of its clients in the labour market; the programme, which lasts at least a year, includes about 4 hours a week of theoretical technical training (provided by centres for Education and Employment) and about 4 hours a week of social skills training, which often is provided through adult basic education (especially the programmes focussing on professional and educational self-reliance).

Two more work-related programmes concern the Local Employment Agency and the Cooperation for Social Workplaces. The programme of the Local Employment Agency focuses on those who have been unemployed for three years or more and is mainly aimed at getting people back into work, either through searching for appropriate jobs or creating jobs. If during intake it appears that candidates lack certain basic attitudes or competencies it is possible to refer them either to adult basic education or the programme run by the Public Centers for Social Welfare. The Cooperation for Social Workplaces (started up on an experimental basis) aims at creating subsidised employment in a protected environment for those that are considered 'unemployable'. The target group consists of people aged 25 or older, with little education (maximum lower secondary education) who have been unemployed for at least 5 years. Though set up with the idea of offering work experience which would support re-integration into a normal workplace, most participants are employed on a steady contract.

The last initiative is not as much one specific programme, but a complex of local, often private training initiatives directed towards the unemployed. It is called the Cooperation of Local Networks, which actually is an umbrella organisation, encompassing 233 member organisations which provide up to nearly 380 training and employment programmes. Given that it concerns local initiatives often from private providers, it is difficult to give more specific information on

the content of the offer. In general it concerns programmes for work experience, training for specific skills and/or social skills in relation with getting re-employed¹.

Denmark: The labour market situation in Denmark has gone through substantial changes during the first half of the 1990s. Until 1993/1994, unemployment was considered relatively high. From 1994 onwards however, an economic upswing took place, followed after some time by a decline in (long-term) unemployment. The 'backbone' of the vocationally oriented training for adults consists of AMU-courses, which are either provided by special AMU-centres or by technical and commercial colleges. AMU-courses are in principle open for everyone, be it employed or unemployed.

The labour market policy in Denmark has changed during the first half of the nineties, with a shift towards a greater emphasis on 'pull factors' (that is: a greater emphasis on trying to pull the unemployed back into the labour market instead of pushing them back in; for example, the obligation for unemployed to follow a 3-6 months course for unemployed (a UTB-course) has been abolished in 1993, since forced training was considered not to result in acceptable results). In this context several new labour market measures have been taken, in order to provide job openings for unemployed and at the same time ensuring sufficient provision for upgrading of the qualifications of the total workforce. A first example of such measures concerns the so-called Job Switching or Job Rotation Model. Basic principle underpinning this model is that unemployed persons, who receive (basic) training in order to be able to fulfil the job, replace employed people going off on training. If possible, the employee that received training moves after his/her return to another position (at a higher level) leaving a more permanent vacancy for the unemployed person. In practice this does happen, but it also happens that after the return of the trained employee the unemployed person loses the temporary job. Another option is that enterprises (especially larger ones) hire a surplus of personnel, recruited from the unemployed, which allows them to send off employees on training more often.

A second example concerns the leave schemes, which have been introduced in the early 1990s. There are three such leave schemes: parental leave, training leave and sabbatical leave. The intention of these schemes is similar to the Job Rotation schemes. Employees using the option of taking leave are expected to be replaced by unemployed persons, who receive (if necessary), training in order to fulfil the job. Training leave is in a sense somewhat an exception. This leave scheme (which actually is the successor of the earlier 'educational support for adults') does not only entitle employed persons to training leave (if there is an agreement with the employer), but also unemployed persons. The scheme has been revised several times, with a last revision stemming from 1995, providing the same rights to employed and unemployed persons. Both employed and unemployed persons are entitled to a leave period up to maximum of one year, once every five years. Sabbatical leave is intended for workers aged over 25 years, who have been working at least three years out of the previous period of five years. Sabbatical leave can last from 13 weeks up to a full year, and may be used for any purpose the worker wants, if there is an agreement with the employer. Parental leave is intended for parents who want to look after their children. Replacements under this scheme, however, do not appear to affect the unemployed very much. Those replacing the employees on parental leave quite often are persons who take on such replacements on a rather regular basis or persons who have only been unemployed for a relatively short period (cf. Andersen et al., 1996; Brandsma, 1998).

There are various training measures run in Denmark, which are more or less specifically oriented towards the long-term unemployed. A first measure is the so-called P47 courses, which are 1-year labour market AMU-training courses (for women). These courses were set up as an experiment in 1988 (the experiment lasting for three years), providing training courses in seven different branches of industry (varying from real estate caretaking to the process industry). The courses, which targeted at unemployed or re-entering unskilled women between 25 and 50 years

¹: Van de Poele, L. & Oosterlinck, T. (1996). *Training for the long-term unemployed in Flanders (Belgium)*. Gent: Universiteit Gent, Vakgroep Onderwijskunde.

old, are run by local AMU-centres. The emphasis in these courses is on project work and developing problem solving abilities and on practical training within enterprises/labour organisations. The courses are based on the alternance model, alternating school-based periods of a couple of weeks, with substantial periods of practical training. Total duration is about 46 weeks, during which trainees attend the course full-time (that is: 37 hours per week). The experiment as such was not only considered as a 'positive discrimination measure' supporting women, but also as a developmental task for the AMU-centres, trying to shift their focus to a more responsive, market-oriented attitude. After the experiment was concluded, it was decided that this type of courses should get a permanent basis, but then should also be open for (or designed for) men.

A second training measure concerns the basic vocational training (EGU, after its Danish abbreviation). This training measure is mainly targeted towards young people that did not enter any other education or training after completion of compulsory education, whether they are considered unemployed or not. The training that is provided for this target group can last up to 2 years of which at maximum 40 weeks will be school-based training. Practical training is offered in enterprises in the form of temporary employment. A restriction to the training offered is that it cannot function as a competitor to the regular vocational education and training programmes, provided in the different types of vocational schools.

A third training measure is constituted by the so-called 'job introductory courses' (EI-courses) and the long labour market training courses (LAMU-courses). The EI-courses were introduced in 1972, first aiming at young persons aged 15-25 years old and for the unemployed (starting from 1977 onwards). The distinction between the two target groups has been abolished in 1993. Nowadays the EI-courses are aimed at those of 18 years or older, who have difficulties with their labour market entrance or with finding a new start within the education system. In practice this means that the focus is on those with no more than compulsory education (who are considered to be unskilled). The EI-course are mainly an organised guidance instrument, based on workshop training, that should result in a realistic individual plan (at the end of the course) for future 'business' (being work, training or a further educational career). On average the EI-courses last for 7 weeks, of which about 4 weeks of training in practice. The LAMU-courses have been established in 1985 as being the first qualifying courses that are especially targeted towards the long-term unemployed. The reason that these courses are grouped together with the EI-courses is that the LAMU-courses consist of a 'training sequence' that often starts of with an EI-course, followed up by a qualifying course (including general studies if considered necessary or appropriate). Up from 1994 the LAMU-courses are particularly aimed at unemployed of 18 years or older. Duration of these courses is between 15 and 26 weeks, of which typically 4 weeks is practical training. Local AMU-centres or vocational colleges provide the courses. The training is to a high degree decentralised, which implicates that no central approval is needed for the training programmes that are provided with the exception of special LAMU-modules developed locally and an extension of the total number of subject hours. The labour market authorities must approve these. Overall the size of these courses (in number of participants) and their budget is decreasing.

A fourth training measure concerns the so-called educational offer to unemployed (the UTB-arrangement). It concerns a general programme, either offering additional education and training to those without qualifying education before they receive their first job offer or additional education and training to all unemployed after their first job offer, irrespective of their educational background (the 'job offer' concerns temporary employment). For the provision of the additional education and training the existing training infrastructure (e.g. AMU-centres and vocational colleges) is used.

The fifth and longest existing training measure, concerns the so-called labour market training or AMU-courses. These courses are considered as part of continuing vocational training. There is a distinction between 'plan courses' on the one hand, and 'income covered activities' and 'company adjusted courses' on the other hand. The latter two are to a large extent paid by enterprises and therefore focus on employed persons from these enterprises. These courses are

in principal open for both employed and unemployed. AMU-courses for the semi-skilled are provided by the AMU-centres, while AMU-courses, for the skilled and middle management “workers” (including the unemployed, provided that they do have finalised basic vocational training) are delivered by the technical and commercial colleges. Though in principal these courses are open for both employed and unemployed, the unemployed get the lowest priority. The first priority are the employed, followed by unemployed who have a job offer (if not guarantee) if they finalise the training. The unemployed without any concrete employment perspective come in last. AMU-courses are planned by so called permanent joint committees, in which the social partners are represented².

Ireland: Employment has increased substantially during the first half of the 1990s. Nevertheless unemployment levels are still over 10%. It appears that approximately half of those unemployed (as derived from the Live Register) can be considered as being long-term unemployed (that is: unemployed for over one year). Of those that according to this ‘definition’ can be considered as being long-term unemployed, again approximately half are in chronic long-term unemployed, being unemployed for more than three years. Until the early nineties policy has focussed on school leavers/young unemployed people (which might have been reinforced by ESF regulations in place until the early 1990s, requiring that participants should be younger than 25 years). It is only since the early 1990s that the long-term unemployed are a priority category in policy making. The focus in the labour market policies for long-term unemployed is on the creation of (subsidised) employment and the establishment of a strong counselling and placement system. This (partially) is reflected in the measures that are specifically targeted to the long-term unemployed. The most important of these measures is the Community Employment scheme (CE). It caters for about 40,000 people and has been established in April 1994. CE offers unemployed part-time work (often within voluntary organisations, community centres, local authorities or school organisations). The overall principle is that for every participant a personal development plan will be drafted, addressing the CE-work related training that will be undertaken, the training that will be undertaken in relation to the participant’s vocational/ labour market aspirations and ‘own time/personal development training’. CE has two options: the part-time job option and the part-time integration option. The part-time job option offered under CE focuses on unemployed who have been registered on Live Register for more than 3 years and are over 35 years old; the part-time job option can last up to three years. The part-time integration option focuses on getting the CE-worker back into the labour market; this programme lasts up to one year and forms a follow-up for the part-time job option. The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) covered about 4,300 participants (1996) and focuses on providing education and training opportunities for the long-term unemployed. Though it aims at the development of employment related skills (including technological and business skills) it also includes more general studies. VTOS is delivered within the vocational and community schools sector of the second level education system. Participants are stimulated to take Leaving Certificate subjects (or obtain a portfolio of certification with Leaving Certificate, City and Guilds and other vocational qualifications), which increases their options for continuing education and training after concluding VTOS. In principle VTOS offers various options. A first distinction concerns the one between the ‘core mode’ and the ‘dispersed mode’. The latter concerns participants entering Post Leaving Certificate courses; these participants have to compete for available places. Dispersed here means that unemployed attendants are dispersed over the regular Post Leaving Certificate classes. the PLC courses are full-time for one or two years. The core mode concerns stand-alone

²: Andersen K. Bach & Nielsen S.P. (1996). *Labour market oriented training programmes for the long-term unemployed: Denmark*. Copenhagen: DEL, Danish Institute for the Training of Vocational Education Teachers.

groups of approximately 15 students either at Foundation Level (one year full-time) or at Leaving Certificate Level (two years full-time).

The Specific Skills Training programme (SST) is a programme that focuses on young graduates/young unemployed and not specifically at the long-term unemployed, though the percentage of long-term unemployed enrolled in a SST programme seems to be gradually (but slowly) increasing. The courses provided under SST last on average 26 weeks and are delivered by the Irish Training and Employment Authority. The guidance, counselling and placement system, which is emphasised in the policy, is part of the Local Employment Service³.

Greece: the Greek labour market is characterised by a substantial black economy, which despite recently introduced measures (1998) is still high (especially in the areas of health and equipment repair and maintenance services) and estimated to comprise about 30% of the GNP. At the same time, employment structures are unstable, with especially small companies closing down, often reappearing afterwards under a different name. New companies especially emerge in the service and trade sector. Registered unemployment is over 10% (depending on age category it fluctuates between 10% up to 25%). Long-term unemployment is estimated to comprise 35-45% of the total unemployment, with most long-term unemployed (about 40% up to 50%) being unskilled, not having received any vocational oriented training. However, many of them have completed upper secondary education and a substantial proportion consists of tertiary education graduates. During the last years specific policy measures have been taken aiming at the long-term unemployed. It mainly concerns wage subsidies (either direct subsidies or in the form of free or reduced health insurance) to employers hiring long-term unemployed. Vocational training (be it initial or continuing training) is provided by various institutions both public and private, ranging from schools for vocational education or schools for apprenticeship training, to small private training companies. From 1993 onwards, the public funds (government and ESF funds) are channelled through two types of institutions, which also provide training for the unemployed (though these are not a specific target group for these institutions).

The first type of institute consists of the institutes for vocational training (which can both be public and private), providing initial training and retraining within a two-year curriculum. By law, this training is considered to be outside the formal education system, although they fulfil the criteria for ISCED level 4 (from 1998-1999 onwards they also offer courses on ISCED level 3c and 2c). The training programmes cover a wide range of occupations and trades and focus on obtaining a diploma. This diploma gives access to official public (and centralised) examinations, which if passed, give people the right to practice the vocation for which they have been trained. From the school year 1996/1997 onwards the training also encompasses a practical training period. The curricula are defined at a national level within the context of the National System for Vocational Education and Training, which was established in 1992. The Organisation for Vocational Education and Training, which was also set up in 1992 and which is a public (semi-)autonomous body supervised by the Ministry of Education, is responsible for the organisation and operation of the public Institutes for Vocational Training as well as for the supervision and monitoring of the private Institutes. The training programmes provided by the Institutes for Vocational Training aim at young people who left secondary education without obtaining access to higher education and without having obtained a vocational qualification.

The second type of training institutes consists of the centres for vocational training, which provide informal continuous training. Again these centres can be both public and private, but the centres can only receive public funding if the Ministry of Employment accredits them. This accreditation procedure is less strict for the public than for the private centres. The courses that are provided mostly have a duration of 100 to 300 hours, but there are exceptional cases of training courses lasting for only 40 hours or longer courses lasting up to 600 hours. The overall

³: Casey, T. (1996). *National background report Ireland*. Dublin: Crica Group Ltd.

programme of continuous training is split into 13 regional areas and 15 specific action regions focussing on high unemployment areas. For every region a number of specific actions, that is training courses, are defined by the regional committees or the Organisations for the Employment of the Labour Force (which monitors the specific action regions). Once the training actions have been defined, these are then open for tendering by established centres for vocational training. Proposals that have to be submitted by the centres should be very detailed, addressing among other things, the objectives, the teaching methods, the materials used, the way in which practical training will be delivered, names and CV's of the tutors involved, and a detailed budget.

The Continuous Vocational Training programme has two lines of action, one focussing on employed people (either self-employed, employed in a private enterprise or employed in public enterprises) and one focussing on young people aged 15-25, unemployed persons or those threatened with unemployment. Courses that specifically aim at unemployed can range between 150 and 500 hours (depending on the previous level of educational attainment of the group of trainees on which the course is targeted), with a practical training component that may comprise up to 75% of the total training time. At least 10% of total training time should be devoted to job search skills⁴.

In addition to these two types of institutes there are the schools for apprenticeship, which are also operated by the Organisation for the Employment of the Labour Force. The schools for apprenticeship offer young unemployed people options for acquiring vocational qualifications (though enrolment is not restricted to young people; other unemployed persons enrol as well). Training is mainly practical, sometimes with actual workplacement. The certificates that can be obtained are recognised as vocational qualifications. Trainees get a remuneration during their training period and are free of paying health insurance as well.

The Netherlands: Like many other countries, unemployment was relatively high in the Netherlands during the early 1990s. After the economic upswing around 1993/1994, unemployment gradually started to decrease, though at first not among the long-term unemployed (although there is not an official definition of 'long-term unemployment', in general those unemployed are considered to be long-term unemployed if they have been out of work for over a year). From 1996 onwards unemployment decreased rapidly, presently resulting in a situation of specific skills shortages. Even among the long-term unemployed, unemployment is decreasing. The long-term unemployed still in unemployment can be considered as the severely underprivileged (often with a combination of problems, which is not only restricted to poor education). The labour market and training policies, which have been used since the early 1990s, are characterised by a high speed of innovation and renewal. Especially in the area of subsidy schemes and work placement programmes, the 'turnover' among measures is relatively high. Presently there are two main work placement programmes in place: the Youth Employment Guarantee Plan and Act and the so-called 'Melkert' jobs, which provide temporary employment. It mainly concerns work within public organisations, which should not replace regular jobs. There is quite some criticism with regard to this temporary employment. On the one hand, it is doubted that the temporary jobs do not affect regular jobs. On the other hand, statistics show that the temporary employment often does not lead to regular employment and that those who have to leave the scheme (once they reach the maximum duration) return into unemployment. In the context of these work placement schemes (often with some public funding), various local initiatives are developed as well, sometimes initiated or co-operated by temp agencies. In general it are the regional employment agencies that decide which unemployed are trained. For the provision of this training, the regional employment offices can dispose of various options for training the (long-term) unemployed:

⁴: Michaelides, P.G. (1996). *Vocational Training in Greece. A summary*. Crete: University of Crete.

- referring the unemployed to adult basic education or courses within regular vocational education;
- referring the unemployed to one of the training organisations specifically designed for training of unemployed or those that want to re-enter the labour market (the CBBs, the CVs and the VVSs);
- referring the unemployed to training provided by the regional training centres under contract with the employment service (these training centres are also the major bodies for initial vocational education and training);
- referring the unemployed to privately provided training.

There are three types of training centres, which have been specifically set up for training of the unemployed.

The first type of organisation are the Centres for Vocational Orientation and Preparation, that were originally established on behalf of unemployed with a Surinam or Antillean origin (and later other immigrants) who, due to their lack of (native) language skills, their insufficient knowledge of the societal and labour relations or insufficient education and training, had major difficulties to obtain a job. These centres aim at enhancing the labour market chances of these groups (whose labour market position is weakened by socio-cultural factors), for which “regular” training programmes are neither sufficient, nor accessible due to their previous level of educational attainment. Most of the programmes offered at these centres are therefore intended as a ‘pre-stage’, that should guide trainees into regular initial vocational training programmes. The centres presently aim at the following target groups: unemployed that are registered at the labour agencies (including long-term unemployed with the least education); immigrants that are unemployed; women who want to re-enter the labour market. The courses that are offered are basic courses; orientation courses, transition courses, vocational courses at a basic level for the technical, administrative and care sector and other (non-qualifying) vocational courses for jobs in horticulture, the transport sector and catering industry. In general the courses provided are rather short; the maximum length is 12 months.

The second types of training organisations are the Vocational Training Centres, which are presently still operated under the national employment service (which will change in the near future). These centres offer (additional) training for the unemployed and employees threatened with unemployment. The general aim of the training programmes is to increase the labour market chances of the individual trainee. Therefore, in planning the courses the specific regional labour market needs have to be taken into account and the regional employment boards are consulted during the planning. Target groups are: unemployed, aged 18 years or older, who are registered as unemployed (for those aged 18 up to 24, being unemployed as such is sufficient for admission, but the unemployed aged over 24 should have been registered as unemployed for at least one year); women, who wish to re-enter the labour market and are “job searchers” for at least three years and employees threatened with unemployment. The centres offer courses in three general directions: technical training programmes; administrative training programmes and commercial training programmes. The duration of these training programmes ranges from some weeks up to a year (depending on the entrance level of the trainee and the intended output level of the programme). The third types of training organisations are the so-called Vocational Training Centres for Women (VVS after its Dutch abbreviation), which are especially designed to provide training for unemployed or re-entering women. Part of the training programmes of these centres focus on training for those (technical) occupations in which women hardly have any share. The organisation of the training programmes is such that they are readily accessible for women with children/child care responsibilities; e.g. school holidays are taken into account and there are childcare provisions at the centres. At this moment 9 of these training centres exist in the Netherlands. It is not clear how many women participate in these courses. One of the reasons for this lack of data is that not all women enrolling in the training programmes are registered as unemployed at the Regional Bureau’s of the employment service. It is estimated that the total number of participants per year, are approximately 1000. The duration of the

training programmes ranges between one and two years; this includes the preparation for looking for a job. The programmes are provided as part time training programmes; with this the care for children going to school is taken into account, so that the threshold for women is as low as possible.

An increasing amount of training funded by the employment service is delivered by the Regional Training Centres (which also cater for senior vocational education and adult education) and by private training organisations. However, statistics on this part of the market are not available, nor is much known about content of the courses and the way in which they are delivered. In addition to this there are, as said, various local initiatives as well. It is expected that major temp agency organisations will get an increasingly important role in the area of training and work placement for the unemployed⁵.

Norway: Between 1988 and 1993, Norway was confronted with a sharp increase in the rate of unemployment. In 1993, the net rate of unemployment (excluding those in labour market training) had reached 5.7 %, the gross rate of unemployment (including those in training) had reached 8.0 %. In comparison, the net unemployment rate in 1987 was 1.5 %. From 1994 onwards, the unemployment rate has slowly decreased to a gross rate of 6.8 % in 1996. The rapid increase in unemployment from 1987 to 1993 was met by an active labour market policy, which meant an increase in the enrolment in various labour market programmes. From the early 1980s, Norwegian labour market policy had shifted from supporting whole enterprises towards a greater emphasis on programmes targeting single individuals. The AMO-programme of labour market training, which has been in existence since 1958, grew to become the largest single labour market programme in the 80s and 90s. The active labour market policy supported both by the government and the social partners focused on both increasing the mobility of workers and increasing the number of participants in various labour market programmes.

Different types of such labour market programmes can be distinguished:

- employment programmes (this concerns temporary measures, used in situation of labour market crisis, that run for a limited time; from 1994 onwards the different employment programmes have been replaced by one programme);
- exchange programmes (these mainly entail various time limited wage subsidies to employers in the private and public sector);
- training programmes.

Training programmes, which cater for the largest share of the labour market programmes, covering 70% of all participants in such programmes, can be further subdivided into work placement, job substitution (based on similar principles as the Danish Job Rotation programme) and AMO-courses, the latter constituting the largest training programme. AMO can be considered as an umbrella covering a large variety of vocational courses.

The unemployed are considered to be long-term unemployed if they have been registered as being unemployed for 26 weeks or more. Unemployed that are prioritised in getting access to the labour market programmes are young people aged under 20 years, that are not enrolled in an educational institution nor hold a job; unemployed in the age group 20-24 years that have not

⁵: Brandsma, J., Meelissen, M.R.M. & Rhebergen, B. (1996). *Vocational education and training; initiatives for the (long-term) unemployed in the Netherlands*. Enschede: OCTO.

been offered a job or an educational enrolment nor have held a job for 6 months or more, and unemployed persons approaching the end of their entitlement to unemployment benefit (80 weeks).

AMO-courses are 'national courses' in the sense that they are registered in a national catalogue from the Labour Directorate and those courses with the same name or code are largely the same courses (according to the curricular definition) irrespective of the locality where they are provided. The District Labour Market Authorities decide for their district which courses will be operated and in which locality. The Labour Market Authorities invite tenders from various course organisations (AMO-departments from upper secondary schools, private course organisers and adult education associations) and decide which offers will be accepted. In addition to this the Labour Market Authorities (who also register the unemployed) select the participants. The courses cover a wide variety of occupations and trades and can last from 1 week (a so-called motivation course) up to a maximum of 10 months. This maximum has been put to prevent competition between AMO-courses and regular vocational programmes in upper secondary education. For the same reason the minimum age for access to an AMO-course is 19 years. About half of the AMO-courses last between 13 and 20 weeks. Among the courses that last longer than 12 weeks some have a modular form but not all. Participants are obliged to leave the course if they get a job offered; nevertheless about 85% finalises the course. Practical training is included in most courses, but whether it is on-the-job or off-the-job training will depend on the course.

The second large labour market programme is called KAJA. This is an employment programme, which was established in 1994. Participants obtain temporary employment for a maximum of 10 months. A substantial difference between KAJA and previous employment programmes, is that under the KAJA programme participants are entitled to receive some training. The training part is set on 15% of the total time spent on the programme (which means 6 weeks of training if total duration is 10 months). Evidence on how the training is actually organised is scarce (and will probably vary with the host company), but the assumption is that it will be mainly on-the-job training. As is the case with similar employment programmes in other countries (f ex. the Netherlands) participants can only carry out additional tasks or 'extra ordinary' work, in order to prevent substitution of regular jobs by subsidised work. Therefore placements are mainly in the public sector. The KAJA programme is intended for the long-term unemployed that have had no benefit from work exchange or training. Similar to the AMO-courses, participants in KAJA are obliged to 'drop out' if they are offered a job⁶.

United Kingdom⁷: after a peak in unemployment during the early 1990s, unemployment in the UK slowly declined towards an unemployment rate of about 8% in 1996. National unemployment figures are however based on statistics on people claiming benefit. This claimant count might not give a 'correct' figure, due to the definitions it is based on. People with small part-time jobs or occasional work can still claim benefit depending on the earnings derived from this work, while participants in government training are not counted as being unemployed. The unemployment rate is, according to the statistics based on the claimant count, higher for men than for women. Despite the decline of total unemployment, long-term unemployment (that is being unemployed for more than six months) has relatively increased since the early 1990s. In 1996 well over half of all unemployed (56%) was unemployed for more than six months, while a third of all unemployed had been unemployed for longer than a year. There are however,

⁶: Pedersen, P. & Skinningsrud, T. (1996). *The effectiveness of labour market oriented training for the long-term unemployed. National report no. 1. Norway*. Tromsø: NORUT Social Science Research.

⁷: This description concerns England (and indirect Wales and Northern Ireland which have more or less a similar system). The Scottish system is somewhat different, though comparable. Since the UK contribution to the project mainly concerned England, we will focus on the situation in England.

substantial regional and sectoral differences in unemployment rates and the trends in unemployment rates.

Training for the unemployed is organised along three major lines. The Training for Work (TfW) programme funded by the British government, training schemes which are co-funded directly by the European Social Fund (indicated here as ESF-training) and training schemes which are operated under special urban policy initiatives (such as City Challenge Companies, Inner City Task Forces and the Single Regeneration Budget Partnerships). The latter training schemes are situated in socio-economic deprived urban areas with high unemployment rates. The training programmes provided under such initiatives often are intended to fill gaps in the existing provision and may concern pre-training for those needing longer training periods than TfW can provide or may concern training for specific vacancies with a local employer. It is estimated that a typical course under such initiatives will be less than 400 hours, but given that there are hardly any statistics available on this type of training it can only be estimated. Overall it concerns a large variety of courses.

The TfW scheme is operated by the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) that negotiate annually a budget for the TfW with the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). In negotiating the budget the number of 'starts' (that is number of trainees) as well as a target for the proportion of trainees obtaining a job or a qualification are set. Once the budget is agreed, the TECs invite proposals from training providers through competitive tendering. Providers can either be Further education colleges, private training organisations or voluntary sector organisations or charities. The training provider signs a contract with the TEC for the specific course(s) to be provided or for a certain period during which training course will be provided. The nature and content of the contract is something between TEC and provider. National rules for TfW only specify the maximum number of weeks to be funded (26 weeks) the number of training hours per week (30 hours per week) and the unemployed that are eligible (which are those unemployed over 26 weeks, and some specific categories like disabled, those needing literacy or numeracy training, people with language problems, people returning to the labour market after a period of taking care for dependants, refugees and asylum seekers). Training provided under TfW mainly aims at qualifications at NVQ-level 1 or 2, though many participants do not work towards a qualification. Funding of TfW is output related. TECs themselves negotiate targets with the government and in their negotiations with training providers they also contract on payment by results (being number of realised starts and number of trainees getting a job). Since the first introduction of such output funding in the early 1990s, this funding system has further evolved; nowadays up to 75% of the negotiated budget for a training provider is paid on the basis of the number of trainees having obtained a job within three months after leaving the training course. The claims concerning the effects of this funding system differ. Whereas the government claims positive effects, others are more cynical in this respect (cf. Coopers & Lybrand, 1994; Felstead, 1998). TfW courses are characterised by a strong emphasis on practical training (that is work placement with an employer) and on job search skills training. The latter seems to be reinforced by the strong output related funding system.

Concerning the ESF co-funded training schemes, training providers can put in proposals for training programmes. Since 1997 ESF applications from training providers have been handled by regional government offices (until then various routes for submitting applications were open, known as the 'sector' system. Course design as such is up to the provider as long as the course fits in with one of the four designed pathways: to employment for the long-term unemployed; a good start to working life for young unemployed; to integration of the unemployed at risk of social exclusion; to equal opportunities for unemployed men and women. According to the regulations in place, unemployed studying more than 21 hours per week are not entitled to claim benefit. If the course is offered as a full-time course, the training provider has to give a subsistence allowance replacing the unemployment benefit. In practice this results in the situation that many training providers try to design the course in such a way that these do not exceed 21 hours per week. Though within the ESF co-funded training programmes there also

seems to be a certain focus on NVQ-level 1 and 2 courses, there are –in contrast with Tfw courses- more courses focussing in higher level qualifications (NVQ level 3 or even 4 and 5, the latter being mainly provided by colleges and universities and industrial training organisations). Overall, the ESF co-funded training programmes are more oriented towards obtaining qualifications than the Tfw courses (which seem to be related to the differences in funding systems). Within ESF courses there are periods spend on practical training in the form of work experience⁸.

In attempting to classify the various schemes and initiatives, two relevant dimensions emerge. The first dimension concerns the amount of centralisation (or decentralisation/local autonomy), the second dimension concerns the locus of delivery (or mode of delivery).

Concerning the centralisation-decentralisation dimension, whether one perceives a training measure as being centralised or decentralised does depend on the perspective one takes. An example can clarify this. The Norwegian AMO-courses can be said to be highly centralised in the sense that their overall curricular content to a large extent is defined at the national level (either modules from the upper secondary programmes or centrally approved courses as laid down in the catalogue at the Labour Directorate). Nevertheless, the Labour Market Authorities have a strong decentralised structure. These authorities have an important role in deciding which of these courses will be offered in a specific area and by whom, and also have an important role in deciding who is going to enrol in a specific course. A similar reasoning could be applied to the situation in the UK where both the Training for Work (Tfw) programme and the ESF co-funded training are national centralised programmes, with the latter being more prescriptive in its regulations than the Tfw programme. However, certainly where the Tfw programme is concerned, centralised regulations are rather minimal, and it is the Training and Enterprise Councils who operate the programme and decide which training courses are provided and by whom. The actual supply of training courses can therefore differ greatly between TEC-regions.

The focus of the centralisation/decentralisation (or standardisation) of the programme content (and not its actual operation) appeared to be the most relevant for the further development of the project (especially from the point of view of the extent to which the total ‘population’ of training provisions for unemployed can be known). Applying this dimension, the following categories can be distinguished:

- national programmes encompassing courses which are provided on a national level (that is: courses which are similar or more or less comparable irrespective of the region or place where they are provided) (e.g.: AMO-courses in Norway, the training provided by the Centres for Vocational Training in the Netherlands, the VDAB courses in Flanders, the initial vocational training in Greece, the P-47 courses in Denmark, and the VTOS in Ireland);
- national framework programmes, within which actual course decisions and provisions are more or less decentralised (or devolved to a lower administrative

⁸ : Gray, A. (1996). *Training measure for the unemployed in the UK*. Falmer: University of Sussex.

level, like regional committees), and where courses are not by definition comparable between regions (e.g.: the ESF co-funded training and Tfw initiatives in the UK, the continuous training courses in Greece, the AMU-courses in Denmark; the community employment initiative in Ireland and the Training Centres for Women in the Netherlands);

- decentralised provision of training, characterised by a variety of local initiatives (e.g.: the co-operation of local networks in Flanders, the LAMU-courses in Denmark, and private initiatives in the Netherlands).

The second dimension, as said, concerns the locus (or mode) of delivery. What is quite apparent from the descriptions of existing training measures, is that overall training measures aimed at the unemployed (with the exception of the more generally oriented (adult) education initiatives as mentioned in Belgium and the VTOS scheme in Ireland), include some practical training. At the same time it becomes apparent that there is substantial variation in the size of the practical component (in terms of the percentage of total time spent on the programme) and its location, ranging from most time spent in the training centre with some practical training in enterprises, up to fully on-the-job. Concerning the latter, this mainly refers to the work placement or employment programmes. However, in these programmes it is not always clear whether or not training is part of the measure and to what extent (as is the case for the Melkert jobs in the Netherlands and the co-operation for social workplaces in Flanders). Though on the basis of the general programme descriptions it is not always clear how much time actually is spent on practical training in enterprises (since this might differ between specific courses, or might differ for individual trainees), overall one can distinguish the following types:

- mainly school based courses, with only a small percentage of total curricular time spent on practical training (either within the training centre or within an enterprise);
- mixed type courses, in which a more substantial part of the total curricular time is spent on practical training in enterprises, or in which school based and work based training are alternated;
- mainly work based courses, where the majority of the curricular time is spent on practical 'on-the-job' training;
- fully work based training or work placements.

There are of course other dimensions differentiating between the various initiatives, like field and level of the programme or course. Typifying the various courses or programmes according to level appeared to be problematic, given that on the one hand work placement schemes cannot be attributed to a specific level and, on the other hand, ISCED is difficult to apply for the distinction between levels for a substantial number of provided courses/ programmes (many of the courses would go into ISCED 9). Field appears to be partially regionally dependent, but also 'time' dependent, differing in some cases from year to year. Illustrative for the latter might be the situation in the UK; in order to get a full picture of the courses (according to name and superficial content) provided under each TEC (of which there are 74) a full survey among all TECs would have been required, that, however, would only have provided a comprehensive picture for that particular point in time.

Cross tabulating the centralisation-decentralisation dimension and the mode/locus of delivery dimension –which actually both can be perceived as continua- provides a table with 12 cells (3x4), in which in principle all initiatives can be placed. In doing so, it becomes clear that (apart from the fact that not all cells are filled), some cells are only filled with one or two examples from one specific country, while none of the cells contains examples of all countries at the same time.

Table 1: Provisional classification of 'training' measures for the long-term unemployed

	(mainly) school based	mixed	mainly work based	work placement
'national courses'	VTOS, AMO	VDAB, VIZO, CV, P47, IEK, AMO	Schools for Apprenticeship	
national framework programmes	adult basic education, education for social promotion	TfW, ESF, AMU, KEK, UTB, SST, VVS	Weerwerk, Public Centres for Social Welfare	CE, KAJA, 'Melkert' jobs
decentralised initiatives	distance education	SLN, LAMU, training under urban policy, CBB		Co-operation for social Workplaces, local Employment Agencies

Legenda:

VTOS = Vocational Training Opportunities scheme (Ireland)

AMO = Norwegian training for unemployed

VDAB = Flemish Employment Service

VIZO = Flemish training centres for the self-employed

CV = Dutch Vocational Training Centres

P47 = Specific type of course for unemployed run by the Danish AMU-centres

IEK = Greek initial vocational training centres

TfW = Training for Work (UK)

ESF = ESF funded training for the unemployed in the UK

AMU = Danish training centres providing training for (un)employed persons

KEK = Greek continuous training centres

UTB = Danish courses for unemployed run by the AMU centres

SST = Specific Skills Training (Ireland)

VVS = Vocational Training Centres for Women (Dutch)

SLN = umbrella organisation for local initiative for the training of unemployed (Flanders)

LAMU = longer AMU courses for unemployed

CBB = Centres for Vocational Orientation and Preparation (Dutch)

CE = Community Employment (Ireland)

KAJA = Norwegian work placement scheme

Keeping in mind what has previously been said about the dimensions of level and field, this clearly outlines the comparability problems that have to be overcome.

Apart from these comparability issues, there is another "comparability" issue that needs to be addressed. Concerning the (legal) definitions of long-term unemployment, it appears that clear-cut definitions as such are not readily available, but mainly embedded in the eligibility criteria for either receiving unemployment (or social) benefit or having access to the training programmes provided. The UK background report clearly outlines the possible deviations between statistical sources with regard to the number of (long-term) unemployed (e.g.: national statistics based on claimants versus international statistics based on the ILO-definition of unemployed) (cf. Gray, 1996; Nicaise &

Bollens, 1998). Nicaise and Bollens (1998) point out different mechanisms that might influence unemployment figures; e.g. limiting the numbers to those officially registered as being unemployed, leaving out those that do actively seek work but have not registered as well as those that neither registered nor seek actively for work, but do want to have a job (e.g. female re-entrants). Other mechanisms that influence the unemployment figures concern the limitation of the counts to those looking for a job of a particular size (e.g. excluding those looking for small jobs of 12 hours a week, as is the case in the Netherlands) or changing the labour market status at every transition from unemployment into training and vice versa (e.g.: Norway; Pedersen & Skinningsrud, 1996). Apart from these general issues of defining unemployment, it is even more difficult to talk of long-term unemployment in comparative terms. If, for example, looking at the eligibility criteria for enrolment in a training programme, it becomes clear that a criterion of an unemployment period of at least 26 weeks (half a year, as applied in Norway and the UK), does not necessarily reflect the conception of 'long-term unemployment' in other countries (where for specific programmes the criterion might be at least one year unemployment; e.g. the Netherlands and part of the programmes in Flanders). What is considered to be long-term unemployment does also seem to depend on the general labour market situation (overall unemployment rates) and the changes in this labour market situation. Apart from the issue to what extent such enrolment differences can be accounted for in a comparative analysis, it will be clear that even in the focus on particular target groups, programmes and courses do differ between countries.

3.2 Further development of the conceptual model

A focussed literature search in the available bibliographies and databases was performed for further underpinning of the conceptual model (focussing on countries participating in this project). Although there appears to be a substantial body of work on long-term unemployment and training of (long-term) unemployed, theoretical or empirical work concerning the relative contribution of the programmes' organisational, curricular and instructional characteristics and the interdependencies between these characteristics is much less developed (cf. Nicaise & Bollens, 1998).

In general we know that on the one hand, the background characteristics of the trainees are related to the effectiveness of the training programmes (cf. Lee, 1990; West, 1996), and that, on the other hand, the selection procedures and criteria, used by employers in hiring personnel, are of influence on the extent to which former long-term unemployed will be able to find a job, once they have finalised their training (cf. Van Beek, 1993). Concerning the former, various research projects (in the Netherlands, but in other countries as well, cf. Nicaise & Bollens, 1998) have shown that in training courses with a mixed population (short- and long-term unemployed, women re-entering the labour market, and those who participate on behalf of retraining), the long-term unemployed have the smallest chance to conclude the course successfully, while women re-entering the labour market and those participating on behalf of retraining, are the most successful. These differences in success are partially explained by the relatively lower level of prior educational attainment of the long-term unemployed (cf. Den Boer, 1995). Ethnicity and the length of the unemployment period, prior to enrolment in the training course, also appear to be of influence, certainly on the outcomes. The longer the period of unemployment prior to enrolment, the smaller the chance of finding a job once the training is concluded (c.f.: De Koning & Van Nes, 1989). Also ethnic minorities have a smaller chance of finding a job after the training has been finished; it might be that in this case 'discriminatory creaming' plays a role (c.f.: Bavinck & Van der Burgh, 1994; De Koning & Van Nes, 1989; De Koning, c.s., 1988; De Koning c.s., 1993).

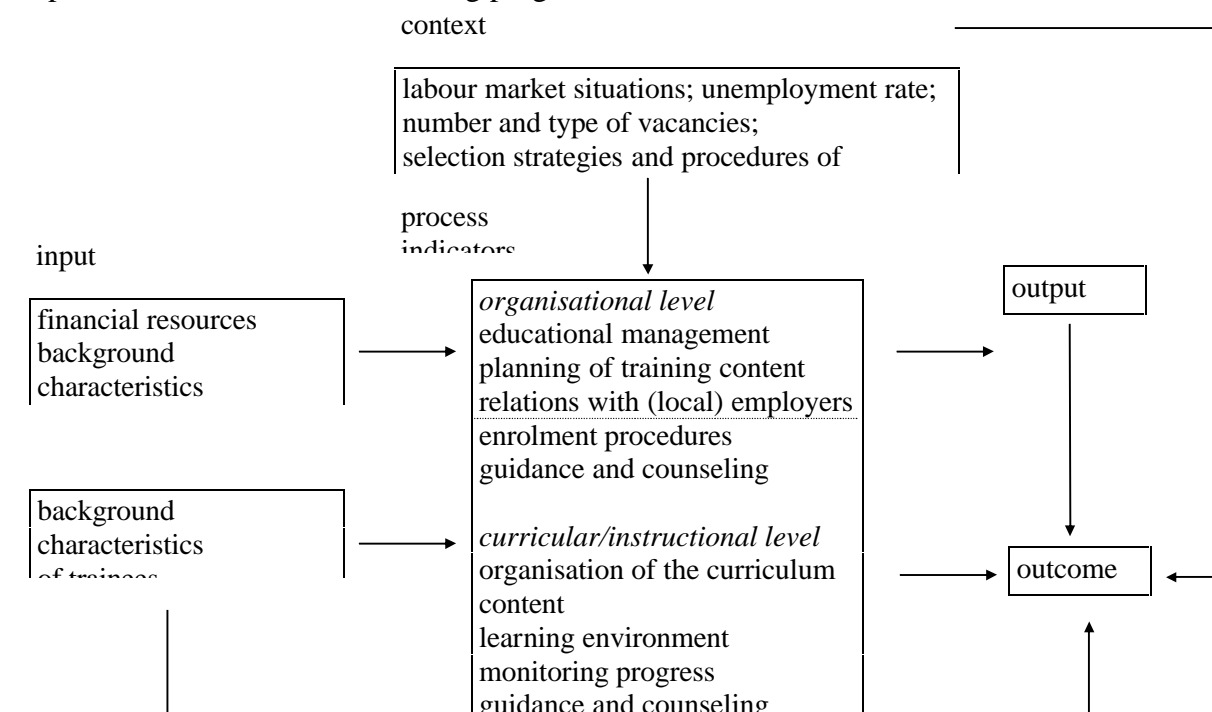
There is also evidence of differences between training programmes in their efficiency and effectiveness (e.g. from studies from the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway), which cannot simply be explained by sectoral or regional differences in the labour market situation. At the same time, the extent to which process characteristics are taken into account, is rather limited (Nicaise & Bollens, 1998). The question therefore is what causes these differences? If the training (process) as such, is interpreted as a black box (see figure 1), this question could be rephrased in terms of, "what makes the difference inside the black box?"

As said, a concise literature review was undertaken, trying to find studies indicating what might make a difference. As far as literature could be found addressing this issue, empirical evidence for 'influencing process variables' was lacking (statement on what might make a difference being mainly based on non-tested hypothesis), or was based on more small scale qualitative research. In the few cases where it was attempted to test a more quantitative model, the conclusion was that only a few process variables contributed to the variance in output and outcome at the individual level.

Before going into the (clusters of) variables that might be of influence, it is therefore necessary to say that the conceptual model as depicted in figure 1 was partially based on the related area of school effectiveness research. This is not fully unproblematic. On the one hand, school effectiveness research does have a strong focus on primary education and (lower) secondary general education. It might be questioned whether results from this area could be transferred to a completely different area of (vocational) training for the long-term unemployed. On the other hand, school effectiveness research itself seems to be a somewhat controversial area. Some scholars would rather like to discard this research approach referring to the too rigid quantitative methodology, which would not be able to take into account the “richness” of a particular organisational or instructional situation where various factors and processes are intertwined. Other scholars, however, argue that a more qualitative approach pertaining to case studies is not very robust evidence for what influences the effectiveness, nor can account for causal relations. Apart from this ‘paradigm debate’ it has to be acknowledged that it has taken considerable time, up from the Coleman report to fairly recently (cf. Scheerens & Bosker, 1997), before at least a basic consensus was reached on a set of process variables that do contribute to school effectiveness. This has been caused by inconsistent research findings and also (justified) criticism with regard to the methodological approach in analysing the data (which for various years has been based on correlational research design).

Nevertheless the mentioned (restricted) literature review indicated at least that the following (clusters of) variables might be of influence⁹:

- guidance and counselling;
- practical training within enterprises
- practical orientation of the course together with its duration;
- political context in which training programmes are run.



⁹ : ‘Evidence’ from more theoretical, descriptive and qualitative studies have been taken into account here as well.

Figure 1: Conceptual model of the effectiveness of training for the long-term unemployed.

Guidance and counselling

The literature indicates that guidance and counselling might be a crucial factor. Not only in the sense of providing guidance and counselling during the course (e.g. preventing drop-out, keeping up trainees' motivation and helping to solve problems) but also at the stage of enrolment (e.g. choosing the most suitable training track) and in the transition to the labour market (e.g.: training job search skills, support during the job search). However, it is not yet clear in which form or configuration (special officers, integrated task of all trainers, intensity, etc.) guidance and counselling is most influential.

A particular issue concerns the guidance and especially counselling during enrolment. As Nicaise and Bollens (1998) point out, increasing attention is given to the necessity of integrating training into a broader counselling perspective in order to tackle the multidimensional problems with which long-term unemployed and the least qualified are often confronted. Counselling should not only contribute to adequately mapping the various individual problems, but also to determining the needs, capacities and preferences of potential trainees in order to enhance the choice for the most appropriate training provision. Enrolling trainees in a course that does not match their interest or capacities might increase the probability of dropping out.

The counterpart of this might be the phenomenon of 'creaming'. That is, in attempting to match training and trainees both in similarity of content and interests and in level (of difficulty) and prior level of educational attainment, the balance could shift towards selecting those unemployed which best fit the course's profile. From various research projects it is known that training programmes for either long-term unemployed or the least qualified tend to 'select' those individuals that are presumed to have the best chance to complete the training successfully. Especially if there are no adequate alternatives for referring those trainees that are not enrolled, such creaming might have overall negative effects. This selection might be deliberately intended by the training organisation, but it can also be an implicit process of self-selection on the side of the unemployed. In this respect it is necessary to take the enrolment procedures used by training institutes, as a process indicator, into account

Practical training within enterprises

Although there appears to be evidence from various studies that inclusion of a practical training period in the curriculum of the training programmes is related to the effectiveness of such training (in terms of finding a job or not once training has been concluded), it is not clear why practical training has an influence. It might be that former unemployed who have received practical training within an enterprise are better informed about the 'channels' through which they can find a job or that employers prefer ex-trainees that have already obtained some practical experience. It can, however, not be excluded that the selection mechanisms of employers play a role in this as well, in the sense that employers (especially those involved in the delivery of practical

training) use the practical training period as an extended selection period. In recruiting and hiring personnel, employers quite often use 'indicators' like level of educational attainment, diplomas, previous work experience, etc. to get an idea of the qualities of a candidate. Obtaining more precise information often is too costly and labour intensive. In this respect, a practical training period provides employers with the opportunity to get better, and at the same time cheaper, indicators for the employability and trainability of future employees and might even enable them to select the best trainees (creaming).

It is presumed that training at the workplace might be the most favourable way of delivering training (certainly for long-term unemployed and the least qualified), but this also depends on the quality of this workplace as a training place. If trainees are only expected to perform repetitious and monotonous tasks and hardly receive any support and guidance, the impact of such training in terms of acquiring skills, could be doubtful. On the other hand, practical training that is fully isolated from the context in which a trainee has to apply the acquired skills might have little impact as well.

Practical orientation and duration of the training programme

Whether or not a training programme encompasses a practical training period already gives some indication about its practical orientation. The practical orientation of the training as such, together with its duration, is a rather controversial issue on which the research findings appear to be inconsistent and often contrasting. On the one hand, it is argued that rather short and too job-specific training might in the short run channel unemployed into employment, but as these jobs disappear (due to economic decline, restructuring of enterprises or sectors, etc.) these former unemployed will again be confronted with (long-term) unemployment since the qualifications they have obtained are not transferable to other jobs or enterprises. On the other hand it quite often is pointed out that long-term unemployed are not that interested in training, but actually want only one thing and that is a paid job. In addition to this, researchers and practitioners become more and more convinced that training for the least qualified (and throughout Europe these groups appear to have the biggest share in long-term unemployment) needs a less traditional approach. Innovative training models that have been and are still developed in some European countries (e.g. Denmark, Germany) emphasise workplace-oriented or workplace-led training principles. An interesting example is, in this respect, the Job Switch Model that has been developed in Denmark. The principle of this model is that employees that go off on training are replaced by (long-term) unemployed, which, after some training, can fill the vacancy. It is expected that through the work experience that these unemployed obtain, they improve their chances of the labour market. Or that they can keep their (temporary) job after the trained employee returns, since this employee can move on to another (higher) post, leaving a vacancy for the former unemployed. However, the extent to which this 'effect' occurs is somewhat controversial (cf. Brandsma, 1998).

A specific element of the practical orientation of the training course concerns the issue of its 'labour market relevance'. With regard to this it is alleged that training will not have much effect (in terms of changing labour market positions) if it does not meet the demands of the (local or regional) labour market (cf. Nicaise & Bollens, 1998; Onstenk & Wilbrink, 1990). This draws the attention to both the issue of the planning of the

training course (who decides to deliver which courses and on what grounds) and to the relations between training organisations and employers in their environment.

Other relevant variables

Before addressing the political context in which programmes or courses are operated, some words need to be spent concerning the other variables included in the model. Concepts or indicators like educational management, monitoring progress, background characteristics of trainers and financial resources are mainly derived from the results of school effectiveness research. Though these results cannot be transferred directly to a completely different area like the training of unemployed, they have been included in the model from an explorative perspective. Given that little is known about the black box of training for the unemployed/least qualified (cf. Nicaise & Bollens, 1998), it seems worthwhile to explore the potential relevance of these concepts. The financial resources, e.g. per trainee expenditure, and the background characteristics of the training staff, especially their experience and professionalisation, might be important input indicators for explaining effectiveness differences between training programmes (c.f.: Scheerens, 1992; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1993; Weightman & Drake, 1990). Concerning the funding as such, also the issue of the funding mechanism needs attention, given the shift towards output related funding (especially in the UK) and the possible negative consequences which are attributed to this type of funding regime (cf. Brandsma, 1997; Felstead, 1998; West, 1996).

Political context

It may be clear that also the 'political' or 'policy' context, within which the training programmes operate, can have substantial impact on their efficiency and effectiveness. This context does not only refer to the labour market, employment and training policies in general, but also the "political" definition of what is considered to be the desirable outputs and outcomes. Here it is called the "political" definition, to distinguish this type of definition clearly from the definition researchers (certainly in the area of educational and training effectiveness) would use. From the latter perspective, 'output' is in this research project defined as: a) the extent to which unemployed that enrol in a labour market oriented training programme finalise their training or leave the programme before it is completed and b) the qualification or certificates they obtain. 'Outcomes' are defined in terms of: a) the extent to which the unemployed find a job, b) the characteristics of the job (steady, temporarily; full-time, part-time), c) the match between the training and the job, d) the 'quality' of the job (in terms of level (unskilled/skilled), stability and perspective on further training or promotion) and e) the extent to which unemployed enrol in further education or training (perhaps as an alternative for not finding a job). "Political" definitions might cover (parts of) this research definition, but can also differ from it.

A specific example in this context concerns the situation in England. Although there are some national initiatives regarding training for the unemployed, which can be perceived as framework programmes, the actual provision of training as well as the actual training courses and their content, are decided locally. The prime responsibility for the planning and content of the training resides with the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs).

Next to this, the TECs are responsible for setting the training targets and for the funding of those training organisations, contracted by them to provide training, and therefore, indirectly, for defining the desired output and outcomes. The funding system is based on output financing, which means that training organisations are funded for each trainee/former unemployed that obtains a job (in contrast with output related funding systems that exist in other countries, like the Netherlands, where output financing would mean that educational institutions or training organisations are funded for each trainee that finalises the course and obtains a diploma or certificate). In practice this can mean that trainees are actually pushed out of training to accept a job, whether it is related to the training or not. The emphasis lies, therefore, on getting unemployed into a job, and not as much on improving their qualifications. Apart from the impact this funding system has on output and outcomes, it is also pointed out that the TECs set the targets for output and outcomes (e.g. in terms of numbers or groups of long-term unemployed to be trained, numbers of trainees that are expected to obtain a qualification and/or employment), and that they can change this from year to year.

A second example concerns continuing education or training, after completing the training in the context of the labour market scheme. For continuing education and training, two ways can be (and are in some countries) distinguished. On the one hand, continuing training within the context of the labour market schemes. On the other hand, continuing education and training within a programme or course that is part of the 'regular' education system. The former route could be considered as being a "dead-end" route, in the sense that it might trap unemployed in the labour market schemes. In Norway, for example the transition from one labour market course onto another has been considered as not being a positive outcome¹⁰. Transition to regular education however, is considered as positive. The approach to this "outcome issue" might depend on the extent to which labour market training for unemployed and regular vocational education and training are strongly and clearly demarcated. If, for example, regular vocational education and training provisions are used for the training for (long-term) unemployed, the perception of the transition of one training course onto another might be somewhat different. This also holds for the extent to which training and employment policies emphasise the need of obtaining a 'formal' qualification (e.g.: as is the case in the Netherlands, where the transition from a non-qualifying short (familiarisation) course onto a qualifying course would be perceived as positive or even necessary).

Nevertheless, keeping this in mind as an issue that should be addressed in the interpretation of the results, positive outputs and outcomes have been defined as:

- output: finalising the course;
- outcomes: finding a (stable) job related to the course and/or continuing in education or vocational training.

This conceptual model together with the basic understanding gained with regard to the general characteristics and operation of the different training schemes for the (long-term) unemployed in the participating countries, formed the basis and input for the first empirical stage: the comparative case studies.

¹⁰ : Recently there appears to be a change in the policy, allowing trainees to develop individual training plans with chaining labour market courses, in order to develop their competencies. Overall, however, labour market training as such appears to be cut back, due to the decrease of unemployment.

3.3 Comparative case studies

3.3.1 Methodology

In the literature on qualitative research and especially on case study research, various types of case studies are distinguished, according to their scope and main function or focus. On the one hand a distinction can be made between case studies with a single-case design and case studies with a multiple case design. On the other hand a distinction can be made between exploratory, descriptive and explanatory case studies. Combining the two dimensions of scope (single or multiple) and function (exploratory, descriptive and explanatory), gives a 2x3 matrix, distinguishing six types of case studies. Which type might be the most appropriate, depends on the central research questions to be answered, the “theoretical and empirical” embedding of these research questions (more specifically the question whether or not there is knowledge available concerning the subject of the study on which it can build (and how much) or whether or not the study has to start from scratch) and more pragmatic elements like time and budget (Yin, 1993; 1994; see also Campbell, 1979).

Overall design

The case studies in this research project actually had to fulfil a double role; or rather, the design concerned a mixed type of case study. They were needed both to test the feasibility and plausibility of the conceptual model and, at the same time, to seek to improve the model by exploring potential variables and relationships that might be of major importance for the effectiveness of training programmes for the (long-term) unemployed but were not (yet) included in the conceptual model¹¹. Therefore, the case studies should be of a mixed type: they were set up according to an exploratory-explanatory multiple case design.

A multiple case design allows to “test” the findings from one case study in the case studies which are performed later on (Yin, 1993; 1994). Each case can in this respect be considered as a (small) research project in itself, going through the successive stages of data collection, data analysis and reporting. Yin (1993; 1994) speaks of the ‘replication logic’ where “testing” the findings of one case in or against the following cases is concerned; this can either be ‘literal replication’ (literally finding the same results, especially in exploratory and descriptive cases) or ‘theoretical replication’ (if the testing of a “theory”, model or hypotheses is at stake, as is the case in explanatory cases).

Performing case studies according to a multiple case design puts high demands on the selection of cases. This case selection was a major issue in the project meetings. After considerable debate, it was agreed that the case studies would attempt to focus on training programmes or courses¹², preferably for unemployed with a low level of

¹¹: It is of major importance to emphasise that the project is focussing on the question of which process characteristics make training programmes for the long-term unemployed more or less effective (if compared to each other) and not on the question whether or not training in itself is an effective measure to help long-term unemployed to return into the labour process. In this sense the question of effectiveness concerns their “relative effectiveness”.

¹²: We use here both alternatives of training programme and course, even though this might be a bit confusing at this moment. The Dutch language has a specific term (opleiding) which might be less

previous educational attainment and, if possible, focus on one case of training for the business sector (e.g.: secretarial, commercial, financial or more specific information technology) and one case of training for technical or crafts occupations. Nevertheless, it was clear that this might be difficult given the differences between countries in unemployment structures (e.g.: in Greece most courses provided might focus on those who left the education system with a qualification at upper secondary or even tertiary level), the differences in framework programmes and the courses provided within these frameworks (e.g.: the very decentralised structures in the UK which make it almost impossible to obtain a complete overview of training for unemployed throughout the country), and, last but not least, the dependency on actual willingness of training organisations to co-operate. This conclusion led to the following proposal for a sample design (figure 2).

Occupational areas	Countries			
	1	2	3	4
1	A	A		A
2		B	B	
3	C		C	C
4		D	D	
5				

Figure 2: Optional sample design

Further considerations

Swanborn (1994) argues that four selection principles can be distinguished:

- minimising the variance in supposed causes (influencing independent variables) between cases;
- maximising the variance in supposed causes between cases;
- minimising the variance in effects or outcomes between cases;
- maximising the variance in effects or outcomes between cases.

confusing, but can unfortunately be translated in English both as ‘training programme’ and ‘training course’. Where we speak of the “cases” for the case studies, we actually mean the course.

Regarding the minimisation of the variance in effects or outcomes between cases, Swanborn (1994) states that this selection principle reflects the present interest of many policy makers in description and analysis of so called “good” or “best practices”. He argues that this is a disastrous selection and research strategy; since there is no opportunity to contrast the findings of such cases/case studies with other (and less successful cases), there will never be certainty nor evidence that the supposed characteristics which turn these cases into “good practices” are actually the relevant and successful characteristics. Building policy making and policy strategies on such biased conclusions might have disastrous consequences (cf. Brandsma & Scheerens, 1995). Therefore this principle could better be disregarded.

Minimisation of the variance in expected causes or influencing independent variables might be of importance from the perspective of the reliability or robustness of the conclusions (Swanborn, 1994). The reasoning behind this is that if different but at the same time more or less similar cases lead to the same conclusions, the findings must be reliable. However, the disadvantage of this approach is that, again, you cannot contrast the results with findings from cases that differ substantially on those influencing independent variables that are thought to be crucial. The argumentation why this might be problematic is actually the same as the argumentation given with regard to ‘minimising the variance in effects or outcomes between cases’. Nevertheless, it was considered to be worthwhile to find -across countries- cases that have a certain similarity in process characteristics, in order to increase the robustness of findings, at the same time taking into account the sampling logic as depicted in figure 2. Concerning the latter it was assumed that this would be the reality to be dealt with. The maximisation principles in selecting cases should at least be attempted to be applied in the selection within countries; trying to contrast the two cases on both independent variables and effects. It could be argued that two cases per country might be too little to allow for this maximisation in variance, but the whole “multiple case study” including 2x7, or 14 cases reduced this problem somewhat¹³.

The qualitative multiple case design

The choice for a (strictly) qualitative approach in the first stage of this project was mainly based on the fact that it allows more flexibility and is therefore better suited to take into account the differences between countries. As was noticed, the use of exact and unambiguous terminology is very important but at the same time rather difficult. Therefore, at this stage of the project with the available knowledge of each others training systems and training programmes and courses, it would have been very difficult to design fully standardised and pre-structured instruments. The implication was that during the first case studies a more open strategy had to be chosen.

This however, did not implicate that standardisation (where possible) was not necessary; to guard comparability it was crucial. It could be obtained in two ways. First of all, the

¹³: Furthermore, it should be taken into account that in the second stage a more large scale approach will be used, but that essentially the four training programmes or courses that will be included in this second stage (per country) can be perceived as ‘cases’ as well, even though the data collection and certainly the data analyses in this stage will have a primarily quantitative character. Case study research does not exclude the use of quantitative techniques. Thus, one could argue that the second stage includes 4x7, or 28 cases.

conceptual model, which functioned both as a reference framework and as a set of guidelines for the data collection and analysis. In this respect the case studies were ‘pre-structured cases’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Secondly, in the procedures, methods and techniques, which have been used for data collection and the data analyses, standardisation has been attempted as well.

A second reason for the qualitative approach during the first stage of the project was embedded in the conceptual model itself. As said, the case studies partly had the function of exploring variables or relations that were not (yet) included in the model; an exploratory function that was reflected by the rather large number of variables that were included in the case studies. Again, a qualitative approach allowed for more flexibility in this respect and was presumed to be more suitable to handle the ‘multivariate’ character of the conceptual model (cf. Yin, 1993). The outcomes of the case studies should allow for a more confined and precise conceptual model (including the relevant multivariate concepts and relations between these concepts and the effects).

As an advance on the following sections concerning data collection and data analysis, figure 3 gives an overview of the general approach of the case studies.

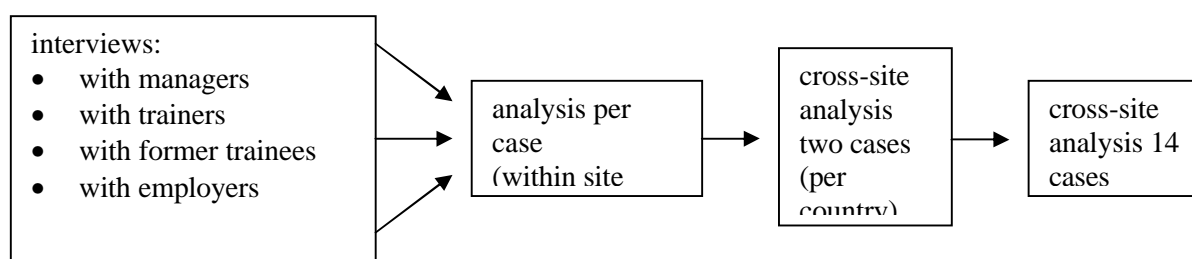


Figure 3: Multiple case study design

Data collection and analysis

A crucial element in doing multiple case studies, certainly when cases are investigated by different persons (multiple investigators, as Yin calls it (Yin, 1993)), is to ensure that data will not be biased or incomparable, due to differences in administering or applying instruments and data collection procedures. Yin (1993) states that in the situation of multiple cases and multiple investigators, the use of a formal case study protocol might be necessary to ensure that the same procedures are followed in each case and by each investigator, without, however, specifying what should be understood by ‘formal case study protocol’. An important element in these ‘formal case study protocol’ was presumed to be constituted by the developed questionnaires, together with the outline structuring each of the national reports. In addition to this a paper on case study methodology was written as an additional contribution to the formal case study protocol.

The following groups of respondents had to be approached:

- the management of the training organisation or training centre;

- the trainers (where a distinction could be made between the management of the training organisation and the actual ‘instructors’);
- former trainees (either presently employed or unemployed);
- employers.

Given the labour intensity of performing case studies, a restriction was needed with regard to the number of respondents to be interviewed. Target figures per group of respondents were agreed (taking into account that the aim of the comparative case studies was to elaborate and refine the conceptual model and to sharpen the hypothesis):

- management: one or two representatives per training organisation or training centre (possibly in a combined interview);
- trainers: depending on the structure of the training (is a group of trainees assigned to one trainer or are there different trainers for different subjects) four to six trainers (if guidance and counselling are not integrated in the tasks of trainers, but the task of separate counsellors, in addition counsellors could be interviewed as well);
- trainees: about 20 former trainees (for “selecting” these trainees, co-operation of the training organisation or the employment service was needed);
- employers: here a target figure was not possible, since it would depend on the number of former trainees that have been interviewed.

For each group of respondents a semi-structured ‘questionnaire’ was developed for the interviews. These ‘questionnaires’ all had the same format; (relatively) open questions followed by several topics, that should not be regarded as answering categories, but as topics that need to be discussed during the interview and that can guide the more in-depth questioning during the interviews. Below an example is given.

One of the items to be addressed in the interviews with (former) trainees concerns the job search activities, once training has been concluded. The question was phrased as follows (including the bullet points)

Could you describe what you have undertaken to find a job?

- registered at the job search centre
- wrote (open) letters of application
- reflected upon employment advertisements
- asked relatives/friends if they knew anyone needing personnel
- visited enterprises/companies to see if they might need anyone
- registered at a (or several) temp-agency (or -agencies)

The topics or categories make clear that a former trainee can have used several strategies to obtain a job. At the same time they form an indication for the interviewer, not to take answers for granted too quickly. Where the latter is concerned, one of the problems with semi-structured data collection is the question whether something did not happen if it has not been mentioned or whether the respondent has forgotten to mention it.

Concerning the issue of administering the interviews, the following procedure has been suggested. After each interview the gathered information would be transcribed into an

interview protocol (where thought appropriate or helpful based on tape recording). With these interview protocols the first step into data analysis could be made.

A crucial question to be answered with regard to the data analysis concerns the unit of analysis. In this particular project the case as such (that is: the training course or training programme) formed the main unit of analysis. Nevertheless, data or information has been collected from different sources and actually at different levels. Information concerning the (process) characteristics of the training course or training programme were collected in the interviews with the 'trainers', while information concerning the impact of the programme on the individual level c.q. the effects on the individual level were gathered in the interviews with former trainees. In this respect, there were multiple 'units of analysis', with the level of the individual ex-trainee (as unit of analysis) embedded within the main unit of analysis, being the case as such (cf. Swanborn, 1994; Yin, 1993, 1994).

Qualitative data analysis is difficult to grasp and define. One of the very few text books describing various methods and techniques for qualitative analysis, is the publication of Miles and Huberman¹⁴. Even though their attempt to systematise qualitative analysis is, as such, praiseworthy, some basic objections can be raised against it. First of all, most of the techniques are rather trivial; any sensible researcher could come up with their solutions, which quite often have the character of "tricks". The bulky parade of techniques they unfold for a reader, is absolutely not well-organised and makes it difficult to survey, what might be the appropriate technique given the research questions and collected data at stake (cf. Swanborn, 1994). Nevertheless, one basic distinction appeared to be particular useful.

Miles and Huberman (1994) make a distinction between 'within-site analysis' and 'cross-site analysis', to distinguish between analysing data, collected for or within one case and a comparative analysis across cases. Based on the description of the data collected within each case and the conclusions derived from that a start could be made with the cross-site analysis.

The cross-site analysis concerned, as said, the comparative analysis across cases. This analysis was, to a great extent, guided by the elaborated conceptual model.

3.3.2 Major results

Cases and data collection

Data collection was certainly not unproblematic. In most cases the number of potential former trainee respondents (being the number of participants that left or concluded the course at least 6 months before the actual data collection) was sufficient to obtain the intended 20 interviews. However, in practice it appeared that great efforts were needed to obtain this number of interviews. In the UK case for example, 100 former trainees

¹⁴: A first edition appeared in 1984. Recently (1994) a second edition appeared, containing over 100 new techniques.

were approached¹⁵, but in the end it only proved possible to obtain a response from 10 former trainees (7 completed the questionnaire in a written form; 3 were interviewed by telephone). Similar difficulties occurred in the case studies performed in Norway, Denmark and one of the Dutch cases.

In some other cases, the number of potential respondents was restricted given the relatively small number of participants in the particular course. In the second Dutch case study (the offset printing course with a duration of 1,5 year), only 9 women participated in that course, 8 of which agreed to be interviewed. A more or less similar situation occurred in Greece where the number of participants per course (similar as in Norway) is limited to 20 at maximum.

In the Flemish case studies, support of the managers of both training organisations was a decisive factor in obtaining the intended number of interviews. Their (substantial) support explains for a (near) 100% response. This does not mean that management in the other cases in other countries was not helpful (though some training organisations were a bit reluctant to co-operate at first). Possibly it is the specific structure or target group of the two Flemish courses, which can explain the difference.

Problems occurred with interviewing employers as well. Here a distinction has to be made between two types of employers. First, 'employers' (or enterprises) that are involved in the delivery of the practical training (if this is part of the course) e.g. by offering work placement, irrespective of whether or not they hire former trainees afterwards. Second, employers that have hired a former trainee of the course at stake, irrespective of whether or not they are involved in the delivery of practical training. During the preparation of the case studies, it was decided to include some 'employers' of the first category as well (instead of only employers who hired a former trainee), since for some cases it was feared that otherwise no employer information would be obtained, given that:

- it would be questionable whether training organisations could (and were willing to) provide information on employers of their former trainees;
- it was expected that former trainees (at least part of them and maybe in some countries more than others depending on strictness of regulation) would not be very happy with the idea that their employer would be interviewed as well and hence, would not be willing to provide the name of the employing enterprise or organisation.

To a certain extent, these expectations appeared to be real. In the UK case study, those former trainees holding a job currently, did not approve of the idea of their employers being contacted. Employers that were interviewed in this case are therefore employers offering work placement. In the first Dutch case study it appeared rather difficult to obtain information on employers involved in delivering practical training through the training organisation. Therefore former trainees were asked to provide both the name of the enterprise where they did their practical training and the name of their employer (if they held a job). Only one former trainee agreed to this and provided the name of the employing company (where he did also his practical training). In the second Dutch case study, none of the interviewed former trainees were reluctant to provide the name of

¹⁵: These 100 were randomly selected from a list of 300 names of former trainees provided by the training organisation. Estimating a response of at least 20%, this would provide the intended 20 interviews.

their present employer (if employed), but two employers could not be persuaded to participate.

For the Norwegian cases it was only possible to obtain names and addresses of employers for the first case (information technology), 4 of which are employers providing practical training and 6 'regular' employers employing former trainees.

In the Greek cases no employers have been interviewed, since the courses studied do not include a practical training period within an enterprise, and among the few former trainees that found work after the training, none was willing to provide the name of the employer¹⁶. The employers interviewed in both Danish cases, are employers that are primarily involved in the delivery of practical training (two of which actually also employed former trainees). The employers interviewed in the Flemish cases are also involved in the delivery of practical training.

Table 2 below gives an overview of the cases that have been included in each country in the first stage of the research project. More detailed information for each case is presented below (differently printed text block).

¹⁶: In addition to the two case studies, a 'quick scan' on two cases in the Athens region has been performed, concerning training courses provided by private training organisations. From these additional 'cases' two former trainees agreed to provide the names of their employers, both of whom were interviewed.

Table 2: Overview of cases per country.

	First case	Second case
Flanders	Informatics (computer science and computer aided-design)	Family and elderly care
Denmark	Real estate care taker (UTB course)	Real estate care taker (AMU P47 course)
Greece	Environmental management/New Technologies	New training techniques with the use of computer
Ireland	Community Employment	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (leaving certificate)
Netherlands	Offset printing	Metal welding
United Kingdom	Information technology/computing	
Norway	Information technology/accounting	Mechanics and metal welding

Belgium: The first Flemish case concerns a specialised training course aimed at physically disabled people, provided by a specialised private training organisation. The training programme (named after the providing training organisation: Specialised training centre informatics) has two options or specialisations:

- computer science (e.g. network administrators, system analyst);
- computer-aided-design.

It concerns full-time training programmes (5 days a week), lasting two years. The training centre is a private training organisation established in 1986, in order to fill the need for competent (disabled) computer operators at a social workplace in its surroundings. Afterwards the focus shifted towards creating employment perspectives in normal economic settings for disabled people. The training centre is relatively small, employing a total staff of 19 people (including a manager co-ordinator, a job coach and a social worker), of which 10 trainers. Decision making on issues as the content of the training programmes and individual training routes are a shared responsibility of the manager and the training staff, who are also involved in the evaluation of the programme, technical innovations and the implementations of new teaching methods, together with the steering committee (one for each specialisation). The training centre's funding comes from the Flemish and the national Fund for the reintegration of disabled people and will be from mid-1997 onwards partially output related (number of trainees getting a job). Enrolment criteria are age (over 18 years), being registered as disabled and pass the selection tests. In addition to this, the motivation for the course (and the work afterwards) is an important criterion. The curriculum (for both specialisations) has a modular structure, encompassing various moments at which decisions can be made whether or not a trainee (candidate) is qualified for (continuing) the course and which training route and profile is most appropriate. Depending on the specific route chosen (specific profile or broad profile) trainees either finish a basic module or take more elaborate and new modules, after which the more job specific training is taken. Each specialisation (and profile) concludes with on-the-job training, finalised with an evaluation. The on-the-job training is one year, during which trainees are placed as apprentices within an enterprise (that is free of payment, but has to give a guarantee to take on the trainee as a regular employee afterwards). Enterprises that are contacted for on-the-job training are those enterprises known to have a vacancy and also being (financially) stable. During practical training there is a three-week comeback every three months and one day every two weeks for help with problems. In order to keep track of the trainees' progress, a computer-based monitoring system is run including information on trainees' background, their learning achievements, communicative and social skills, motivation, and special circumstances. There

are close relations with employers, who are involved in the selection of trainees (test at IBM), in determination of the content of the programme (through the steering committees), in the on-the-job training and through the work of the job coach.

The second Flemish case concerns a training programme to become a family or elderly care worker. This training is provided by a private care organisation, established in 1948. The training course itself, which is a full-time course lasting 9 months, was established in 1988. The training organisation forms, together with the care organisation and the employment service, a consortium. Funding comes from the Flemish government, the employment service and the ESF. The training centre itself is small, consisting of 7 trainers hired on a free-lance basis. However, the manager and the co-ordinators (4) of the care organisation also work for the training organisation. The training programmes as such was established by a parliamentary decree, which defines the modules (or subjects) and their content, the duration of the practical training period, and the selection criteria for trainees and trainers. There is also strong external control (government, employment service) on the operation of the course. Nevertheless, trainers appear to have a relative large freedom in organising their own subjects. The evaluation of the course is the task of the manager. Basic criteria for enrolment of trainees are motivation, age (18 years or over, as set by law, up to 45 years), gender (women) and a good physical condition. Selection subsequently takes place by means of interviews with candidates, results of psychological or technical tests and a 'team' assignment. The selection takes up 5 months. The training is split up over 3 periods; a 4-month classroom based training period, followed by 3 months on-the-job training and again 2 months classroom based training. Classroom based training encompasses both theoretical subjects and more practical training (cooking, cleaning etc.). Practical or on-the-job training is provided in 3 forms: 2 weeks in an elderly home, 2 weeks in a child day-care centre and 2.5 months on care taking visits at home. The care organisation (that mainly employs former trainees) and the training organisation are much intertwined.

Denmark: Both Danish cases are courses for becoming a real estate care taker, but the programmes are run under different schemes; a UTB-course and a P47-course.

The UTB-course is of rather short duration (15 weeks) and was provided by an AMU-centre. The course as such (real estate caretaking service/janitor's assistant course) actually is part of a combination of a job offer, followed up by an educational offer, a specific form which was abolished in 1994. The course was funded by the Ministry of Labour through the local labour market employment centre. The AMU centre providing this specific course was set up in an urban area in 1983/1984, but merged with another AMU centre during the late 1980s. It can be considered as a relatively large training centre, employing 60 trainers on full-time basis (added by a varying number of part-time, often temporary trainers), 3 counsellors and 8 consultants and managers. The training course as such runs full-time for 15 weeks, of which 2 to 3 weeks of practical training outside the centre (e.g. at a large housing estate). The training provided at the centre is build up in modules taken from ordinary qualifying courses (also provided at the AMU-centre); 60% of this modular training is practical (within workshops in the centre) and the remaining 40% theoretical. Enrolment mainly takes place through the employment centre, which invites unemployed for courses in which they may have an interest. Selection itself takes place at the AMU-centre, with the estimated individual chance of completing the course satisfactorily being the main criterion (excluding addicts, alcohol abusers and immigrants who had not mastered basic Danish). Participation could be a necessity for long-term unemployed in order to keep their unemployment benefit. For each class on a UTB-course, a counsellor is allocated, monitoring trainees' progress as well as helping to solve specific (personal or training related) problems.

The second Danish case, the P47-course on real estate caretaking, was also provided by an AMU-centre. This AMU centre started in 1971 as a self-financing institution. It is a large

training centre employing a total staff of 280 people (of which 160 training staff), additioned with 50 temporarily trainers and specialised trainers hired from other educational organisations (especially adult education centres). Course planning and renewal mainly resides with the educational managers of the centre and the educational consultants of the centre. Within the rules of the syllabus (describing the training programmes on offer) trainers are highly responsible themselves for organising their own work. Funding of the course comes from the Ministry of Labour (through the Directorate General for Employment). Eligible for access to the training course are semi-skilled unemployed men and women between 25 and 50 years old, disposing of a valid car (or tractor) license. After an introductory meeting, participants were either enrolled after an interview, or after an interview followed up by a visitation course and a second interview. Purpose of the visitation course was (given that there were more applicants than trainee places) to assess the individual chance of successful completion of the course and to get an understanding of the trainee's dedication and motivation, and the trainees' vocational qualifications and possibilities of entering into a working group (similar criteria are used in the interviews). The P47 real estate caretaking course is a 46-week full-time course, set up according to the alternance model in which periods of school based training (4 periods of altogether 34 weeks) and periods of practical training outside the centre (3 periods of in total 12 weeks) are alternated. School periods, as in the UTB course, comprise theory (60%) and practice (40%) both strongly based on project work and problem-oriented training methods. Trainees' progress is evaluated by means of written assessments halfway and at the end of the course, individual assessments for separate (qualifying) modules and weekly, oral assessments in the group. Trainees should find a practical training place on their own, but can ask help from the training centre. There are regular contacts between the training centre (co-ordinating trainer) and trainee firms. In general, contacts with employers (e.g. on the planning of the course) are handled in the reference groups, in which representatives of trade and industry participate.

Greece: Both Greek courses are run under the national continuous training framework. The first case, environmental management/new technologies, is a training course provided by a public centre for continuous training (KEK). It was established in 1995 and can be considered as a civil non-profitable training organisation. The training centre has a scientific council advising on most issues of educational policy, a general director managing the institute, 7 permanent full-time administrative staff and a pool of 500 trainers, employed according to the courses on offer. Funding comes from the government and the EU (ESF and other relevant programmes like NOW and Youth Start); in this specific case the course was funded by the Ministry of Employment. The course as such was addressed towards unemployed persons by means of advertisements in local newspapers, the employment agency and the bulletin boards of the local municipalities. Selection is based on the labour market situation of the candidates (unemployed, underemployed or insecure jobs) and on an interview with the candidate (assessing motivation/attitude towards the course; previous experience, work perspectives and personal situation). The selection is performed by a 3-person committee (the manager, the responsible person for operating the course and a representative from the funding organisation). The training course (in principle) encompasses theory and practice. Theoretical instruction, or 'school based' training, has a linear sequence and is not modularised. For the practical instruction small groups are formed. Normally, practical exercises should also include some practical work/training outside the training centre. In this case, due to 'lack of time' this was restricted to visits to (biological) waste refineries and water refinery plants. Trainees enrolling and finalising the course get an additional payment ('reimbursement').

The second Greek case concerns the course 'new training techniques', which is delivered by the University of Crete. The main aim of the course was to introduce trainees to the use of multimedia software in order to build multimedia applications for educational tasks. The training centre itself was established in 1995 as an independent administration within the

University. The task of the centre (and its manager) mainly is to submit proposals (which are initiated and prepared by university staff) and the financial management of the courses. The total (organisational and educational) operation of the courses as such is the responsibility of the (university) trainers actually running the courses. Funding of the course comes from the government. The training course itself was designed as a non-modularised, common introduction with group instruction. The practical training (planned for about 50% of the total duration of the course, being 200 hours) was designed as developing multimedia application prototypes (within the training centre). Theoretical teaching was based on traditional classroom instruction. Financial conditions for the trainees in this course were similar to the conditions in the first course ('reimbursement' after finalising the course).

Ireland: The two Irish cases represent the two major Irish schemes for the unemployed: Community Employment (CE) and the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS).

The CE-case concerns a scheme run at a community centre in Dublin. It is a community centre in a less advantaged urban area, receiving a grant from the Irish training and development agency for providing employment and development opportunities for participants, and is further depending on varying sources of funding (e.g. the Eastern Health Board, the Dublin Inner City Partnership, the Department of Social Welfare). The centre employs about twelve staff members (of which two part-time), has fifteen people employed full-time under the Job Initiative and cares for 70 people under CE (of which 30 are based at the centre itself). The 'course' consists of part-time CE-employment and training where considered appropriate (see also section 3.1). For each individual participant a personal development plan is drawn up, including the training to be undertaken in relation to the CE-job and future job aspirations, and the way time will be spent on personal development. Enrolment is based on national eligibility criteria (21 years and older and over 1 year unemployed for the integration option; 35 years or older and over 3 years unemployed for the part-time job option), and an interview between the job centre (part of the community centre) and the applicant for a vacancy. Motivation is the main criterion, followed by the interest/willingness to learn and work. 'Training' is primarily work based, given that CE is mainly about providing job opportunities. Where more specific (vocational) training is needed, this is provided for by other training agencies (though it can also be provided internally). Though guidance and monitoring do as such not exist, each participant, four weeks prior to leaving CE, has an interview at the job centre to discuss future options. The staff of the community centre keeps files of participants including for example their CVs.

The VTOS-course is run at a Dublin college. This case focuses on those who did a leaving certificate. The college introduced VTOS in 1990 and employs 28 permanent staff, 21 staff on annually renewable contracts, 20 part-time teachers, 6 CE participants and 9 non-training staff. Funding mainly comes from the government. VTOS distinguishes between 'core' and 'dispersed' courses. Core courses concern stand-alone groups of at maximum 20 students, while 'dispersed courses' refer to students who join existing classes. The latter variant seems to be rather popular under the younger age category (20-25 years old), who see the option as a 'grant', focussing on particular subjects. Apart from general eligibility criteria (21 years or older), all applicants in this case go through an interview which mainly focuses on motivation, chance to 'survive' the course and the match between the course as such and individual expectations. The curriculum of the VTOS-course is set and does not provide for personal choice. Depending on the level students either take core and practical subjects (foundation level) or take core leaving certificate subjects (leaving certificate students) and a computer course. Though practical training, in the sense of training in an enterprise is not included, practical subjects (woodwork, computers) are taught and also excursions are organised. The college's guidance counsellor meets every VTOS-group every two weeks, especially to help solve problems with re-entering full-time education. Instruction is mainly based on classroom instruction.

Netherlands: The Dutch cases are a metal welding course provided by a Centre for Vocational Orientation and Preparation (CBB) and an offset printing course run by one of the Training Centres for Women (VVS). The CBB providing the metal welding course was founded in 1976 (see also section 3.1 for more general features). It is a relatively small training centre employing 20 trainers (of which 12 full-time), and 18 non-teaching staff (6 trainee counsellors, 3 managers and 9 other non-teaching staff). Each trainer is also the mentor of a group of trainees, responsible for individual guidance and monitoring the trainees' progress and achievements. The centre's educational policy is mainly set by the co-ordinators (trainers responsible for a group of courses) and the trainers. The funding of the centre (including this metal welding course) is mainly public, through the employment agency and the municipal social services. It are also these actors that enrol/select trainees, given that the trainee is motivated for the course, has a basic mastery of the Dutch language and basic numeracy skills and has no social/psychological/physical barriers to attend the training centre. Such issues are first addressed in an enrolment interview. Once admitted, the trainees go through an assessment period aimed at getting a better understanding of the trainees' capability and deficiencies. After the assessment, it is decided what might be the best track for trainees to proceed (into a vocational course or into 'remedial courses' in order to solve deficiencies, so that trainees can continue in a vocational course afterwards). Courses that are provided are mainly tailored towards 'customers' (employment agency, social services) demand, but at the same time based as much as possible on existing occupational profiles (or parts of these). The metal welding course is a modular course with a fixed sequence basic part and an optional continued training part. The course lasts between 20 to 40 weeks depending on the learning pace and capacities of individual trainees. Training routes are individualised, and most instruction is based on individual instruction and self study. On average, 70-80% of the training is practical. Practical training takes place in practice-classrooms (equipped with the necessary tools and instruments), where also the theoretical instruction is given. At the end of the course, most trainees have a period of practical training within an enterprise. Trainees receive 'job-skill training' with an emphasis on social and communicative skills needed for functioning in a work environment. During the course, trainees' achievements are registered on paper as well as in a computerised monitoring system and regularly discussed amongst mentors and trainers. The trainers maintain frequent contacts with employers and the employment agency. In addition to this the training centre runs its own (small) temp agency, at which trainees who finalised their training, can register.

The other Dutch case, the offset printing course at a VVS in the centre of the Netherlands, is only open for women. It has been established in the early 1980s. It runs various courses, which change over time. Courses are closed down and started on the basis of market research aiming at getting better understanding of possibly profitable job openings and occupational trends. There are no specific eligibility criteria (apart from those set by the employment service, which concern: motivation for the training and necessity of the training given no other job opportunities or job chances are available) and enrolment takes place through various routes (advertisements, guidance and counselling offices, employment service or local social services). Selection is mainly based on a short questionnaire and an intake interview, through which the training centre tries to find out whether or not the course matches motivation and expectation of the candidates. For some, more technical courses, it is required to pass an entrance exam focussing on numeracy skills, mastery of the Dutch language and technical understanding. The offset printing course, which is run in co-operation with a specialised graphical school, lasts for 1.5 years. The first six months of the part-time course (three days a week) are 'school based' (though with some practical assignments in the workshops of the specialised school). After this a concomitant apprenticeship training starts, during which trainees are apprentice within an enterprise for 2-3 days a week and also visit the training centre (or specialised school) for 1 day a week. From the moment of enrolment onwards, particular emphasis is placed on guidance and counselling of trainees; the so-called 'trajectory guidance'. During the intake stage, particular

attention is paid to the possible (mis-)match between individual expectations and capacities and the chosen course. Throughout the course there is a special provision within the curriculum (1.5 hours per week) for discussing work and personal related issues that might inhibit learning and participation. After concluding the course there are follow-up meetings in which problems concerning job applications for a job or obtaining a job can be discussed and solved.

Norway: Both Norwegian cases are AMO-courses (the training scheme for unemployed people in Norway). Both courses are provided by AMO-departments within upper secondary schools, though in different labour market districts.

The first case is an information technology and accounting course. The AMO-department delivering the course is situated in the same premises as the upper secondary school. Course offerings, as well as 'school evaluation', guidance and counselling and staff development are subject to national regulations. The information technology and accounting course has been run for nearly 10 years. The course provides 512 hours of instruction, split over three main modules: introduction, word processing and accountancy. The number of participants is restricted to 12 per course group. The course is practically oriented in the sense that trainees work with the computer most of the time. During the school based training trainees also have to carry out a project assignment, which they have to do in small groups. At the end of the course trainees get a 6-8 week practical training period in an enterprise; this practical training is rather new. Apart from the evaluation of learning results (a 2-3 hours test per module), the course as such is also evaluated by trainees themselves. This happens internally (twice during the course) as well as externally through questionnaires sent out by the district labour market authorities. There are close relationships with regional employers. On the one hand, through finding enterprises for work placement. On the other hand, through extensive informal contacts between training staff and employers, with the latter even contacting the school if they are searching for new personnel.

The second case is a mechanics and metal welding course. In contrast with the first case (which differs from ordinary upper secondary programmes, though it is approved by the central authorities), this course has been developed on the basis of modules from the upper secondary programme. The course has been run for more than 10 years at the AMO-division of the upper secondary school. Though this division is an integral part of the school, they are located in different premises. The course encompasses two parts: a foundation course which lasts for 19 weeks and an advanced course which takes 21 weeks. This AMO-course is a compressed version of an almost identical course in upper secondary education, in that the general education subjects have been removed from the AMO-course. Instruction is mainly based on classroom instruction and more practical work in the school workshop (from appr. 12% in the foundation course up to about 65% of curricular time in the advanced course).

On-the-job training within an enterprise is not part of the curriculum. For both cases it holds that personal development or training in communicative and social skills is not part of the curriculum as such, but some training in these areas is occasionally provided on the schools' own initiative.

England: The case study concerns an office skills training centre, running a 'using information technology' course (at NVQ level 2) under the national TfW programme. The course is run under contract with one of the inner London TECs. The training organisation is a private company, that emerged in 1990 out of a group of companies involved in software development. This particular training centre is one of the 35 training centres run throughout the country by this group of companies. The centre employs five full-time staff (of which one manager-teacher, one placement officer/job search tutor and one secretary). Given its size, the centre has a flat hierarchical structure with most decisions on educational policy taken as a team. However, the

contracting and output funding regime of the TECs leave little space for this (e.g.: within national framework regulation it is the TEC which sets priorities with regard to target groups). The TEC in this area has set the rule that trainees who want to enrol have to go through guidance service in order to obtain a recruitment interview with a TFW provider. It concerns a private guidance provider, who is paid by the TEC, partly on the basis of the number of completed action plans for its clients. The unemployed that are referred to the training centre then have a selection interview at the centre. The interview focuses on the motivation of the candidates (do they really want to learn or do they want to enrol for the extra money they can receive), their mastery of the English language and the likelihood that they will be successful and find a job.

The standard duration of this course is 14 weeks, though extension of this period is possible if negotiated with the TEC. Reason for extension could be that the expected chance of finding a job might increase if the trainee stays on longer. The course is in principle full-time, with trainees expected to attend the centre for 30 hours a week, of which 24 hours is spent on instruction and at least 6 hours on job search. The training is modularised and highly individualised, with trainees mainly working their way through the manuals. The course as such deals with three main groups of office software, being word processing, databases and spread sheets. Counselling is provided in four ways: a two-week introduction period, one-to-one reviews on a four weekly basis, the possibility to ask help from the tutor or work placement officer and support from the work placement officer in searching for a job. In principle practical training is provided in the form of work placement within and enterprise. However, if there are difficulties in finding sufficient places within enterprises, trainees can also receive their practical training in the practice firm within the training centre¹⁷.

The training programmes

As could be expected given the differences in national context and measures for training of unemployed people, there is a substantial variety between the cases studied in each country. The duration of the courses varies considerably, ranging from rather short courses of 200 hours (full-time this means five weeks) up to full-time training programmes lasting for two years. Also, scope and intention of the training programmes are very different, partly due to national policies and regulations.

There is also a remarkable difference in the size of the training organisations, ranging from very small training centres (UK, Greece¹⁸), through medium sized training organisations (Belgium, Netherlands, Ireland) up to large training organisations (Norway, partly through the linkage with upper secondary schools, and particularly Denmark). Given the qualitative nature of the data (especially the relative small number of former trainees interviewed) it is difficult to say what the impact of differences in size might be. Nevertheless, from the various cases some specific issues emerge. Firstly, the size of the whole organisation does not exclude the possibility of small scale organising within the organisation. If, for example, the Danish cases are examined it appears that the number of trainers directly involved in the delivery of the course and in the day-to-day contacts with trainees is relatively limited. Day-to-day management of the course seems to reside primarily with them, which for the trainees might implicate

¹⁷ : Gray, A. (1997). An information technology training course. Case study report. Falmer: University of Sussex.

¹⁸ : If it concerns the core organisation as such. When the pool of trainers is taken into account (in the environmental case 500 trainers and the other case in principle all university staff, depending on the subject of the course), the size increases considerably.

that their prime focus is on the smaller unit in which they are trained. Similar findings emerge from the Dutch cases where the central management is at a relative distance of the actual management and operation of the course, leaving the latter either to the sector manager or the trainers/mentors. Secondly, management and educational management do not necessarily coincide in the same person. As said, there are examples where the central or top management is rather distanced from the actual training process (cf. also Greece, where the management appears to have primarily an administrative function) and the 'educational management' is devolved to another level in the organisation. There are also examples in which it is difficult to speak of (educational) management of the training programme as such, given the specific structure of the programme (cf. CE in Ireland, where the main operation of the programme takes place in the community centre, but specific vocational training often is provided by training organisations outside).

As said, there is also a certain variety in the orientation of the programmes. Though most courses focus on training labour market related skills, there are differences in the degree of labour market orientation. The Irish cases are somewhat an exception, in this respect. The Irish VTOS case, for example, seems to be more oriented towards education and continuing education, than towards getting people into jobs. This is supported by the trainees' activities once they leave VTOS; they either enrol in continuing education or are considering doing so. Community Employment has a primary focus on re-integration of people into the community and community processes, although there also is a focus on re-integrating people in the labour market. However, among those former trainees of this scheme that have been interviewed, most stayed on (temporary) employment within the community centre, once they left the community employment scheme. The UK case is rather in contrast to these, especially the VTOS scheme. Due to the output related funding mechanism, training is highly focused on getting people into jobs, whether these are related to the training or not. This results in a situation where the actual training in IT-skills is concentrated as much as possible in three days a week (though trainees are expected to attend the centre for 30 hours a week), in order to keep two full days for job search.

In this respect it seems that differences in orientation do have a relation with funding regimes, at least to a certain extent (since differences in orientation are also caused by differences in active labour market policies and the particular instruments implemented on behalf of this). Though in all cases the specific training courses are funded from public (governmental) sources, in some of the countries training centres in general draw their funding from different sources, being either a combination of funding from different public sources (including EU-funding, in particular ESF-money) or a combination of funding from public and private sources. There are apparently differences in the funding regimes (ranging from funding solely on the basis of enrolment figures to merely output related funding). Overall there seems to be a tendency towards a greater emphasis on output related funding, with the UK as most extreme example (where presently up to 75% of the budget for a training course is depending on previously defined output targets). This shift seems to fit into the general tendency of a stronger emphasis on accountability of schools and training organisations, but it does have its counterparts in terms of increasing the inclination towards 'creaming'. The particular UK-example does not implicate that in the other courses

there is no 'drive' for getting participants back into a job¹⁹, but finalising the course and obtaining -if possible- a (recognised) qualification is considered equally important. There are however, differences in the extent to which such 'output' targets are related to, if not part of the funding. In some of the cases there is a clear tendency towards a form of 'output funding'. In the Flemish cases funding is related to the number of trainees sitting for the final exams or the number of trainees that obtain a job after the training. In Denmark the introduced 'taxi meter' system implicates that payment for those dropping out in between is no longer continued (as might be the case if funding is only based on number of enrolments). Funding conditions appear to be similar for the Greek cases; in order to not lose funding by early drop-out a strategy of 'over enrolment' is applied, where early drop-outs can be replaced by those on the waiting list. Though such clear 'incentives' are not (yet) present in the other cases, there certainly is an element of competition. In Norway the AMO-departments have to go through a competitive tendering procedure, where prices are based on real cost budgets. In the Dutch cases, certainly the CBB-case, training centres have to try to 'sell' training places (mainly to the employment service) in order to obtain funding for keeping the training centre in operation.

In all cases, some sort of entry selection is applied. Issues that are considered of particular interest in this selection are the motivation of candidates, and their willingness and ability to learn. Often, mastery of the national language is a criterion as well, though in an exceptional case (the Netherlands) language training can be offered if language skills might inhibit training. There appears however, to be a difference in the intention with which the selection takes place. Roughly, it is possible to distinguish three types. The first type of selection aims at "measuring" (either by applying tests or specific assessment procedures) the extent to which the candidate trainee can handle the training, handle both its level and content, and is capable of finalising the course (e.g.: the Flemish cases, the Dutch CBB case and the Danish P47 case). The second type of selection appears to be more oriented towards estimating the individual chance of being successful, either in terms of finalising the course or in terms of obtaining a job, or both (e.g.: the UK case, the Danish UTB case and -though to a much lesser extent- the Norwegian cases). The third type of selection appears to be mainly oriented towards the issue whether or not the trainees' expectations and preferences match the actual content and aim of the course (e.g.: the Irish and Greek cases, the Dutch VVS case). These are 'rough' categories in the sense that such a categorisation does not do justice to the multiple intentions of the selection that is applied. In this respect it is not possible to allocate specific cases to one specific category. The tentative allocation given by the examples does, nevertheless, refer to a certain primary orientation in the selection process. Once again, it should be stated that this orientation is embedded in the national policy context. In England for example, the output funding more or less reinforces selection on estimated success upon the training centres.

The question that emerges from this is whether or not selection is a "bad" thing. Matching trainees' interests with the appropriate course might be essential for a fruitful learning process. The trainees in both Greek cases for example, do not appear to be very satisfied with the content and learning outcomes of the training course. In one case

¹⁹ : As far as it is a task of the training centre. In most countries this is a task of the employment service and as far as training centres might help trainees to find a job, this is done on an informal basis.

(environmental management) most trainees were lacking the necessary background knowledge in order to fully benefit from the specialised course. They had not known beforehand that the course would be that specialised and expected something different. In the other course there appears to be a mismatch between expectations and actual offer as well, since part of the trainees state that they have not learned that much as expected. A similar mismatch between expectations and actual experiences occurs in the English case, where the outdatedness of the computer equipment plays a particular role. Given these examples, it can be argued that a certain selection is necessary in order to prevent disappointments, which could lead on to negative attitudes towards learning and training. Nevertheless, the question remains whether or not this selection results in 'creaming'. The English training centre is quite frank about this; they are more or less forced to do so. But what happens in the other cases? Two issues need to be addressed here. First of all, answering the question whether creaming occurs, requires clear information about unemployment categories in the particular area of the training centre (which often is not easy to obtain) as well as information about those who did not gain access to the course though they did admit; information that is lacking at most training centres. Secondly, part of the cases included have a particular scope, not only aiming at a particular target group, but also aiming at a particular (and relatively high) output level, which seems to implicate more or less creaming by definition. Nevertheless, of the cases included, it appears that only some of them focus strictly on the least qualified (community employment, the Danish UTB course, the family care case in Flanders and the Dutch metal welding course).

It is difficult to disentangle the actual influence of guidance and counselling during the various stages of the training. On the one hand, guidance and counselling appear to be closely linked to monitoring (or even evaluating) the progress of trainees. On the other hand, guidance and counselling can be either an organisational characteristic (does the organisations as such value these activities) or a curricular/instructional characteristic (is it an embedded part of the training course) or both. Concerning the former, it can be tentatively stated that the more selective the course appears to be (selection at entrance), the more emphasis is given throughout the whole course. Examples of this can be found in Flanders and the Netherlands (though in the latter case of the VVS selection at enrolment does not seem to be that tough; here it appears more to be a form of self-selection among potential trainees). Here guidance and counselling together with monitoring of trainees are aimed at obtaining the best possible results, which nevertheless also implicates that only 'the best trainees' are selected. Concerning the latter, it appears that training organisations where guidance and counselling is firmly rooted in both the organisation as such and the curriculum of the course, guidance and counselling appear to have most 'spin-off' at least in terms of trainees' satisfaction (though over-emphasising it, can give trainees the feeling of being belittled). At the same time one can trace a more social welfare orientation of the guidance and counselling services in some of the cases. In these cases guidance and counselling seems to be focussed on the personal development and well being of the trainees/participants and less on preventing dropout or realising good placement results for the participants. Which perspective dominates appears to be partially dependent on the 'philosophy' underpinning the programme (as well as its delivering organisation), where a distinction can be made between a more social welfare/community development oriented perspective and a more 'business-like' and market oriented

perspective (which however do not exclude each other). It also seems to be partially dependent on the training organisation's perception of its target groups and what their specific problems might be.

With the exception of the Irish VTOS programme, all courses include practical training in one way or the other. The Norwegian mechanics and metal welding course provides practical training within the training centre's workshop, while the Greek case on 'new training techniques' also provides the practical training within the computer rooms of the university. In the other cases, on-the-job training is –in principle– part of the curriculum. Though the duration and intensity varies, from a couple of weeks to various months or even a year. Overall, this training on-the-job (the work placement or apprentice period) seems to be a good vehicle for getting into a job. Many of the interviewed former trainees state that they found a job with the enterprise or organisation where they did their practical training. In some cases the lack of the expected work placement (e.g.: UK, Greek case on environmental management) was mentioned as a particular negative point. The training centres as well appear to value highly the possibility of getting a job through the practical training or work placement. Nevertheless, there appear to be differences in the way in which practical training or work placement is linked to the rest of the curriculum. In the case of the UK and the Norwegian IT-course the orientation seems different from the other cases. In the UK, again related to the output funding regime, getting trainees into work placement as quickly as possible in the hope that it will lead to (steady) employment appears to discard with the pedagogical function of such practical training. In the Norwegian IT course, work placement (for a period of about 6 weeks) has only been introduced relatively recently into the curriculum. Placed at the end of the course, it more or less functions as a transition stage. The idea of a transition stage does hold for some of the other cases as well. However, there the practical training is perceived as an integrated part of the curriculum, purposefully designed as including both theoretical (or school based) and practical (or work based) training. The Danish cases based on the alternance model, is the clearest example in this respect.

The provision of practical training or work placements, is the major link between employers and training organisations. Though in some cases employers (or employers' organisations) are also involved in the planning of the content of the courses, it is the practical training that establishes the strongest link. As said, the particular orientation of the training organisation on the aim and scope of the practical training differs. This appears to hold as well for the commitment of employers to providing practical training. Overall, selection of employers involved in delivery based on their 'quality' as a training provider hardly seems to appear, partly since such selection is not possible given the difficulties in finding employers willing to be involved (e.g.: the UK). But there are differences in the extent to which guidance and counselling during practical training is structured from the training organisation. The structuring may not only concern the centre's own efforts and the contacts with the trainee, but may also concern the extent to which the employer is 'drawn into' this process (e.g.: informatics training in Flanders).

The extent to which training organisations maintain relations with (local) employers or employers' organisations again differs between training organisations. Partly this is due

to the orientation of the training that is provided. The VTOS scheme in Ireland for example, is primarily a general education oriented programme, while community employment focuses on work experience and on-the-job training through involvement in work relevant for the community. Nevertheless in the latter case it is stated that attempts are made to further build up the relations with local employers, since that might be a channel for getting participants back into the regular labour market. Relations with employers in the Greek cases are hardly existent, unless the involvement of experts in the programme committee in one case (environmental management) would be perceived as such. In that case it is indicated that the training centre provides training mainly for the agricultural sector with an emphasis on an orientation towards self-employment. In other cases there are contacts with employers, either formalised (e.g. involvement in planning the content of the course or trainee selection) or less formalised/informal contacts (e.g. market research on training centres own initiative, extensive informal networks between trainers and employers).

More or less related to the former issue, is the issue of the planning of the content of the courses. Who determines the content of the courses and to what extent have the training organisations a say or even the initiative in this? The first basic distinction concerns the extent to which training centres can influence the (content of the) training offer. In the cases where they can, a further sub division in three types can be made:

- cases where training organisations in direct consultation with employers determine the content of the training programmes (a ‘shared’ responsibility as is the case for the two Flemish cases, the two Danish cases, the Dutch welding case of CBB);
- cases where the determination of the training offer and its content is to a large extent the initiative of the training organisation itself, though after a certain form of market research in which at least an identification of employers’ needs takes place (as is the case in the Dutch offset printing case);
- cases where the determination of the training offer and its content is to a large extent the initiative of the training organisations itself without necessary consulting employers (as is the case for the two Greek cases, where the local governmental authority sets out the aims and target groups, etc., and to a certain extent the Irish CE-case).

In the cases where the training organisations have little influence on determining the content of the training offer (Norway, UK), decisions concerning what will be offered are taken at another level. In the UK this is the level of the TECs: there it is determined (after consulting the appropriate bodies) which training courses will be offered. This does not exclude the possibility for the training organisations to give a certain ‘personal interpretation’ to the courses for which they tender. In Norway the regional labour market authorities decide which courses will be offered (this also holds for Greece). Here the content of most courses conforms to a national standard, sometimes with minor local adaptations.

The former trainees

In general one could conclude that courses for (long-term) unemployed attract a wide age span, ranging from people in their (early) twenties up to people in their mid or late forties. The average age of interviewed ex-trainees does, however, not exceed the age of

35. The distribution of ex-trainees according to gender, does -to a certain extent- reflect gender specific education and training patterns or, in other words, gender specific occupational choice patterns. There are some 'exceptions' being the second Danish real estate caretaker course, which is explicitly focussing on women; the second Dutch case study, which does not concern a typical 'female' occupational area (on the contrary; printing still is a 'man's trade', however training courses provided by one of the Training Centre for Women do not (yet) provide access for male trainees) and the two Greek cases ('environmental management' where women are in the majority, and teaching and training, normally an area with more women than men, but here with a 50-50 distribution between both sexes, which might be related to the fact that computers are mainly considered as a domain for men in Greece).

Looking at prior educational attainment of participants, a first thing which strikes is that, with the exception of one case, all participants have had some years of secondary education at least up to the level of lower secondary education. The transition from lower to upper secondary education coincides in most countries with the end of compulsory schooling. The 'exceptional' case concerns the welding course case from the Netherlands; this is provided by a Centre for Vocational Orientation and Preparation, which are known for their focus on the least qualified target groups.

In other cases, the level of prior education attainment could be considered relatively 'high', though there should be precaution with regard to the concept of 'high'. Firstly, one can doubt whether only lower secondary education as such is an adequate educational basis in the present 'knowledge society'. Secondly, the completion of compulsory education does not necessarily provide a good indicator neither of an individual's employability nor of the extent to which the necessary (vocational) skills and knowledge are acquired. In the UK, for example, the debate focuses on the fact that though most young people complete compulsory schooling, the mastery of basic skills (such as literacy and numeracy) falls short. In addition to this, in various countries those that only have completed compulsory schooling are perceived as unskilled, not having obtained a vocational qualification that is employable in the labour market. Nevertheless, the differentiation on previous educational attainment can partly be explained. On the one hand, there are the enrolment and selection procedures applied by training organisations. Especially in the Flemish cases this selection seems to be relatively strict (if not 'harsh'), which implicates that mainly those are selected with a good chance of completing the course and being successful in their jobs afterwards. It should be remembered that in both cases, trainees who are allowed access to the training course are quite assured of obtaining a job afterwards. On the other hand, average national levels of educational attainment in combination with average national (un-)employment structures play a role. This seems particular to be the case for Greece, where a strong academic tradition in educational choice patterns still appears to be prevalent. Many young people opt for general academic education, hoping to gain access to higher education, especially universities. For those who do not gain such access, prospects of employment are low and, at the same time, few educational or training alternatives are left, apart from courses provided under the continuous training framework (or the initial vocational training programmes). Though at the same time, these particular cases (especially the educational multi-media course) seem to attract those with university qualifications as well.

Other explanations which should be mentioned with regard to other cases concern:

- the specific character of a training provision: this is particularly the case for the Training Centre for Women in the Netherlands, which do not specifically focus on unemployed women, but on women in general including those who want to re-enter the labour market after raising children for example; some of the latter group of women might have a rather high level of prior educational attainment, but are looking for a new job (orientation) after having been out of the work process for some time;
- 'strategic behaviour' of some trainees, who are already employable, but want to broaden their qualification profile with some more practical skills to enhance their job chances or who want to change their occupational careers in a fundamentally different direction, as is the case in the IT-course in Norway; especially the former group seems to be relatively highly educated (Skinningsrud & Pedersen, 1997);
- the funding regime, which focuses on 'positive outcomes' (e.g. number of trainees getting a job, number of trainees returning to full-time education) as is the case in the UK; this type of 'output funding' in combination of a very competitive tendering procedure in order to obtain training contracts, leads to a situation in which training providers are very much opting to select 'best candidates' (probably using previous educational attainment as a screening device) in order to make sure that they will reach targets as they have been negotiated.

With regard to previous unemployment, or the duration of the unemployed period previous to enrolling in the training course, there are remarkable differences as well. First of all, such differences can be retraced to (national) eligibility criteria and, of course, to national policy priorities. In addition to this, these differences can also refer to differences in definitions of 'long-term unemployment' and changes in such definitions over time (which in their turn might be due to changes in policy priorities)²⁰.

Nevertheless there are specific factors that can explain differences. In the first Greek case for example, participants were either lyceum graduates or tertiary education graduates, who had never officially been registered as being employed but had held odd seasonal jobs in the tourist industry. Though officially perceived as (long-term) unemployed, they did not consider themselves as being unemployed.

Concerning the 'information channels' through which trainees get information on the course, it appears that in various countries the employment service plays a role in referring the unemployed to a specific course. Quite obvious this is related to national regulations and tasks assigned to the employment service (or labour market authorities), as is the case in Flanders, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. Nevertheless, the role of the employment service is not the most important in various cases. Surprisingly, the Norwegian cases show that the former trainees held the opinion that getting on to the specific course was to a large extent the result of their own initiative.

The employment service is not mentioned in the Greek, Irish and English cases. In Greece the main channels appear to be the local press and friends or relatives. In Ireland

²⁰: See the background synthesis report for more details on this issue.

'word of mouth' is the main channel through which unemployed learn about the Community Employment programme, while in the UK the adult guidance service plays a major role in the referral.

One Flemish case shows a different pattern. Given that this case aims specifically at disabled people, the fact that the most important channel is constituted by professionals or professional organisations in this area, is not a surprise.

Which were the main reasons for enrolling in the training course? Being it more or less directly stated, one can conclude that nearly all former trainees wanted to obtain a job and improve their chances of the labour market. In some cases it is stated explicitly in terms of 'getting a job' or 'increasing chances to find work', while in other cases it is stated more indirectly in terms of 'promising employment perspectives of the course', 'promising job opportunities once the course was concluded' or 'improving or changing job perspectives'. In the latter case it often concerns people with a relatively higher level of previous educational attainment, who after periods of work and unemployment (often shorter periods of unemployment) or periods of domestic responsibilities, wanted to chance into a new occupational sector than the one for which they originally had been trained or originally had been working in.

Interest in the subject of the course or the occupational area for which the course is training is expressed in other cases/countries as well (Flanders, Greece, Denmark, the Netherlands, UK), as are the more generally formulated notions like the attraction of the learning as such, acquiring and developing new knowledge and skills, gain an understanding of own qualities or gaining understanding of new occupational areas with probably better future job perspectives (Flanders, Greece, Ireland, UK).

The Irish Community Employment scheme seems somewhat particular in this respect. Trainees refer to the fact that training is possible as well as the possibility of (part-time) work. This is due to the specific structure of this scheme and its predecessor (the Social Employment Scheme). Where the preceding programme did not offer the opportunity to receive training, training now is explicitly included in the Community Employment scheme. This scheme is based on providing (paid) jobs to those who participate and on providing training that is related to the specific job they perform during enrolment in the scheme.

Financial motives are relatively little mentioned. Apart from cases where people feel pressured to enrol in order to stop being a financial burden for the social benefit of the municipality (one former trainee in the second Norwegian case), reference to financial motives is only explicitly made in the second Danish case and by one person under Community Employment in Ireland. Nevertheless there are indications that financial motives might play a (indirect) role in Greece and England as well. In the interviews with the training organisation it is either stated explicitly by a manager, or referred to more indirectly in the statement that those who are forced to enrol by financial threats are not the most motivated trainees.

Looking at the elements of the training courses which former trainees evaluate as most interesting or useful, it overall appears that the practical parts of the course (if included) are often mentioned. Former trainees refer to practical training periods or

apprenticeships, practical assignments, or working with specific computer programmes (Flanders, Denmark, Greece, Netherlands, Norway). In the Greek cases it concerns the 'practical elements' as far as they were provided. In the first case these were visits to waste refineries and some exercises with a specific computer programme, while in the second case it concerns that knowledge and skills developed through the actual computer work and prototyping at the training centre.

Though explicit reference to 'practice' is lacking in the first Irish case, one could state that the specific job related skills that are mentioned are (partly) learned on-the-job, given the specific structure of the Community Employment programme. And even though the actual practical training period within an enterprise had not been provided in the first course of the first Norwegian case²¹ (due to budgetary problems), the practical assignments performed at the training centre (the drill and practice in various computer programmes) are highly valued by the former trainees.

The English case seems to be somewhat an exception in this respect. Only the training in job search skills is mentioned as a useful element, which might be due to the fact that (contrary to the trainees' expectations) a work placement was not provided²². Overall this course has been evaluated rather negatively by the former trainees.

In addition to the practical elements of the training courses, the occupational theory or theoretical subjects are often mentioned as being interesting or useful.

Asking former trainees about plusses and minuses of the training course, it in general appears that there is slightly more consensus on the plusses than the minuses, with the exception of those cases where particular problems appeared with the course (Greece; UK). Negative characteristics were often mentioned by fewer former trainees than positive characteristics, though it should be recalled that overall the number of responses is small and differences therefore rather relative.

Looking at the positive characteristics of the training course, it appears that in most cases once again reference is made to the practical training period, the practical assignments and the combination of practical training and theory within one course. One could say that a training course, in which sufficient opportunities are provided to actually apply what has been learned, is valued by trainees. Other valued elements are:

- The guidance and help or support from the training staff. In most cases this refers to the support directed at facilitating the learning process, helping to overcome problems encountered during the learning as such, but to a certain extent it also refers to support in solving specific person-related problems and issues;
- The issue of 'work'. On the one hand, the good job prospects (if not job guarantee) is mentioned in part of the cases (Flanders, Ireland whereas regards the support of the job centre also in relation to job opportunities, Netherlands second case and Norway, first case).

²¹ : In this case study two groups that had subsequently taken the IT/accountancy course, were included. The group from the first course did not receive practical training in an enterprise, the second group did.

²² : Officially work placement is part of the training course, but given that the organisation had a vacancy for the function of work placement officer for a substantial period, the interviewed trainees did not receive practical training within an enterprise.

In some cases a relatively small number of positive characteristics is mentioned. This can be partly explained by the specific problems that were encountered in these courses. In the Greek cases the trainees in general were rather apprehensive with regard to the usefulness of training courses for improving employment perspectives given the lack of vacancies that exists. In the first case the overall judgement was relatively negative given the specific problems encountered; the training course was set up as a rather specialised course in environmental management, with the expectation that those applying for enrolment in the course would have a suitable background in natural sciences. Given the fact that most participants lacked this background and had difficulties in following the course, their overall evaluation of the course was not very positive, notwithstanding the attempts to adapt the course to the backgrounds of the participants. In the UK-case the overall evaluation of the course was very negative, since participants had the feeling that nothing was learned, equipment and software were outdated and that staff did not have time to help them. Also the fact that the expected work placement was lacking was evaluated negatively.

This negative evaluation of the IT-course in England is reflected in the negative characteristics that are mentioned by the former trainees: outdated equipment and software, no work placement (which by the former trainees is perceived as a rather important opportunity to get into employment, since employers tend to use such periods as a means to judge the capacities of a candidate), too little time for guidance and support from the training staff (which appeared to be overloaded), no improvement of job prospects and an insufficient practical orientation of the whole course as such. Actually three former trainees claimed to have left the course early, due to this lack of practical orientation.

In the other cases, characteristics have been mentioned as being negative, while the same characteristics were indicated as positive elements as well. Guidance and help from trainers in the first Flemish case, for example, was also indicated as one of the main positive characteristics. Where the negative side of the coin is concerned, referral is made to the fact that staff did not always had time for people, the fact that if trainees were out for a certain time the contact with the training organisation became very loose, the fact that staff did not always appear to acknowledge the fact that they were working with adults or that guidance and support was too much based on the principle of 'do-it-yourself'. Also the fact that trainees have fairly little influence on which job they get is characterised as negative. Further complaints concern the fact that the level of the course was too high and the progress through the course material too fast or concerned the apprenticeship as such (a complaint of a person who had been working for several years) and the lack of differentiation according to the entrance level (previous level of educational attainment) of the trainees.

Especially where the recognition of the maturity of the students is concerned, similar complaints can be heard in the second Flemish case. Former trainees from this course indicated that training staff did not always have an appropriate approach towards the trainees given their age (and level) and the fact that most had been housewives themselves. Moreover it was indicated that (part of) the training staff was relatively old with consequences for the training methods they applied and also for their perception of the occupation of caretaker.

In the first Danish case, former trainees had problems with the pedagogical model underpinning the training course, which gave them the impression that they were left to themselves too much, solving their own problems (especially during the practical training problems). Nevertheless, they did recognise that in the end this approach might be effective, helping them to further develop their own problem solving skills and enhancing group work. Part of the trainees in the second Danish case had problems with the practical training, where they had the perception of being treated as cheap labour. Negative characteristics mentioned in the Greek cases stem from the specific problems that have been encountered (first case; as outlined above) or the fact that labour market perspectives in general are not very good (certainly not for the higher educated), which is reflected in the remarks concerning information and consultation with regard to labour market prospects.

In the Irish Community Employment case, it is especially the perspective after maximum allowable time spend in CE, which is characterised as negative. There is no continuity afterwards, total duration is considered to be too short and the work done during the participation does not lead to any (official) recognition, which might be helpful by seeking employment. In the second Irish case, especially the insufficient recognition of the student body and the facilitative side of the training (facilities like library and crèche, but also insufficient substitution in the case teachers were missing) are mentioned.

The former trainees of the welding course (the first Dutch) case, mention various negative aspects, but most of these are mentioned by one or two former trainees only. This explains why both 'duration too long' and 'duration too short' appear in the list. In the second case the negative points mentioned by the former trainees reflect the specific problems that appeared in this course. As mentioned earlier, the course was split between the training centre actually providing the course, a graphical school and training within enterprises. The core trainer of the training centre did not function very well, with the result that both the core subject (actually being the pedagogical principle underpinning the whole philosophy of the training centres for women) was not provided as intended and that the contacts with both the graphical school and the enterprises where the participants did their practical training were hardly established. Most of the comments can be traced back to this situation. Two specific issues concern the fact that part of the former trainees came across the course only by coincidence (insufficient PR/information) and the fact that one of the trainees thought that it would be better to start with the practical training earlier on during the course in order to make clear the relevance of the theoretical subjects.

What did the former trainees 'learn' from the course? What did they gain from it? Though there is quite some differentiation between cases (both in types and the number of learning outcomes mentioned), job or occupation specific knowledge and/or skills (and variations on this like specific computer skills, setting up for self-employment, welding skills) and communication skills are often mentioned. Other learning outcomes that are frequently mentioned concern increased self-esteem or self-confidence and the acquisition of job search skills.

Overall, it must be concluded that nearly all interviewed former trainees did finalise the course they had started. Only in the case of the IT-course in England, five trainees left the course prematurely. As said, three former trainees claim that they left the course since the course was not sufficiently practice oriented. Two other trainees left the course because they obtained a job. In this respect one could say that there is a certain bias in the former trainees that have been interviewed, because in other cases no ‘drop-outs’ were included.

Which activities did trainees undertake in order to obtain a job? In the two Flemish cases this question is irrelevant given the job “guarantee” that is part of both courses. In the specialised computer course finding work placements (and with this future employment) is the task of the job coach²³, while in the case of family and elderly care, being hired by the care organisation is part of the enrolment in the training course. In other cases most trainees either started to look for a job once they finished their training, or were employed by the employer where they did their practical training. There are, however, some exceptions. In the first Danish case on real estate caretakers, a job search strategy is implemented as part of the course, in the sense that the trainees have to find (in principle) their own trainee firm. Only if they do not succeed to find a trainee firm, does the AMU-centre help. The second exception is the IT-course in England. Trainees started to search for jobs right from the moment they enrolled and are actually obliged to do so.

Did trainees find work? It should be taken into account that especially in part of the Danish and Norwegian cases time between finalisation of the course and the interview was relatively short, which might have affected the outcomes.

All former trainees in the two Flemish cases have found a job relevant to their training. This is not a surprise given the particular structure and relations with employers. In the first Danish case 4 former trainees found a job; they are employed at the business where they also did their practical training. In the other Danish case 6 former trainees are employed, while 1 enrolled in continuing general adult education. In both Greek cases part of the former trainees are employed, though mostly not in jobs relevant to the previous training. Those trainees do not consider the training course being of any help in getting into the job. In the second Irish case all former trainees either enrolled in further education or are considering to do so, which is in line with the orientation of VTOS. Of those who have been enrolled in community employment, two stayed on at the community centre under the Job Initiative, while one person has set up an own business. Of the two Dutch cases, the offset printing course seems to be the most successful. Seven of the eight interviewed former trainees found a job in the vocation for which they have been trained. In the other case four former trainees continued training once they finalised the welding course; two are still enrolled in the continuing training course, while one of the two other trainees found a welding job after concluding continuing training. Among the former trainees in the UK case that found a job, only one obtained a job that seems related to the training.

²³ : Training firms in this case are recruited on the basis that they already have a vacancy in the computer area, which during the first year is filled by the trainee without costs for the employer.

The employers

Why do employers take on trainees or hire former trainees? With regard to taking on trainees for their practical training or their work placement, there are basically three groups of arguments. The first one refers to a certain felt social obligation; vocational training is partly perceived as a shared responsibility of the government and social partners, in which business and industry has to take its part as well. Certainly if it concerns the training of adults who want to re-enter the labour market and the labour process. The second group of arguments refers to the fact that taking on a trainee means free (or cheap) labour for a certain period. The third set of arguments refers to the possibility for an extended and free trial period, that taking on a trainee offers. Though it is difficult to say whether one of these lines of argumentation is predominant in one of the countries, it seems that the 'social obligation' is in particular mentioned in Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, while the free labour and free extended trial period are mentioned more often in the UK and Belgium. It has however to be taken into account that these results only concern a limited set of cases per country, with some cases having a particular linkage between training course and employer. Concerning the latter, the cases in Flanders are somewhat atypical given the strong link between the training organisation and the employer providing both practical training and the chance to be hired once the training has been concluded. It is especially this strong linkage, establishing both regular contacts with the training provider and opportunities to influence the content of the course (made to measure as one of the employers states) that are perceived as positive characteristics of the specialised information technology course, by those employers that have been involved in the practical training within this course.

Though 'social obligation' might be in particular mentioned in Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, this does not implicate that employers involved in the delivery of practical training do not have pragmatic reasons for doing so. The fact that it is to a certain extent free labour, either in combination with the fact that certain skills are needed at that particular moment for which money is lacking to hire it externally or in combination with the fact that a certain 'job' has to be done, which otherwise would not be done, does play a role as well. The actual practical training within the enterprise or labour organisation is mainly based on an expert-novice model, with a more experienced worker taking care of the trainee. There are, however, clear differences in the extent to which the training organisations itself devotes time to the guidance of the trainee and the contacts with the employer and 'expert-trainer' within the enterprise, as outlined before.

Overall the employers appear to be relatively positive with regard to the content and quality of the course and the 'quality' of the trainees they have taken on. Though there are, of course, specific 'complaints': like the duration of the practical training (too short), the use of outdated software, too little emphasis on the acquisition of a 'business attitude', too little specialisation or the poor contacts between the training centre and the employers providing the practical training.

Asked for the chances of former trainees to get a job with the same employer and the way in which they could get this job, nearly all employers stated that they would employ standard procedures. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that such 'standard

procedures' give former trainees an advantage over external candidates if vacancies are available and trainees have functioned satisfactory during their practical training. Concerning the Flemish cases, the employer has -at least a moral- obligation to hire the trainee afterwards, unless the trainee has proven not be capable for the job. In the other cases, trainees are directly asked to stay on to fill a vacancy, or allowed to participate in an internal application process before the vacancy is advertised externally. Or they are filed in an internal database until the moment a vacancy comes up. The advantage for the employer is clear; they already know the candidate and can save on recruitment costs.

3.3.3 Some conclusions

In general, it can be stated that the cases do show quite a variety in characteristics, linked to the rather great differences in national contexts (regulations with regard to training organisations and curricula, funding mechanisms, (local) labour market situations and changing labour market conditions). In this respect comparing cases sometimes raised the feeling of attempting to compare inequitable entities. It should, however, also be taken into account that it sometimes might concern somewhat atypical courses, in the sense that they have been chosen because of particular (known) features (e.g. Netherlands, Flanders) or in the sense that particular courses are not necessarily representative for labour market training courses in general.

Apart from the differences in (national) regulations and funding arrangements, which partially determine the differences in organisational and curricular characteristics between the courses, it is quite clear that it is the labour market as such, which is particular relevant for the effectiveness of the training in terms of its outcomes. Certainly when taking into account the present situation in some of the participating countries, where unemployment (and even long-term unemployment) has decreased during the last years.

Concerning the guidance and counselling that is provided by the training organisations, it is difficult to draw a more general picture. On the one hand, one could say that overall guidance and counselling seem to go hand in hand with evaluation and monitoring of trainees' progress. On the other hand, the extent to which guidance and counselling is provided (in a structured) way varies substantially. From no structured guidance and counselling (trainers try to solve problems of trainees as they come, in the Greek cases), to a structured system where guidance and (a computerised) monitoring (system) are strongly linked (e.g. the Flemish specialised informatics case and the Dutch welding case). Of course, these are more or less the extremes of a continuum. Various instruments are applied in order to provide guidance and counselling to the trainees (though not always perceived in this way and though not always evaluated positively by either the training staff and/or the trainees):

- appointing specific staff or specific tasks to trainers (e.g.: guidance counsellor, supervisors for practical training, group mentors, (class) tutors, placement officers)
- applying specific instruments (personal development plan, assessment procedures, computerised trainee monitoring systems, traject guidance, 'one to one reviews').

It seems that there is a certain relation between selection on the one hand, and guidance and counselling on the other hand. A relation in the sense that those training organisations that try to measure the extent to which trainees will be capable of handling the training course (both level and content) and to finalise it, by means of assessments before enrolment, are the training organisations where guidance and counselling is most strongly embedded in the organisation as such and at the curricular level.

It appears that the extent to which “sufficient” time of the training staff is devoted to guidance and counselling of the trainees (that is: sufficient in the opinion of the former trainees), influences their satisfaction with the course. That is their judgement about parts of the training course afterwards. At the same time, it does not seem to be of such influence that minimal provision of it results in substantial dropout from the course (this can at least not be concluded on the basis of the case studies).

In all cases a form of selection at the stage of enrolment appears, though the thoroughness (or toughness) and scope of this selection differs, ranging from (more or less extensive) testing, via more qualitative techniques in order to forecast the chance of success to finish the course or find a job an to attempt to grasp the match between trainees’ interests and the course on offer. As said, a more stringent selection procedure does not need to be ‘negative’ as such, since it can prevent disappointments and a furthered disinterest in training. At the same time, selection does enhance opportunities for creaming certainly if there are few other options for referring those trainees to course offers considered more appropriate to them. There is a link between selection (or ‘creaming’) and the funding regime under which a training provider has to operate; the UK provides the clearest example in this respect, but indications can be found in other cases as well (e.g. Flanders, Denmark). Output related funding does not only enhance a certain tendency towards increasing selectivity, but can also contribute to ‘pushing’ trainees out of training, certainly if the output criterion as such is getting a job (irrespective of the question whether the job matches the training), instead of obtaining a qualification.

In relation to this it appears that any form of pressure on unemployed people to participate in training does not seem to be an effective instrument. Threats, in terms of negative sanctions or incentives in terms of additional financial rewards, appear to be more demotivating than motivating. In the case of threatening with negative sanctions (cuts in the benefit or even losing the benefit) this may push people into training, but it is questionable whether it really motivates them and increases their awareness of the possible value of training. Providing positive incentives (an additional amount on top of their benefit or a reimbursement of a certain amount if training is concluded) can result in a situation in which trainees enrol for the sake of enrolling while not really motivated. Or in a situation in which they opt for any course, not really considering which course might be the most appropriate.

The relations between training organisations and employers differ rather strongly and are partly depending on the environment and institutional embedding of the training courses. Planning of the training courses from the perspective of the (perceived) relevance of the course to the needs of the local labour market is not necessarily a guarantee for finding a job once the course has been finalised. Though neglect of such

needs is another extreme that will not be helpful for re-integrating unemployed people in the labour market. Apart from the issue of the level and quality of the course (as perceived by the employers or expressed by the qualification obtained), it appears that the expectations of either the organisers/providers of the course or the funders of the course are not necessarily the best indicators for determining whether there is a real need for the specific skills acquired. Establishing clear links with regional employers could contribute to a better estimate of the labour market relevance of courses. However, the strongest link between training organisations and employers seems to be the involvement of employers in the delivery of practical training, certainly if commitment of the employers with the training can be enhanced.

There is a substantial difference in the duration of the courses between the countries and within the countries (though in the latter case to a lesser extent). Given this variation it is difficult to draw firm conclusions with regard to the effect of the duration, though it does seem that rather short courses might be less effective in terms of finding gainful employment. However, the possible effect of duration is on the one hand mediated by the target group of the course and the intended level and content of the course, and on the other hand, contaminated by the (local) labour market situation and the particular needs of that market.

In some cases 'job search (training)' is emphasised. The question is whether this contributes to the realised outcomes in terms of the number of trainees that find a job. It seems that training in job search skills might become more important if recruitment strategies are more formalised. The extent to which these strategies are formalised or less formalised, seems to be related to the economic structures and the structure of the labour market, e.g. in terms of formalisation of demand and supply channels and the formalisation and acceptance of the (role of the) employment services. Where recruitment strategies are highly formalised and employment services and temp agencies play an important role in the demand and supply channels (in addition to channels as personnel advertisements), training in job search skills seems to be more important (and perhaps profitable) than in less formalised labour markets that mainly employ informal channels for matching supply and demand.

Overall it seems that the curricular and especially the instructional characteristics are of greater influence on the output and particular the outcomes of the courses than the organisational characteristics, though it is at the same time clear that the organisational characteristics set the stage for further developing particular curricular and instructional characteristics.

Concerning the motivation of former trainees to enrol, getting a job or improving the chances to get a job, together with a certain personal interest in the subject of the course, seem to be the most important reasons for enrolment. Reference to being pressured to enrol for financial reasons (losing benefits or gaining additional benefits) are hardly mentioned, though in several cases (Greece, UK) assumptions are being made (e.g. by the managers or the trainers) that such motives did play a role.

- Overall it seems that the practical training (either practical training within an enterprise or the practical assignments and exercise within the training centre) is

valued most. Where a period of work placement or practical training was expected and not provided, this is perceived by former trainees as a drawback and one of the characteristics on which they judge the course negatively.

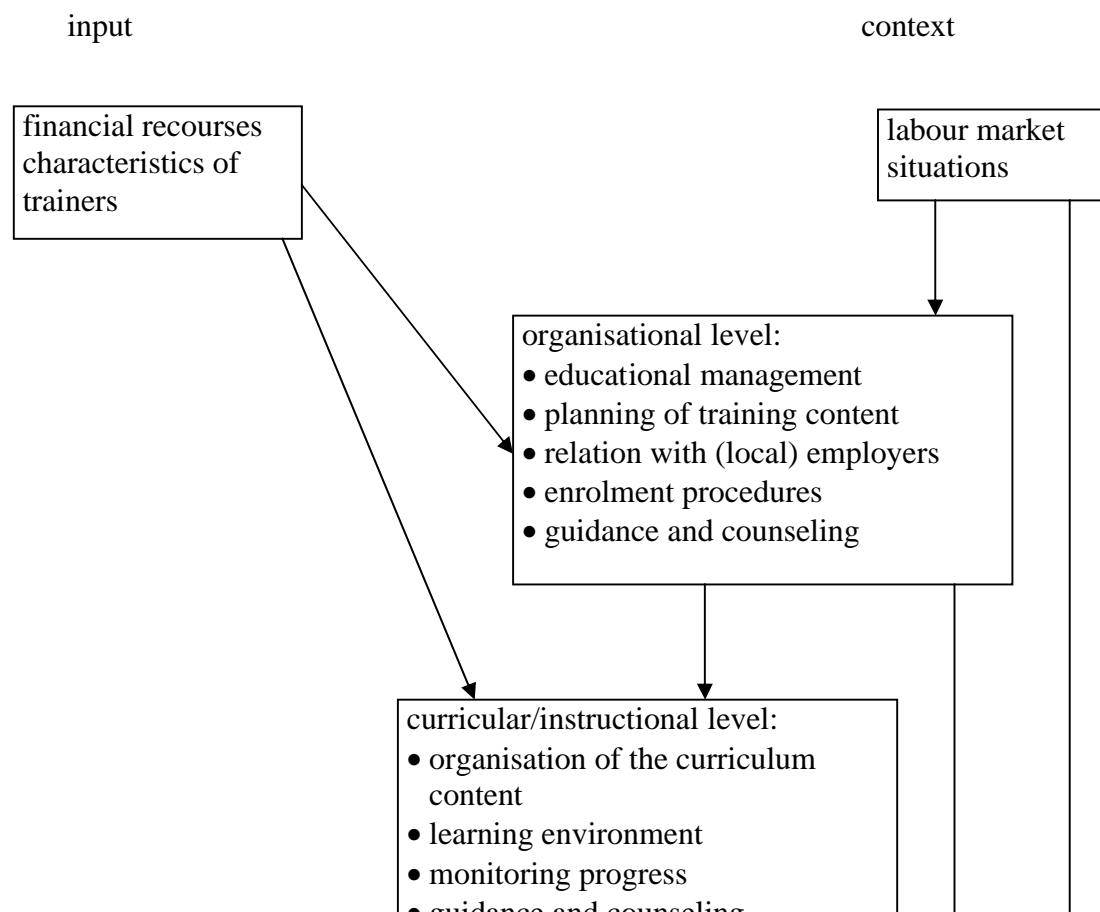
- Considering the issue what former trainees have learned or gained from the course, it appears that the job or occupation specific knowledge and skills, communication skills, increased self-esteem or self-confidence and acquisitions of job search skills are often mentioned by trainees.
- It is difficult to say in general which characteristics of the training course are being valued positively and negatively. There do not appear to be very clear cut patterns, and overall what is mentioned is rather course specific. Again practical training comes out as a positive point (together with guidance and counselling, if provided), and the lack of such training as negative. Numbers appear to be too small to really detect patterns in terms of the extent to which former trainees tend to be more positive on the training course as such if they succeeded in finding a job after the training was concluded and found a job that matches the training they received. Nevertheless, some indications can be given. Trainees from the IT-course in the UK and the two cases from Greece (where none of the former trainees had the opinion that they would not have found the job they held if they had not done the course) appear to be somewhat less positive on the course than former trainees from other courses. Considering the latter, those individuals in these cases that expected to find a job once the training was concluded but did not succeed (or found a job with no relation to the training undergone) also seem to be somewhat less positive.
- Concerning the extent to which former trainees succeeded in finding a job, it is quite clear that the cases where a “job guarantee” was given (or at least a certain (moral) obligation to hire the trainee once the training was concluded successfully) at the moment of enrolment have the “highest” score. But once again, numbers appear to be too small to draw any far-reaching conclusions. In this respect it is a pity, that most of the people interviewed (with the exception of the IT-course in England) are former trainees that finalised the course and that the number of dropouts is very small.

Given the results of the case studies, especially the estimated relative influence of the organisational versus the curricular and instructional characteristics, it was decided to develop two more specific models to be tested in the quantitative stage: an output model (what influences whether or not the course is finalised) and an outcome model (what influences whether or not a job is found). Both models are presented below.

The basic difference between the two models is the earlier mentioned assumption with regard to the respective influence on output (finalising the course) and outcome (finding a (matching) job or enrolling in continuing training). It is presumed that organisational characteristics mainly will influence the output via the curricular and instructional characteristics. Here it should be taken into account that ‘hard’ evidence cannot be derived from the case studies given the overall qualitative character and the small variation in the output-measure. Nevertheless there are indications that organisational conditions (caused especially by funding conditions) do influence curricular and instructional characteristics in a way which at least makes it “easier” for trainees to decide to stop (e.g. as seems to hold for the UK case). At the same time, however, organisational characteristics might have a direct influence on output as well. On the one hand, there appears to be some interrelation between a certain ‘selectivity’ at

enrolment (testing capabilities of candidate trainees) and the extent to which structured guidance and counselling at both organisational and curricular/instructional level is provided. This does, however, not exclude that “less selective” cases do provide guidance and counselling as well. On the other hand, it has been stated that the provision of practical training seems to be the strongest link between training and employers. This is more a curricular characteristic. But the link as such appears to become even stronger if the commitment of the employers reaches further than that (e.g.: involvement in planning the content; direct influence on the content).

Of course the labour market situation can influence the output as well. Here it concerns the so-called ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors often mentioned in relation to drop-out from secondary general or vocational education. The reasoning is that students are ‘pulled’ out of school, if it is easy to get a job (demand exceeds supply), while they are ‘pushed’ back into school if chances of finding a job are not good (supply exceeds demand and students use school as a (temporary) parking until prospects on jobs improve). Whether push and pull factors work in a similar way for (unemployed) adults is questionable. There is a substantial chance that trainees will leave the course if they can get a job or get a job offer of the training firm where they do their practical training/work placement. It is, however, doubtful that unemployed adults will use a training course as a ‘parking option’ if employment prospects are low. First of all, training programmes for unemployed do not function in that way; there are overall clear eligibility criteria. Secondly, enrolling in a course might be for various participants a big step to take. It appears to be more logical to presume that the trainees’ own estimation whether the training will be helpful in finding a job, will be a reason to continue or dropout. The clearer and better the perspective on a job, the bigger the chance that they will finalise the course. Though in decisions concerning dropping out or not, financial motives might also play a role (if applicable).



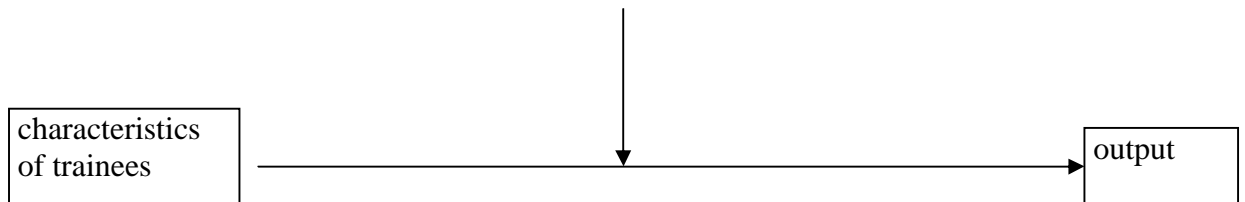
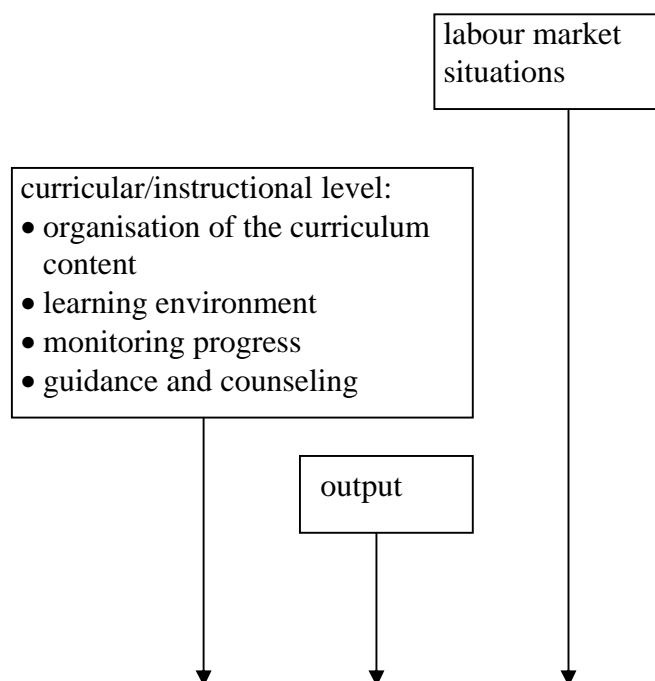


Figure 3: The output model

Concerning the outcome model it is presumed that in particular curricular and instructional characteristics might be of influence. It concerns characteristics like: providing practical training within an enterprise, the length of this training period (both part of the learning environment), guidance and counselling (especially during practical training and the transition to the labour market) and help with or training in job search (job search skills). These assumptions seem to be supported by the trainees' evaluation of the training courses. Given that hardly any dropouts have been interviewed, it is somewhat difficult to ground the assumption that output will influence outcome as well. Here there seems, however, to be evidence from other studies that those that do not finalise the course and/or do not obtain a qualification have more difficulty to find a job. It will be clear that whether or not a job is found will also depend on the labour market situation.

input

context



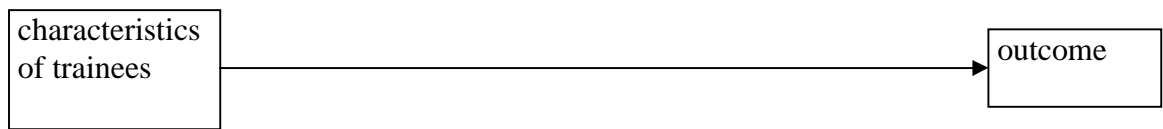


Figure 4: The outcome model

3.4 Survey research

3.4.1 Methodology

Based on the experiences and results during the first empirical stage of the project, the comparative case study research, the second stage in which a survey should be conducted was prepared. One of the first activities in the preparation of the survey research consisted of drafting a methodology paper outlining the possible pitfalls in the proposed quantitative design, the general principles of multilevel research and the intended application of multilevel analyses in this project.

For the data collection, questionnaires were drafted that were suitable for administering by post (but if needed also could be used for administering by telephone). Questionnaires were developed for the following categories of respondents:

- managers of training organisations;
- trainers involved in the delivery of training courses that were taken by the former trainees;
- former trainees that had attended a course;
- employers that employed a trainee once she/he had finalised the course.

In developing these questionnaires, experiences from the case study research have been taken into account, altering or skipping questions that did not work during the interviews in the qualitative stage. Especially with regard to the former trainees it was attempted to keep the questionnaire as short as possible, given that the willingness to participate in an interview was not great and could be further damaged by working with lengthy questionnaires.

Concerning the data collection, it was proposed to attempt as much as possible to apply the same procedures, though it was taken into account that different settings might need different approaches. With regard to the former trainees, three options were outlined.

The first option would be to administer the questionnaires by telephone, which would have the following possible advantages:

- fairly quick process of data-collection;
- no need for (time consuming) data entry afterwards;
- quick and efficient data-processing and production of data sources;
- possibilities to build in “skip rules” and other checks (e.g.: only one answer possible) which are followed automatically during the interviewing (which also provides opportunities for checks on the internal logic of answers and corrections);
- it makes control on and management of data-collection and response easier (e.g.: redialling a number if it appears to be occupied; checking and following up appointments, etc.)

The second option would be to distribute the questionnaire by post. With slight alterations the questionnaire can be turned into a postal version²⁴. It is of course possible to use a combination of both data collection procedures, in order to avoid that a bias in data collection appears, since only the former trainees with a telephone are reached

²⁴ : Both a postal version and a ‘telephone’ version of the questionnaire have been distributed.

(whether such a bias might appear depends of course on the national or even regional/local situation). Actually, such a type of combination has been applied in one of the Dutch case studies, where part of the former trainees were addressed with a written questionnaire instead of a request for an interview. The reasons for this was not so much that former trainees might not have a telephone, but also could have a secret phone number or could not be found at home at the moments that they were contacted for an appointment. Overall, the experiences with this postal approach were not bad.

If for some reason, administering the questionnaire by telephone or by post (or a combination of this) was not possible or not desirable, the alternative then was to do face-to-face interviews, taking into account that this is a stimulus other than asking questions by phone or answering written questions. The fact that there was face-to-face contact might evoke different reactions. In this case it was rather important to stick to the questionnaire as closely as possible.

All three strategies have been applied. As was experienced during the case studies, contacting people by telephone was not always possible (e.g.: no telephone connection, secret phone numbers, mobile phones with numbers not registered in a directory). Sometimes also the reluctance to answer questions by telephone played a role²⁵.

During the progress of the data collection it became clear -even more than during the case studies- that it was very difficult to track former trainees and find them willing to co-operate in the project. An additional issue in this context was that performing the suggested analyses required a minimum number of respondents per “case” which increased the pressure on the data collection. Data collection has therefore been rather time-consuming.

Data were collected for the following courses/programmes per country:

Belgium:

- Training for young children’s guidance: it is a training course aimed at low qualified women who have been unemployed for over a year, who are trained for jobs in after-school care centres. The course lasts 6 to 7 weeks. The training course as such is acknowledged under the Work Again framework, which implicates that the counsellors of that programme are responsible for the recruitment and selection of the trainees;
- Employment service training course for the building crafts: it concerns one of the ‘traditional’ courses of the employment service for those looking for work (irrespective of gender or duration of employment) and trains for the building crafts (carpenter, bricklayer, etc). Duration of the course depends on the previously acquired knowledge and skills of the trainees as well as on the specific trade they want to be trained for;
- Practice or simulation firm: this practice firm is part of a group of firms under the heading ‘work experience firms’, and trains for multi-skilled administrative work of low qualified unemployed that have been unemployed for over a year. The training

²⁵ : This might be caused by the fact that at least in some countries (notwithstanding the privacy legislation), direct marketing/sale or market research by telephone has increased substantially during the last years.

is set up in a fictitious company where the trainees work as ‘virtual’ employees with fictitious assignments. Total training lasts 6 months of which 5 are actually spent on working in the practice firm;

- Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW); the OCMW training is one which is described in the decree concerning the functions of OCMW. This means that people living on minimum subsistence can be employed for one year within the service of the OCMW itself with the aim of re-integration in the labour process. During this year also training is provided, but the shape and size of the training varies between centres. The particular centre included provides a 6-month training followed by 6 months of work experience. The training itself is out-sourced to an external training provider who trains the participants for various jobs in the catering branch (assistant cook, serving and maintenance).

Denmark:

- P47 course in the technical sector: it concerns the so-called P47 courses (see also section 3.1 and section 3.3), training for occupations in electronics, process industry and the transportation branch. The courses are delivered at AMU-centres and last for 52 weeks;
- Special planned courses: these courses are part of the AMU-courses (see section 3.1), and are also delivered by AMU-centres. The special planned courses last from 14 up to 26 weeks. The courses included train for cleaning/cafeteria, metal, construction, electronics and the process industry.
- LAMU-course: it concerns one of the first qualifying courses for unemployed people (established in 1985; see also section 3.1). This LAMU course trains for jobs in the transportation branch and lasts for 26 to 32 weeks;
- LAMU-course: this concerns LAMU courses at different AMU-centres, training for jobs in cleaning/cafeteria, metal, carpentry, electronics and environment.

Ireland:

- Dispersed VTOS (see also section 3.1): it concerns the dispersed VTOS option for those taking Post Leaving Certificate Courses (has been investigated at two different training centres);
- Core VTOS: the stand-alone variant of VTOS (one to two year full-time education);
- Community Employment (see also section 3.1; has been investigated at two different centres).

Greece: all these courses are initial vocational training courses, provided by (public and private) initial vocational training institutes, with a two-year curriculum (see also section 3.1)

- informatics applications;
- accountancy and administration;
- marketing and hotel specialisation;
- mechanics and electronics.

There was a “fifth case” including small numbers of former trainees from thermohydraulics, computerised accountancy and ‘kindergarten’ training, which was used to check validity and consistency of the data from the four ‘normal’ courses.

Netherlands:²⁶

- Administrative course: it concerns a course provided by a Vocational Training Centre (CV, see also section 3.1), with an administrative and a financial administrative specialisation. Duration of the course depends on the level of previous education and training of the trainee and on the particular learning pace of the trainee;
- Building and construction trades: this concerns courses also provided by a Vocational Training Centre, training participants for occupations in the building and construction sector (carpentry, bricklaying);
- Metal work: a training course of Vocational Training Centres, preparing for jobs in the metallurgic industry;
- Electronics and process industry: also training course delivered by Centres for Vocational Training (given that these are smaller courses, attracting not as many trainees as the other programmes, these two have been taken together).

Norway:

- AMO-course in health and social studies
- AMO-course in information technology with accountancy;
- AMO-course in metal welding;
- AMO-course in sales and customer service.

England:

- IT-course for refugees and recent migrants
- ESF-schemes run by an adult education department (encompassing various courses, like IT, child care, catering): these courses are a combination of personal development, job search skills and vocational training.
- Wage subsidy scheme: again it encompasses various directions of training for work. In this scheme TECs give a grant to the employers, who employ an unemployed person and provide them with training. The training as such is to the discretion of the employer and can vary substantially, from rather informal learning without a formal qualification up to some job skills training or courses with a longer duration leading to a recognised certificate.
- ESF funded training provided by technical colleges, covering a different number of subjects.

As mentioned earlier (see section 3.1), there has been a recurrent discussion on the issue of defining a training programme. As was outlined in section 3.1 a distinction could be made between training programmes (that is courses) provided at a national level, framework programmes that set the overall regulations leaving the specific courses to be provided under the programme to a more decentralised level and regional/local initiatives. Given this variation, which is also reflected in the training courses/programmes included in the quantitative stage (listed above), it can be that some of the included courses are provided at different locations (which means that

²⁶ : The duration varies in principle, due to individualisation of the training according to level and capacities of the trainees (the pedagogical principle underpinning this is called “hoofdelijk versnelde scholing” which is very difficult to translate); in practice however, many courses are still mainly based on classical instruction with only small variation in duration.

different training centres have been involved in this stage as well), certainly if participant numbers were limited per course to a relatively small maximum (e.g.: in Norway). In this sense there might be a certain unequal balancing, in that some of the included courses are provided at one locality (one city or town), while the scope for other courses is much larger.

Data analyses

The management questionnaires that were administered were rather extensive, addressing various characteristics (variables) of both the training organisation and the training course. Though the trainers' questionnaires and the questionnaires for former trainees were shorter, they still elicited substantial information on the training course and the former trainees' 'career' after the course. In order to be able to 'model' the data (according to the multilevel analyses for both the output and outcome model) it was necessary to reduce the abundance of data into a more concise set of new concepts or variables. For this data reduction a twofold strategy has been employed. On the one hand, it has been attempted to construct new concepts of variables by means of computing summed scores (e.g. number of different facilities for guidance and counselling) or by means of factor and scale analyses (e.g. scales for motivation²⁷). This was a necessary step in the data reduction, given the tremendous amount of variables included; apart from dummy variables and continuous variables (based on questions where only one answer could be ticked), various questions were included where respondents could tick more than one answer. In the latter case each item becomes a variable (e.g. for the managers questionnaire this resulted in well over 200 variables and for the trainers questionnaire well over 175 variables). On the other hand, explorative analyses of variance have been performed (both on the original variables and the newly constructed ones) in order to see which of the variables might relate to the output and/or outcome measure. This also was a necessary step, since attempting to build models with a large amount of variables (even after data reduction) would not work. The explorative analysis of variance could help to further reduce the variables to be included in the modelling (though there are of course also theoretical considerations to include specific concepts or variables in the modelling).

For each country, inclusion of 4 training courses or training programmes was envisaged in the project proposal (4 x 7 = 28 training courses). Given the experiences during the comparative case studies (that is: the often relatively small numbers of participants per course as well as the difficulties in tracking former trainees and persuading them to participate in the study, which even in the cases with relatively larger participant numbers per course strongly reduced the number of actual respondents), a decision had to be made with regard to the intended multi-level analysis. Running this type of analysis requires a minimum number of respondents per 'unit', in order to prevent that modelling is impossible or data cannot be interpreted. Running separate multi-level analyses for the participating countries, would have required much more than 50 to 75 respondents per course/programme (a number which in the chosen approach was not

²⁷ : Motivation does not concern the 'strength' of the motivation (how much the person is motivated to do a course) but the character of the motivation (e.g.: extrinsic motivation or intrinsic motivation).

always feasible)²⁸. Therefore it was decided to run a multi-level analysis across countries, with of course the difficulties this might cause for the interpretation of the data given the contextual differences.

²⁸ : The used minimum limits of 50 respondents per course, would ideally have resulted in 200 respondents per country, which is too small a number to run this type of analyses in a way that still can be justified.

3.4.2 Major results

Former trainees

Of the trainees that enrolled in a course, 28% was unemployed for 6 months or less before enrolment, while 33% was unemployed for about a year and another 16% for about two years. The rest of the trainees have been unemployed for a longer period (in some exceptional cases up to nine years or more). There is some differentiation between countries with the Irish and English samples containing a relatively higher number of 'long-term unemployed' than the other countries. The number of people who indicate that they have been taking care of family and children before entering the training course, is rather small (both relative and absolute).

Female trainees appear to be over-represented; 61% of the respondents is female (which might be caused by the specific training courses included). Overall the level of previous education is relatively 'high', with about a fifth of the sample that did not continue education after lower secondary education (of which about a half has less than completed lower secondary education), though there are differences. The trainees in Greece are relatively well educated, which can be explained by the fact that the initial vocational training focuses on young people who completed their general academic schooling but enter the labour market without any vocational qualifications.

The most important reasons for enrolling in the course are: 'increasing one's own chances in the labour market' and 'the content of the course'. The number of former trainees that states not having had a choice among courses is rather high; 45% against 55% that has the opinion they could choose.

Concerning the channels through which trainees got informed about the course, nearly a third of the trainees states that they got the information from an advertisement (though least mentioned in Norway), about 30% mentions the employment service (which is of hardly any importance in Greece), while about a quarter of the former trainees says that family or friends drew their attention to the course (which is most frequently mentioned in Greece and Ireland).

The dropout rate is remarkably low (also in absolute numbers): of all trainees only about 12% left the course prematurely. In this respect, the differences between countries are modest. The main reason for leaving the course was finding a job, followed by personal or health reasons (in the UK also the fact that trainees had the idea the course did not increase their chances of finding a job, played a role). However, it should be born in mind that the absolute numbers of dropouts per country are very small. This raises the issue of a possible bias in the sample (an issue that came up during the case studies as well). It could be that trainees that have been less successful (not completing the course, and maybe not finding work either) have been less willing to answer a questionnaire or to co-operate in an interview.

Looking at the opinion of the former trainees concerning the training they took, it can be concluded that overall the former trainees are very positive about the course. Well over 50% has the opinion that there was a good match between theory and practice, that there

was sufficient guidance, that it was useful to meet new people, and that participation in the training increased their self-assurance. Again well over 50% do not agree with the statement that the training has not been useful for finding a job. However, if this is related to the question whether or not the training was needed for the job they found a different picture emerges. In the latter case 47% of all trainees state that the training was not needed, while 42% has the opinion that the training was necessary. The Belgian trainees are the most negative in this respect, while the Greek trainees are the most convinced that the training was needed. Apparently there is a difference in the perception whether or not the training was useful in finding a job and whether or not it was really necessary to get a job. With regard to 'interesting aspects' of the course, trainees are rather positive as well. The combination of theory and practice, the job related subjects, the general subjects and the practical training are considered overall as being (very) useful. A particular aspect that is somewhat more negatively judged, is the training in job search skills; though it is not considered as being not useful, relatively more trainees find it not useful (37%) if compared with other aspects. The Greek and English trainees are the ones that consider training in job search skills the most useful.

A rather high percentage of the former trainees found a job; about 66% of all trainees obtained a job after the training was concluded, of which the majority got a steady job. Of those who have not found a job (the remaining 34%), about 10% indicates that they have not been looking for a job. Of those that obtained a job, 44% claims to have found the job during the course; especially in Denmark and Greece this is the most common answer. This could indicate that work placements or traineeships during the course are good vehicles for getting into a job. Asked how they found the job, 29% does confirm that they stayed on with the employer where they had their work experience period. Among the trainees that did find a job, 30% found a job within three months after finishing the course, while about a quarter of the trainees had to search for three months or longer. Very few started their own business.

Among the channels for finding a job, staying on with the employer of the work placement is the most important. Other channels are own applications (especially in Ireland), informal channels (especially the UK), the employment agency (especially Norway) and through the training centre (especially in Belgium).

Among those that found a job after the conclusion of the training, 71% was still holding the same job at the time they were questioned. Among those that lost their job, the majority (82%) had started looking for another job, and 63% of these succeeded in finding a new job. There are however, some differences between the countries. Among those who found a job in Belgium, only 59% still had that job when questioned. Among those who lost their first job, in Greece only 74% were looking for a new job.

As said, most of the trainees that found a job after finalising the course said that they staid on with the employer that also provided the practical training. The second most important way to find a job is an application letter. There are however, some striking differences between countries. The employment service seems to be most important for getting a job in Norway (while in Greece the employment agencies are hardly mentioned). Informal channels (friends, family, neighbours) seem to be relatively more

important in the UK as a way for getting a job than in other countries, while temp agencies are relatively more important in Greece and Norway than in other countries.

Trainees were asked whether or not the job would have been obtained if the course had not been followed. Overall nearly half of the former trainees (47%) had the opinion that the course as such was not necessary for finding the job they obtained. This is particular the case in Flanders (nearly three-quarters of the former trainees). In contrast to this, 42% of the trainees did think the course had been necessary to get a job, with the Greek trainees being most affirmative (59%). The remaining 11% of the trainees stated that they did not know whether the course had been a necessity or not.

What parts of the course are considered as having been helpful for finding a job? Job related skills and the practical training (within an enterprise) receive the highest score; respectively 89% and 87% of the trainees considers these as having been (very) helpful. But also the job related theory and the general knowledge are considered as having been helpful; 82% of the trainees thinks that the job related skills that have been acquired have been helpful for finding a job and 84% of the trainees has this opinion about the general knowledge. The training in job search skills is in this respect the least valued; 61% of the trainees considers this as having been helpful, while 38% thinks that it has not been helpful.

In addition to the question whether the training was considered necessary to get a job, former trainees were asked about their opinion on the match between the content and level of the course and the content and level of the (first) job they obtained. Concerning the content of the job slightly over 40% of the trainees had the opinion that the job was the same as which they had been trained for, while nearly 27% said that the job was completely different (with the highest scores in Ireland and Greece). About 30% of all trainees had the opinion that their job was somewhat different than the job they thought they had been trained for (with the highest scores in Norway).

Concerning the level of the course, an interesting picture emerges. A quarter of the trainees states that the level of the course and their job are similar (with the lowest score in Ireland where only about 14% of the former trainees has this opinion), while about 37% of the former trainees state that the level of the job is higher than what they thought they were trained for. In the latter case this is not only mentioned most often by the former trainees in Flanders, but also those in Ireland. Slightly over 20% of the former trainees states that they cannot use the skills they have acquired during their training in their present job (former trainees in Norway mentioning this most often) and a small group of just over 15% states that they have acquired new skills in their (first) job.

The training

General characteristics of the training organisation

Concerning the training organisations providing the training, the general picture emerging from both the programme description and the case studies is more or less reinforced. The training organisations with the longest tradition (that is the oldest

established ones) can be found in Denmark, Norway and to a lesser extent Belgium and the Netherlands. The training organisations in Greece and Ireland are the most 'specialised' ones, focussing on a few different courses (less than 10), while the Danish AMU-centres provide more than 20 different courses. If specialisation is interpreted in terms of target groups, especially training for unemployed, it appears that the training organisations vary; for some, half or more of the training offer is focussed on unemployed (especially in Flanders), while unemployed people are not really a target group (e.g. in Greece). Also the size of the training organisations is rather similar to what was found in the case studies (with the exception of the Netherlands where the investigated Centres for Vocational Training are much larger than the two training organisations studied in the qualitative stage). Turnover among training staff employed by the training organisation is relatively small (Greece being the exception in that the organisations for initial training also work mainly with pools of trainers).

Though turnover among training staff is relatively low²⁹, there are clear differences in the number of years that trainers are employed by the training organisation. The trainers at the Danish AMU-centres are in general the ones with the longest career at the same training centre, and also the ones with the most years of experience as a trainer (together with the trainers in the UK). The fact that the trainers in Greece are the ones with the shortest period of employment at the same training organisation can be explained by the structure of the training centres, mainly working with pools of trainers, from which trainers are recruited according to the needs of the courses on offer. This, however, does not implicate that these are the trainers with the least experience. According to the number of years of work experience as a trainer, the Norwegian trainers are the least experienced.

On average, trainers have a previous level of educational attainment at the level of tertiary, non-university education. However, trainers in Greece are more highly educated, mostly at university level, while the trainers in Denmark and the Netherlands are relatively 'less educated', with a certain predominance of education at the level of senior vocational education. These differences do -to a large extent- express differences in regulations concerning the qualifications required in order to be appointed as a trainer.

For all training organisations and the studied training courses within them, it holds that the main funding sources are the (national) government together with the employment service. This does not exclude that various training organisations derive their funding from various sources among which the European Social Fund.

The funding mechanisms in operation are in general not based on the number of enrolments only, with the exception of Ireland where both CE- and VTOS-funding is based on enrolment numbers. Funding mechanisms are quite similar to those described in the case studies. Nearly all training organisations state that their budget has increased during the last three years. This is somewhat against expectations, given that in part of the countries unemployment has decreased during that period and given the general

²⁹ : The question concerning this issue asked for a general indication of the annual turnover among training staff, without mentioning a specific reference period.

pressure on public budgets and expenditure (with alleged budget cuts as mentioned in some of the background reports and case studies).

In some of the countries (especially Norway, Greece, UK and part of the Flemish cases) the expenditures for training also include trainee subsistence allowance; this however does not necessarily mean that training organisations take over the whole benefit. In the case of Greece and the UK the allowance concerns an additional payment for those who enrol in training (on top of the social or unemployment benefit).

Training programmes

For recruitment and enrolment the main channels are according to the training organisations (written) information (e.g. advertisements) and information meetings of the training organisation or the employment service (the latter with the exception of Greece). These are also considered to be the most important enrolment channels for the training organisations as well. All training organisations select trainees, with the exception of Greece where the IVT training organisations to a certain extent enrol everyone who expresses the interest to enrol in a course³⁰. Concerning the issue why and when selection is performed, most training organisations state that it is part of the standard procedures (with the exception of the Flemish training organisations), with overall formal eligibility criteria being applied. Selection mainly takes place on the basis of formal criteria, with motivation being the most important criterion, followed by the estimated chance of finding a job once the training is concluded, the previous period of unemployment (duration) and the estimated chance to finalise the course. In Greece and Ireland somewhat different criteria are applied; the duration of previous unemployment and the chance of successfully finalising the course are considered less important, while the previous level of education is taken into account as a selection criterion³¹. Nearly half of the training organisations use an entry test during selection, again with the exception of Greece and Ireland.

Nearly all training courses have a practical training period³². In the case this practical training takes place in an enterprise, the enterprises involved in the delivery of the practical training are mainly recruited through informal contacts. Nevertheless 8 out of 10 managers state that certain criteria are applied when recruiting enterprises for delivering practical training. These criteria mainly concern: the match between the 'job description' (of the trainee place) and the course (with the exception of Ireland), the extent to which the enterprises meet the (legal) health and safety regulations (with the exception of Greece) and the past record of performance of the enterprise as a 'trainer' (with the exception of Greece).

³⁰ : This seems to be mainly caused by the fact that relatively few candidates applied in these courses. However, where the number of candidates outnumbers the available places, criteria are applied as indicated.

³¹ : In addition to this the previous (or even current) employment and its relevancy to the course is seriously considered as an advantage of the candidate to be selected as a trainee).

³² : Striking is that according to the trainers, the percentage of all courses having a practical training period is somewhat smaller than according to the managers. According to the managers 90% of the courses encompasses a practical training period, according to the trainers it concerns 80% of the courses.

Similarities

There are some other striking similarities in the design characteristics of the training courses (as indicated by the trainers involved in the training). Nearly three thirds of the course are modularised (60%), though it should be taken into account that the concept of modularisation can be confusing. Some understand it as 'cutting' the curriculum into blocks or periods, while others perceive it as a didactical principle as well, where modules constitute relatively independent curricular units encompassing presentation, practice and evaluation.

The majority of the courses also include job search training, of which nearly a third claims to pay attention to job search training throughout the whole course. Within 71% of the training courses, the progress of the trainees is being monitored.

Nearly all training centres (that is according to their managers) state that they provide guidance and counselling for their trainees. Of all forms of guidance and counselling provided, financial and economic support is one of the forms least provided and if it is provided this is mainly done by specialised staff (counsellors or specific trainers) or the employment service. Other forms of guidance and counselling are remarkably often considered to be a task of all trainers.

Concerning guidance and counselling provided during the enrolment stage, the forms most often mentioned are: assessment of prior learning, assessment of prior work experience and assessment of the interests of the trainees. Guidance and counselling provided during the training course seems to be focussed on: providing support for the learning as such; career advice; support in the acquisition of application skills (writing application letters, having application interviews) and the increase of self-esteem. The form of guidance and counselling most mentioned as provided during the practical training (or work placement) period of the trainee, is observing the trainee at the workplace, performing actual work tasks. Guidance and counselling during the transition stage (from the training into the labour market or onto other or further training), seems overall to be the least provided. Nevertheless, quite a few training organisations state that they draw trainees' attention to vacancies (nearly two third), provide active support in job search (two third) or provide training in writing application letters or performing application interviews (8 out of ten).

Differences

At the same time there are differences as well. First the duration. On average the training takes 1.1 year, with the longest courses being provided in Belgium (a weak significant relation). The real significant differences between countries occur if one looks at the specific instructional characteristics. Looking at the total number of trainees in a classroom or in a small group if instruction is given in that setting, it appears that both during instruction in a classroom setting and in a small group setting, 'groups' appear to be the biggest in Greece, while the classroom groups are the smallest in Belgium and the small instruction groups in Norway contain the smallest number of trainees. There are also differences in the relative importance of different instructional modes and the percentages of time spent on different forms of instruction. Relative importance of the instruction in small groups is the highest in Ireland, while the time

devoted to this form of instruction is highest in Norway and Belgium. The relative importance of individualised instruction is, again, highest in Ireland, while the time devoted to this form of instruction is far highest in Norway. Similar findings are obtained for the practical training. The training in England gives a strong emphasis on practical assignments. The time devoted to guidance of trainees during their practical training, is however, highest in Norway.

Though as such modularisation is often mentioned (60% of the trainers state that the course is modularised), the extent to which it concerns a flexible modularisation differs considerably between countries. The distinction between 'flexible' modularisation and 'non-flexible' modularisation, is based on the amount of 'influence' a trainee can exert on his or her own training route and pace. Based on items applied in studies into modularisation (Meesterberend-Harms & Pijlma, 1991; Harms, 1995), trainers were asked to indicate whether or not there was a fixed sequence in the modules, whether or not all trainees were working on the same module at the same time, whether or not finalisation (testing) of the module was at a fixed time for all trainees, whether or not trainees could choose among optional modules, and whether or not trainees could go through the modules in their own pace. Based on these items a new variable was constructed indicating the 'amount of flexibility' in the course. Differences between countries appear to be highly significant, with the Flemish course being the most flexible, and the Greek courses the least flexible (with the other countries tending more or less towards non-flexible modularisation).

Training organisations also differ in the extent to which they track former trainees once they have left the training. Especially training organisations in Norway, Belgium and Ireland try to keep track of the former trainees; in the other countries this is much less the case. Where former trainees are tracked, this is mainly for half a year (or less) concerning the question whether or not they found a job or whether or not they enrolled in continuing training. The main purpose, for which such information is used, is the evaluation of the course.

Effectiveness indicators?

The key question of course concerns the issue what the training contributes to the improvement of the labour market situation of former unemployed persons. A precaution should be made here. On the one hand, there is relatively small variance in the effect measures. The number of drop-outs (both relative and absolute) are rather small, which makes it complicated to find clear relations between process characteristics and the 'output'. On the other hand, a substantial number of former trainees have found a job, with only slightly over a third that did not find a job. Though variance is higher in this case, it still is moderate.

It was expected that there would be a clear relation between trainee characteristics like previous level of education and motivation. This only partially holds. There appears to be no relation between the trainees motivation (scaled as an 'extrinsic' motivation and a 'intrinsic-situated' motivation) and the outcome in terms of finding a job. There is a weak significant relation between finding a job and the previous level of education, but not in the expected direction. The relatively higher educated have less chance of getting

a job after the training than the relatively lower qualified. Age, motivation and the duration of the previous unemployment period, do not seem to make a difference; neither in finalising the course nor in finding a job.

Which course characteristics are related to dropout? As said, some precaution is needed in this area given the relative small variance in the “output” as such (few dropouts). This might explain why relatively few process characteristics at the organisational level seem to have impact on dropout. Nevertheless there are some instructional characteristics that appear to be related to leaving the course before its completion. Firstly the way in which the practical training is delivered. Chances of dropout seem to slightly increase if the extent of realistic design of the practical training increases as well. The closer practical training is to the real work practice, the higher the chance that a trainee will not finalise the course. This appears to be in line with the earlier postulated assumption concerning the “pull impact” of providing practical training within an enterprise. It also appears to be in line with the fact that finding a job is the major reason for leaving the course before its finalisation. Whether in the longer run the jobs found are steady, full time jobs, or temporary insecure jobs, is not known.

In addition to this, there are two other process characteristics at the curricular/instructional level that do seem to make a difference. Firstly, the amount of ‘flexibility’ in the organisation of the curriculum. It concerns the earlier mentioned distinction between flexible and non-flexible modularisation. Chances of dropping out seem to increase with an increase in the flexibility of the curriculum. At first sight this seems to be at odds with newly advocated instructional principles, where trainees’ own responsibility for their own learning process is emphasised. However, several scholars have indicated that adults’ motivation for learning is essentially ‘situated’ in the sense that the social contacts and the learning in a group are important for them (Boshier & Collins, 1985). ‘Motivation’, which is lost in highly, individualised learning environments. It has also been stated that individualised learning, e.g. by means of modularisation, requires ‘learning capacities’ in terms of being able to plan and steer one’s own learning process. Capacities which might not have been developed or foregone by those having acquired little previous education or those having left the education system at an early stage (Brandsma, 1994). From research into modularisation it is known that too much flexibility -in terms of individual planning and pace- might have adverse effects on learning achievements (Harms, 1995). Secondly, the issue of job search training. Though there is a significant relation between dropout and the provision of job search training, this relation is somewhat difficult to interpret. In general, it seems that whether or not job search training is provided, does influence dropout (chances of dropout increasing with the provision of job search training), but concerning the stage at which this training is provided relations are less clear, although it seems that job search training towards the end of the course does increase the chance that the course is not concluded.

To what extent do process characteristics at the organisational level influence output (as presumed in the output model)? It appears that selectivity at the enrolment does have some relation with dropout, though the relation is somewhat weak (modest significance). The less selective training organisations are, the bigger the chance of dropout. Concerning guidance and counselling (which in principle according to the

model could be located at both the organisational and curricular/instructional level) an adverse and unexpected relation appears. If guidance and counselling is provided (in general) the chance of dropout seems to increase as well. This rather surprising result could indicate that guidance and counselling does not only help trainees to finalise the course, but might also contribute to an (early) acknowledgement that the course a specific trainee enrolled in is not the most suitable for that particular trainee. However, looking at the particular stage in which guidance and counselling is provided, it on the one hand appears that if less guidance and counselling is provided during the enrolment stage the bigger the chance of dropout, while on the other hand, the more guidance and counselling is provided during the stage of transition to the labour market, the bigger the chance of dropout as well. Guidance and counselling during the enrolment stage seems to corroborate the 'early acknowledgement' assumption. Guidance and counselling provided during the transition stage does not seem to fit with this. However, it is quite possible that those who reached that stage of the training are, to a certain extent, "pushed" out of the training, in the sense that they obtain help in finding a job and that the fact that a job is found is the reason that they leave the training.

The next question of course concerns the relation between process characteristics and outcome³³. Which process characteristics might influence the obtainment of a job once the course is concluded?

In line with expectations, it appears that the more selective the training organisation is in enrolling trainees, the more successful it is in terms of the number of former trainees finding a job. Certainly if in addition to the general eligibility criteria additional criteria and an entry test are being applied.

Concerning guidance and counselling, questions were posed with regard to the type of guidance and counselling provided and the stage at which guidance and counselling is provided. Whether guidance and counselling as such is provided does not make a difference. However, how guidance and counselling is provided, at which stage and on what topics does have impact. Concerning the stages in which guidance and counselling is provided, it appears that the guidance and counselling during the enrolment stage does have a relation with the chance of finding a job, but not a linear one. The same holds for guidance and counselling during the course and during the transition stage. There appears to be a certain optimum between little guidance and counselling and too much guidance and counselling, though it is rather difficult to state exactly where the optimum lies. Providing hardly any guidance and counselling seems to decrease the chances of finding a job, while "too much" guidance and counselling seems to have the same effect. However, concerning the guidance and counselling during the practical training (within an enterprise) the relation is quite clear; the more guidance and counselling is provided, the bigger the chance of getting a job. It also appears that whether or not guidance and counselling on personal (welfare) issues is provided does have an impact; if provided it seems to increase the chances of finding a job, especially if provided by specialised staff (that is: counsellors employed by the training organisation or trainers that specifically got this task assigned). In addition to this it

³³ : This concerns the outcome in terms of finding a job or not. Clear relations between process characteristics on the one hand, and both the match between the job and the training and the enrolment in continuing training on the other hand, could not be found.

appears that providing guidance on other or further training enhances finding a job as well, though the particular direction of the relation between the two variables is not fully clear. Focussing guidance during the practical training period or work placement on either solving particular problems (e.g. problems with colleagues or problems of fitting in) and/or technical advice on work related tasks and problems, also enhance the chances of finding a job.

Where the flexibility of the training does have an impact on dropout, the relation with the chance of finding a job is somewhat more complicated. Modularisation as such does not influence the chance of finding a job; whether the modular structure of the training is flexible or non-flexible does not make a difference. However, it appears that the extent of individualisation of the training -in terms of whether the duration is fixed or dependent on the trainees' capacities and learning pace- does make a difference. Participating in a training course with a fixed duration seems to enhance the chance of finding a job. In relation to this, it also appears whether or not individualised training plans are drafted at the start of the course does not have an impact either, but here it is necessary to indicate that developing individualised training plans at the start of the course (or before) does not occur much (mainly in the UK and Ireland, though it has been stated that some individual agreements occur in Greece as well, though these are not formalised).

Does practical training prove to be a vehicle for getting into a job? On the basis of the case studies it was presumed that practical training provided within an enterprise might help trainees into a job. At the same time, the "practical nearness" of the training appears to "pull" trainees out of the training. As expected it is not as much the issue whether or not practical training is provided that makes a difference, but the way in which it is delivered does have impact. The closer to the reality of the work practice, the bigger the chance of finding a job. In this respect, providing trainees with a practical training period or work placement in an enterprise does provide them with more opportunities to find a job.

Whether or not job search or job search training is included appears to make a difference as well. It is quite clear that job search training provided towards the end of the course does increase the chances of finding a job, while job search training provided throughout the course actually seems to decrease the chances of finding a job.

Some conclusions

Among the trainees that have been 'interviewed' during the survey, there is a rather low percentage of dropouts³⁴. Also the number of trainees that found a (steady) job is rather high. With overall 'staying' on at the employers where the practical training took place, being the most important channel for getting a job. There are however, differences between countries in this respect, which seem to relate to the extent of formalisation of the labour market (especially the role of the employment service). Both in terms of output and outcome the training courses seem to be successful. The question of course is what and how did these courses contribute to the labour market position of individual trainees. On the one hand, if one looks at the extent to which former trainees think that

³⁴ : If compared with drop-out rates as known from other national sources or estimates, there is an under representation of drop-outs among the trainees' in the sample.

the course was necessary for getting the job they obtained, it appears that nearly half of the trainees think that this is not the case, while slightly less trainees are convinced that the course was necessary. In between a quarter and slightly over a quarter of the trainees is convinced that the job is (absolutely) not what they have been trained for (according to respectively level and content). On the other hand, if one looks at the course characteristics that seem to contribute to either output or outcome, the following picture emerges. Concerning the output, it is clear that the major reason for leaving the course preliminary is finding a job (followed by personal or other health reasons or other reasons). There are actually three types of process characteristics that seem to contribute to dropout. Firstly, the extent to which the organisation of the curriculum is flexible. This refers to the modularisation of the curriculum where a distinction can be made between a flexible variant and a non-flexible variant. The more flexible the modularisation of the curriculum, the bigger the chance of leaving the course before its completion. Secondly, the way in which practical training is delivered. The closer to the reality of working life, the bigger the chance of dropout. Providing practical training within an enterprise –as work placement- appears to pull trainees out of the training. Thirdly, the provision of job search training, where the relation is not fully clear but there seems to be a tendency that dropout chances increase with provision of this specific training towards the end of the course. As such both the impact of the practical training and the job search training seem to be quite logical. The chance of finding a job will probably increase towards the end of the course, and with this the incentive to leave the course increases as well. Practical training within an enterprise often is provided towards the end of the course as well, forming a sort of transition stage between the training at the training centre, and the re-entry in the labour market.

Concerning the impact of course characteristics on finding a job, once the training has been completed, some interesting patterns can be detected as well. On the one hand, it appears that providing counselling and guidance or not, does not make a difference. This probably is due to the fact that nearly all training organisations claim to provide some guidance and counselling. Concerning the type of guidance and counselling provided there is however, an impact on outcome. Providing guidance and counselling on personal (welfare) issues, providing guidance and counselling on further training and providing focussed guidance and counselling during the practical training/work placement period –that is: focussed on solving problems like conflicts or on technical advice on work related tasks and problems- do increase the chance to find a job. On the other hand, some of the factors influencing the output (that is the chance of dropping out), have impact on the outcome as well. Modularisation as such does not make a difference, but the extent to which the course has a fixed duration does. Gearing the duration of the course as much as possible towards the individual capacities does not increase the chance of finding a job, as might have been expected. On the contrary: a fixed duration of the course –similar for all participants- seems to contribute to the chance of finding a job. In addition to this, the relation of practical training and job search training with the outcome, is interesting. The closer practical training is to the reality of working life and the more job search training is situated at the end of the course, the bigger the chance of finding a job. This might look like rather cynical results, in the sense that these two process variables also influence dropout. However, there is a (high) probability that the dropouts that responded on the survey are those that left the course towards the end and not the early dropouts (which is more or less

corroborated by the indications from the former trainees on the time spent in the training course). In this respect it concerns dropouts that leave the course during the transition stage. Whether or not this should lead to the conclusion that the training as such does not make a difference on dropping out or staying in, is however, questionable. Apart from the role of practical training and job search training, the influence of the amount of flexibility and the guidance and counselling remains. In this respect it would be quite interesting to gain more understanding of what might cause early dropout.

4. Conclusions and policy implications

This section first outlines some more general issues concerning the major conclusions and policy implications of the project (main scientific results being detailed in the synthesis). Secondly this section deals with some particular research issues in performing a comparative European project like this effectiveness study and the possible implications that can be derived from it for future research. Finally, some (policy related) implications for further research will be addressed.

4.1 Training for the unemployed

Building a possible effectiveness model

Given the results of both the qualitative and quantitative stage, what can be the overall conclusion? It is clear that we certainly did not build *the final model* concerning effectiveness of labour market oriented training for the long-term unemployed. The question of course is whether this could have been expected.

Results are somewhat disappointing in the sense that stronger relations had been expected between some of the process characteristics and the output and outcome criteria. For example with regard to the outcome, a stronger and more clear relation had been expected between the provision of practical training in an enterprise, and the extent to which former trainees managed to get a job. Certainly on such 'key variables' like the inclusion of practical training or job search training, the variance between the different courses is relatively small.

On the one hand it could be argued that a larger sample would have been needed (both the number of courses and the (total) number of former trainees). This might be somewhat problematic, though not totally unfeasible. Specific problems that occur concern on the one hand the already mentioned problems concerning tracing former trainees and persuade them to participate in a survey. There is a more fundamental problem, which might not affect all European countries, but some of them at least. It concerns the extent to which the population of training initiatives for (long-term) unemployed is known. Some countries do have a clear record or register of what is provided by which organisations, up to the level of the actual courses that are run, due to the central registration of such aspects (or at least the possibility to ask appropriate bodies for such information and combine them in an overview at national level; e.g. as seems to be the case in Norway and Greece). This, however, still does not exclude the possibility that there are local initiatives that can only be included in the population after running a survey on this. Other countries do not know the total population of training schemes and initiatives or can only 'construct' a population overview going to (more or less) great difficulties. In the latter case there are of course variations, running from knowing the major schemes (and/or providers) but having to survey them to detect the actual course offer, from a situation where a survey is needed among major founders/decision making bodies in order to get a basic insight into the population of training provisions for the unemployed (as was the case in the UK).

On the other hand, it can also be argued that a more concise conceptual model is needed, that is more focussed and contains fewer variables. In that sense the various

analyses run on the data collected in this project can be perceived as a first step forward in this direction.

It should however be stated that the variation between the courses included in the comparative analysis is quite substantial. Though some striking similarities in design characteristics have been found (e.g. inclusion of practical training, inclusion of job search training, modularisation, etc.), there still are considerable differences. Not only in the more 'detailed' design issues, but also with regard to the targeted or actual participants and the purpose or scope of the training. To illustrate this: there is on the one hand the initial vocational training in Greece, focussing on (relatively) younger people, that completed upper secondary education but have not gained access to higher education, nor obtained a vocational qualification. While on the other hand there is the Irish VTOS scheme that focuses on those that have not obtained a formal school diploma (e.g. the Leaving Certificate), but after a couple of years or more of other activities (including non-activity) want to return back into education. The issue can then be raised, whether the development of more specific effectiveness models –e.g. according to target group or according to the particular purpose of the training (where there might however be a coincidence between the two)- is desirable or necessary. Nicaise and Bollens (1998) point out that tailor made design of training for specific target groups among the long-term unemployed might be necessary. Some of the cases included in the qualitative stage of the project can be perceived as examples of such tailor made design.

Effectiveness research into vocational training, as performed here, is still rather underdeveloped. In addition to their urge for further research into the causes of disadvantages on the labour market, with special reference to the accessibility of labour market programmes for particular target groups, Nicaise and Bollens (1998) point out that the question 'why' something is effective has been little addressed and needs specific attention. From a policy point of view this is an important question if not the most important question. It at the same time often is one of the more difficult questions to answer. On the one hand, experiences with effectiveness research in initial vocational education and training in the Netherlands have learned that it is quite difficult to find specific process characteristics that influence the effectiveness³⁵ of this type of vocational training and that what does seem to matter varies substantially between specific vocational programmes (cf. Van Batenburg, 1995; Brandsma, 1999). This might indicate the need for more differentiated effectiveness models that can capture the specific differences between programmes. On the other hand, there are indications, both from effectiveness research in primary education and some (Norwegian) studies concerning labour market schemes that effectiveness can change over time (decline, increase) and that changes in effectiveness are not necessarily caused by changes in effectiveness enhancing process characteristics. To state it more bluntly: once effective does not mean always effective. Pedersen and Møller (1998) state on the basis of some Norwegian evaluation studies, that in the short run participants in labour market training have a higher probability on employment than non-participants and that labour market

³⁵ : Here the effectiveness mainly concerns the dropout from the vocational education programmes; dropout from senior vocational education (whether provided as apprenticeship training or as school-based training) is relatively high (on average about 40%), though there are substantial variations between occupational sectors and between schools.

training is more effective than work placement only, with the combination of training and work being the most effective. However, they also conclude that there are major differences in effects, not only between programmes, but also for one given programme if measured at different points in time. Moreover, studies with regard to long-term effects of the labour market programmes are inconclusive and sometimes contradictory. Cynics might conclude that this indicates that it is not very useful to try to detect what makes the difference in effectiveness between training programmes. All the more since the findings of Pedersen and Møller seem to indicate that effectiveness of labour market oriented training might be more dependent on the general unemployment situation, than on the process characteristics (or the “quality”) of the training. The latter probably is true, but this does not implicate that any additional contribution from the training process as such should therefore be discarded.

Accessibility of labour market training

Given the characteristics of the trainees in both the case studies and the survey, especially their labour market situation after the course and the fact that relatively little dropout appeared, the possibility that the trainee data are somewhat biased cannot be excluded. It could be that those who dropped out of the course were less willing to co-operate either for reasons of not wanting to admit that the course was left prematurely or for reasons that one did not want to be reminded of the course (which might also have been the reason for drop-out). It can also not be excluded that those who did not obtain a job after finalising the course were less willing to co-operate as well. It therefore has to be taken into account that there might be a bias towards the relatively more successful trainees.

At the same time, some other traits of the trainee sample bring up more fundamental questions. It appears that the trainees involved in the courses that have been investigated in both the case studies and the survey are on average relatively more highly educated than expected on the basis of the assumption that most long-term unemployed belong to the least qualified. However, here it should be taken into account that there are differences between countries with the Greek ‘cases’ probably affecting the average. The initial vocational training courses included in the second stage in Greece are not necessarily aimed at long-term unemployed, but more at young people who left the educational system without gaining access to higher education nor obtaining a vocational qualification. These young people often did however complete upper secondary education. It also appears that those enrolled in the courses are for a substantial part those that on average have been unemployed for six months (or even less). Though hardly any country has a clear-cut definition of what constitutes long-term unemployment, such an unemployment duration might for many not match their perception of long-term unemployment. Here it has to be indicated that the labour market training programmes or courses investigated in some countries (e.g. the UK and Norway) do apply eligibility criteria in which being unemployed for at least three or six months is required (whereas in other countries the criterion of unemployment duration stipulates an unemployment period of at least a year). If an unemployment criterion implicates that unemployed receive a training offer as soon as this period is reached (or even a few weeks prior to this), and do accept this, this can partially explain for the average.

Nevertheless, the background characteristics of the ‘sampled’ trainees do raise two more fundamental issues. Firstly, the accessibility of training provisions for long-term unemployed and secondly, whether or not and to what extent the “real long-term unemployed” are reached by labour market oriented training measures.

Concerning the accessibility of training provisions, the issue of creaming has been addressed several times. Nicaise and Bollens (1998) speak in this respect of inadequate upward mobility through continued education and training, which in their opinion is caused by three clusters of factors: legal, administrative and institutional barriers, creaming of candidates and to motivation of possible candidates to participate. Concerning the legal, administrative and institutional barriers they point out that particular eligibility criteria like length of previous unemployment, but more particularly the labour market status (being registered as unemployed or even being registered as remunerated unemployed), can deny certain groups of unemployed access to training schemes; e.g. those who for various reasons have not registered like re-entering women or those taking on chains of odd and insecure jobs, and those who cannot register since they do not meet the registration (or remuneration) criteria. Though it is not possible to state in which respect enrolment in the programmes and courses studied in this project has been affected by such barriers, it is clear that eligibility criteria related to labour market status are applied. The fact that national unemployment rates differ from unemployment rates according to the ILO definition (often to the advantage of the national rates) does at least provide an indication that national definitions of unemployment do make a difference with regard to who is considered as unemployed and who not, and therefore might also affect who is given access to training and who is not (cf. Gray, 1996).

Concerning the motivation of possible candidates to participate, Nicaise and Bollens (1998) underline first of all that investment in training is a risky investment, given the uncertainty of the returns participation may yield (cf. Brandsma, 1997, 1998). Though one can argue that in many cases participation in training for unemployed does not require a monetary investment of the participants, since most costs are born by public funding, time devoted to training can be perceived as forlorn time for finding a job. Certainly if unemployed have the impression that participation in training does not lead anywhere or can even have adverse effects (as has been proven in some studies; cf. Anderson c.s, 1993). Moreover, training often is not the first priority for the long-term unemployed. In the short term, they may perceive direct employment as the best strategy of getting back in the labour process, training being only a postponement of obtaining gainful employment or even a barrier. Other, psychological, barriers, such as fear of failure, a negative self-image or fatalism, may also demotivate unemployed people to participate in training. Certainly if unemployed already did participate in training without realisation of their (high) expectation, there is a chance that they will perceive this as a personal failure or as a reinforcement of the belief that training does not pay off, to the further detriment of their motivation to participate in training.

These motivational issues might lead to a process of self selection, with the result that only the most motivated enrol in training. Once again, it is difficult to say to what extent motivational issues and self selection have affected the enrolment in the training programmes and courses included in this study. Apart from the fact that the ‘intensity’

of the motivation in terms of more or less (or most and least) motivated is very difficult to measure -certainly in retrospect-, information on the (potential) motivation of non-participants is lacking in this study. Comparing treatment and control groups on the basis of a matched pairs design has not been considered (deliberately) for methodological and practical reasons³⁶. Nevertheless, on the one hand it becomes clear that one of the 'learning effects' frequently mentioned (though maybe not explicitly intended by the courses) is the growth in self-esteem and self-confidence. On the other hand, trainees' motivation is an important, if not the most important criterion in the recruitment and selection processes prior to enrolment.

The latter refers to the third cluster of factors mentioned by Nicaise and Bollens (1998) (and various other researchers; cf. Lee, 1990; West, 1996), the creaming of candidates. Creaming as such is difficult to prove, unless one is able to link those enrolled to those being not enrolled but belonging to the target group and compare their background characteristics (an exercise with similar problems as the already mentioned paired matching). De Koning et al. (1990) did to a certain extent succeed in such a linkage, and concluded that training providers were indeed creaming off the least disadvantaged of the target group. It was, however, unclear to what extent such creaming took place deliberately or not. From this project it becomes clear that some sort of selection at the entrance of a more or less rigorous form does take place and that expected success of candidates, in terms of finalising the course or finding a job or both, does play a role in this selection process (sometimes by means of various tests to 'measure' learning capabilities of candidates, but moreover by 'subjective assessment' of those deciding on enrolment). Some of the training organisations are very explicit and open on this issue, referring to the need to be selective given the output related funding regime they are subject to or to the specific relationships with (local) employers, which does not allow for 'failure' (or in other words, forces them to maximise their credit worthiness; cf. Nicaise and Bollens, (1998)). In this sense, too strong an emphasis on effectiveness in terms of realising set, quantitative targets, could in the long-term prove to be counter productive. As has been argued before, it is difficult to decide whether selection in order to optimise the match between trainees and their motivation, capacities and preferences and course content and level, should be judged as wrong as such. Mismatches at this level might lead to a decrease of motivation, early drop-out and disencouragement or even reinforcement of the disbelief in the benefits of training. However, if selection does result in systematically pushing out the least advantaged, the question is whether this is not an undesirable societal effect (certainly in the long run³⁷). Nicaise and Bollens (1998) state in this respect:

³⁶ : There are examples of studies where such a comparison has been attempted. In the studies where this was done on the basis of a matched pairs design, it became clear that even a 'perfect' match solely on background characteristics (age, gender, previous education, duration of previous unemployment and specific ethnicity) of those receiving training and those not receiving training, already is hardly achievable. Even if such matching could be realised to the most optimal level, it still does not reveal anything on factors that might be of greater importance, like motivation, specific personal circumstances at the time, prior work experience (including odd, temporary jobs of even moonlighting). Given this, and given the limitations in time and budget for this project, it has not been attempted to set up a matched pairs design. This means that conclusions can only be drawn with respect to the gross effects of training, not with regard to the net effects of training (which requires a matched control design).

³⁷ : There is evidence that long-term unemployment, particular in combination with severe social exclusion, is handed down from one generation to another (at least in some social environments). The

“Some state that we simply have to learn to live with the trade-off between effectiveness and equity, arguing that it makes no sense to operate an adverse selection system and only provide training to the poorer candidates.”

This might be considered a rather cynical conclusion, certainly if alternatives tailored for and really reaching the bottom end of the labour market are lacking. Even though cynical, this statement does raise the issue of ‘effectiveness of training in terms of reaching the intended target groups and getting them back into work. But it also raises the more general issue whether training does pay off. At the individual level, one can to a certain extent answer this question affirmative. Looking at the results of this particular study, it appears that rather large percentages of the former trainees have found a job among which well over three thirds were still holding the job at the time questioned. However, less than half of the former trainees is convinced that the training was necessary in order to obtain the particular job, and according the trainees’ opinion there is a certain mismatch between the received training and the obtained job. Does training pay off at a more aggregated level, that is the level of the society? It is much less easy to answer this particular affirmative. First of all, we have to acknowledge that little is known about the macro-economic effects of investment in training for the (long-term) unemployed. But the macro-economic effects were not the focus of this study either. There are however indications that the macro-economic effects of labour market measures for the unemployed are less convincing than the micro-effects. Studies concerning this particular issue indicate that the (net) effect of training at a macro level is reduced or minimised due to substitution effects and dead-weight losses (that is: either finding a job as a result of the training, but in doing so taking the place of another job seeker that would have got the job if training had not been received, or finding a job for which the trainee would have been recruited anyway, even if the training had not been received) (cf. Nicaise & Bollens, 1998; OECD, 1993).

Notwithstanding potential or measured micro or macro effects of training, one thing is clear. Training cannot and does not create jobs. The economic upswing in various European countries during the first half of this decade has resulted, though delayed, in the reduction of unemployment even among those considered long-term unemployed. Given the present economic forecasts the question rises what will happen if economic growth declines (as foreseen) or even turns into a recession? Will this mean that those who have returned to employment after training are the first to be hit by unemployment again? This will depend on various factors like whether the first job obtained was a steady job or not, whether those former trainees who lost their first job obtained another job and the characteristics of this job, but also on more general factors like the stability of both the economic sector and the enterprise in which the former trainees are employed as well as the overall vulnerability of the national economy to global economic cycles. It appears that two basic lines of reasoning can be distinguished in this matter. On the one hand, there are various (economic) scholars stating that due to the demographic development of ageing of the work force, it will be necessary to get unemployed and ‘inactive’ labour back into employment -preferably after sufficient

disbelief in the usefulness and profitability of participation in education and training appears to be part of the set of values handed down together with unemployment and social exclusion from one generation to the next.

training- in order to meet demand for labour. If this demand is not met, economic decline will appear not so much as a result of economic downswings, but due to the fact that the labour market cannot match supply and demand. On the other hand, there are (economic) researchers that foresee that those with the most vulnerable labour market position (the least qualified, older workers and workers with an unstable working career) are the first to be hit by increasing unemployment rates. Some of the most cynical among them point out that, due to the lack of quality of the training that has been provided to the former long-term unemployed, these persons are apt to end up in the vicious recycling of qualifications (cf. Thijssen, 1997). With this (and with the quality of training) they mean that the training provided is too much focussed on getting people back into employment as quickly as possible, without taking into account the long-term employment perspectives of the training provided. In their opinion the level of the training is too low and the scope of the training is too narrow, often focussed too much (or 'customised' too much) towards specific vacancies that exist within certain enterprises or that are expected to arise in the short-term.

In principle both lines of reasoning once more underline the dilemma to be faced in designing labour market measures for the long-term unemployed, though in the case of the demographic arguments it will depend on the particular demand for labour to be met³⁸. If labour market measures intend to promote the re-entry of long-term unemployed and especially the least qualified among them in gainful employment with the prospect of employment in the long run and even the prospect of continuing training in the context of employment, the initial investment needed for training these unemployed should be substantial. At the same time, as can be derived from various literature sources, the least qualified long-term unemployed often are confronted with multiple problems and do not (necessarily) give priority to training.

Specific research problems

Performing a research project like this has proved not to be easy. What has been attempted is to open up the black box of the training processes as such, in order to explain the possible impact of what happens between enrolment and re-entering the labour market. As Nicaise and Bollens (1998) state it, little is known about this black box, certainly not from an evaluation evidence perspective. As far as attempts have been made to pay particular attention to 'effects' of processes within the black box, these are mainly small scale qualitative studies indicating possible relations or effectiveness enhancing variables (cf. McGivney, 1992). Therefore, the conceptual model underpinning this study partly was based on such (relatively weak) evidence and partly on more theoretical considerations as could be derived from e.g. school effectiveness research. This conceptual model does not only depict the ambitious intentions of the project, but also (if not even more) reflects the tension between striving for a more concise model on the one hand, and the felt necessity to do justice to the richness of the variety between countries on the other hand. Though in some respects the training programmes and courses for the long-term unemployed do appear to be more similar

³⁸ : It is not specified by those advocating this line of reasoning, whether the attributed need for bringing unemployed back into the labour process in order to meet the mismatch between supply of and demand for labour due to demographic developments, concerns skilled and qualified jobs or unskilled, low-paid and insecure jobs.

than expected, at the same time the scope, aims, target groups and context of these programmes and courses show substantial differences between the participating countries (e.g.: the initial vocational training courses for young unemployed in Greece versus the community employment initiatives in Ireland).

In this respect the overview provided by Nicaise and Bollens (1998) of various evaluation studies in different countries³⁹ is more or less revealing. Not only are the differences between countries interesting in that some national studies report negative effects of training, while others report positive employment effects of the training under certain conditions, the overview also makes clear that results of separate evaluation studies within countries are not always consistent.

In performing the study various problems were encountered that were not always expected (see also section 4.2). First of all, it appeared to be a very laborious task to track former trainees and gain their co-operation once tracked. Problems of tracking down former trainees were caused by the mobility of former trainees, which became more severe with the increase of the time lapse between the moment of leaving the course and the moment of questioning. Part of the reluctance of former trainees to co-operate seems to stem from the specific topic of the survey. Former trainees appeared to prefer not to be reminded of the training or their previous unemployment or just did not want to be bothered about it anymore. A certain fear of stigmatisation seems to reinforce such apprehension. In addition to this (though with some difference between countries) some former trainees were also rather reluctant to co-operate fearing that the information they provided might be abused to inform tax officers or the officials of the social or unemployment benefit, on their present whereabouts and earnings. Nevertheless, it should be born in mind that it is known that in survey research, and certainly this type of survey research where there is no direct interest for the respondents to co-operate, response rates in general are relatively low.

Not only tracking the former trainees and persuading them to co-operate caused problems. Similar persuasion problems occurred when approaching training organisations (or the employment centres/authorities) and employers of former trainees. Concerning the former, obtaining agreement for conducting the investigation of the specific programme or course selected, proved to be difficult and time-consuming in several cases. This might partly have been due to privacy protection legislation (as was the case in Norway where a specific permit of the National Data Protection council had to be obtained, and even then labour market authorities could withdraw their co-operation as they did in approaching employers), but this is not the only explanation. Some training centres did not want to co-operate given their own work load (whether or not in combination with the fact that some additional work in delivering names and addresses of former trainees was required from them) or out of fear of negative results and publicity. Even if training organisations appeared willing to co-operate, they sometimes did sincerely delay progress by keeping researchers waiting for the requested information for months (e.g. as was the case in the Netherlands).

³⁹ : Most studies references by Nicaise and Bollens concern studies into the impact of training on labour market status after training as such, without accounting for the possible effects of process characteristics of the training.

Concerning the employers of former trainees it became clear (already during the case studies) that the former trainees were not very keen of providing the name of their employer out of fear that the interview might affect their position within the enterprise. The second barrier, however, was to gain co-operation of those employers that were named by former trainees. Here, even more than in interviewing the former trainees, it became clear that it was very difficult to obtain information from respondents that do not see any benefit from investing time in a survey they did not ask for. The interviewed number of employers is therefore even in the quantitative stage very modest⁴⁰.

A specific problem, related to the earlier mentioned tension between a more concise conceptual model and doing justice to the richness of the variety between countries, concerns the perceived need for flexibility in instrumentation and data collection. Given the differences between countries in both the programmes and course and the contextual issues, some questions or the phrasing of some questions of the common questionnaires were not considered applicable in part of the participating countries. Similarly, as mentioned before, a standard way of collecting data was not always considered possible. In this respect a certain flexibility in both the instrumentation and the data collection as such, was considered necessary by the partners. Nevertheless a common codebook and a common data entry file were distributed among partners in order to ensure comparability. One can conclude that probably data entry and cleaning rules have not been clear enough or at least not applied strictly enough. Data cleaning of the various delivered data sets therefore has taken a substantial amount of time before actual analyses could be started, even then still revealing (more or less serious) data errors during the process of explorative data analyses. Similar experiences have been obtained in other European research projects that have attempted to display a more quantitative approach⁴¹.

4.2 Comparative research issues in the area of vocational education and training

Performing international comparative research in the area of vocational training and human resource development in general and the training of long-term unemployed in particular, is quite a complex issue. Certainly if one wants to move further than purely descriptive and qualitative research. Various particular problems have been encountered during this project like the comparability of training programmes and courses for the (long-term) unemployed (according to level, content, target group, major aims and contextualisation), the (un)willingness of major players in the field to co-operate and the difficulty and time-consuming character of tracing former trainees and persuading them into an interview. Based on the work performed in this project, some more general or

⁴⁰ : And partially lacking since the training did not focus that much on re-entering labour market employment (e.g. CE and VTOS in Ireland) or since co-operation in this stage was refused by the labour market authorities (e.g. as was the case in Norway, where the labour market authorities according to legislation had to send out letters to former trainees asking their consent for approaching their employers, which the authorities bluntly refused to do so).

⁴¹ : A clear example of this is the first European Continuing Vocational Training Survey (run in co-operation between EUROSTAT and DGXXII under the FORCE-programme), where similar problems concerning incomparability (on basis of perceived necessity for flexibility) and data cleaning were encountered, and where data cleaning took several years, before substantial analyses could be performed.

overall issues are outlined (that can occur in other comparative research projects in the area of initial or continuing VET), with the attempt to point out some crucial aspects for the further development of (policy in the areas of) comparative research at a European level.

Conceptual issues

In our research project there have been some debates on definitions of concepts like ‘training’ and ‘training programmes’, which at first sight seem to be so simple and seem to have a common meaning to all of us working in this field. However, as soon as one really launches into practical research work, where sample designs have to be developed and samples have to be drawn, it becomes clear that these concepts are much more multi-faceted and multi-interpretable than one first thought.

A generally accepted definition of the concept of ‘training’ does not seem to exist. Though as such this does not need to be problematic, a first aspect one should take into account developing projects like this is that there is substantial variation (between but also within countries) in the extent to which training is school-based or work-based. Actually these two are the extremes of a continuum, with all possible variations in between. We did not try to come to a common definition of training, but moved forward more pragmatically in deciding that whether or not practical training was included, how much practical or work-based training was included and how it was delivered, should be included in the model and the test of the model (where one assumption was that practical training would make a difference). In practice it can be concluded that all training programmes included in the study, do encompass some practical training.

With regard to the concept of ‘training programmes’ the situation was much more complicated. It appeared that a differentiation could be made between (at least) three meanings of this concept:

- national framework programmes (like Training for Work in the UK), which set the general rules, targets and conditions, but leave the actual implementation as well as the issue which training is provided to lower administrative bodies (e.g.: the UK where regional/local bodies like the Training and Enterprise Councils decide to a large extent which training is provided and by whom);
- programmes/courses provided at a national level (countrywide) as is the case in the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark, where national framework programmes and specific providers are very much linked and the courses that are provided are to a large extent similar throughout the country⁴²;
- local courses or initiatives, which can either be operated under the national framework programmes or can be developed bottom-up (which appears to some

⁴² : It should be born in mind that there will be regional/local variations. On the one hand variations with regard to the courses that are actually offered (e.g.: Norway where the district labour market authorities decide on an annual basis (for each district/region) what the offer should be, but where courses as such are similar). On the other hand variations with regard to actual level and content of courses (e.g. the Netherlands, where in principle the courses offered by the Vocational Training Centres are similar throughout the country. It is, however, known that courses with the same name can and do differ with regard to the level of attainment once the course is concluded, and with this also differ with regard to (part of) the content).

extent to be the case in all participating countries, though least in Denmark and Norway).

Given that the situation was (and is) so different in the various countries, it was unavoidable to accept that in some of the participating countries training courses were investigated that were restricted to a specific area or region, while in other participating countries identical training courses, but provided in different regions, were included.

Methodological issues

Specific methodological issues arising in international comparative research are the different opinions on research and adequate research methodologies. Or, in other words, differences in research paradigms. This as such is neither new nor unexpected. However, there are areas in which international comparative research has been more established and has a longer tradition, which has resulted in a greater convergence between researchers with regard to research methodologies to be applied. School effectiveness research is one example of such areas. In contrast to these areas with a long(er) standing tradition in international comparative research and/or a more coherent and shared research paradigm, it has to be concluded that VET-research⁴³ neither has a well developed research paradigm (both conceptual and methodological) that can boast on support of or consensus in a community of researchers, nor has a long standing tradition in international quantitative comparative research (that goes beyond the limits of descriptive studies).

This is reflected in the specific issues one encounters in a comparative study like this project. Though known beforehand, one still has to deal with the differences in opinion between project partners with regard to whether a study should be quantitative or qualitative in nature and with regard to issues like what establishes a good ‘comparative case study’.

A specific example concerns “linguistic” problems in direct relation to such methodological issues. The word “case” can be used in various ways. During the first stage of the project it referred to the cases included in the case study. During the second stage the particular courses (or programmes) could be perceived as cases, but at the same time each respondent in a data-entry file is normally named “case” as well.

Together with the earlier mentioned differences in systems and therefore differences in the interpretation of specific concepts, these point at the ‘tension’ between comparability and flexibility. A position that all decisions to be made during projects like this, should be subordinated to the comparability issue, does not allow for the flexibility that is needed given the differences in systems. Nor does it allow for the flexibility in terms of a conciliatory attitude towards differences in opinion and preferred approaches, which is needed to keep complex projects like this one going.

A particular issue in our project was that the design of the second stage was based on so-called multi-level research designs (multi-level analysis). Though the most appropriate design for answering the main research questions, application of this type of

⁴³: The concept of VET-research used here, encompasses both research into initial and continuing (vocational) training, including in-company training and human resource development.

design also meant facing the fact that the knowledge of and experience with multi-level analysis, was quite differential between partners.

In order to overcome such obstacles, the following measures have been developed:

- an extensive (methodological) paper has been written by the co-ordination on comparative or 'multiple' case designs, which has been discussed during on of the project meetings and which both formed the basis for a common understanding of comparative case study designs and for drafting the synthesis report on this stage of the project;
- an extensive methodological paper on multi-level research and multi-level analysis has been written by the co-ordination, in order to provide every partners with the same (basic) knowledge base on this particular research design and type of analysis; in addition to this, the comparative analyses across countries has been performed by the co-ordinating unit (as was foreseen in the project plan);
- allowing for flexibility in the sense that partners were given space to collect data (certainly in the second stage) in a way that would best suit their expertise and specific national situation, though using the same standardised instruments; where thought appropriate or necessary, national options (that is: specific questions relevant to the specific national or regional situation) could be included in the standardised questionnaires.

However, as outlined before there are drawbacks to such flexibility as well. Not only data cleaning took considerably more time than ever expected, it also appears that on some questions comparison is not possible, since questions have been skipped in some countries.

Comparability issues

Specific comparability issues that arose during the project (apart from the more general issues directly or indirectly related to comparability, which have been discussed in the preceding sections) concerned the comparability of the direction or fields of training to be included in the study and the level of the training courses.

Concerning the field of training, it was originally proposed to attempt to focus on training courses across all countries that would go into a same category of the ISCO-classification. Though at first sight a logical and easy to handle proposal, it in practice appeared to be much more difficult to tackle this issue. Not in the least given that, due to differences in economic structures and strength/development of specific economic sectors, the emphasis on specific target domains (that is: for which occupation or occupational area unemployed are preferably trained) differs between countries, but also within countries between different regions. In addition to this, there are two other complicating factors. On the one hand the specific trends and hypes that influence for which occupations or occupational areas unemployed or trained (text processing for successive text processors or information technology are examples of such trends or hypes, but there are more specific examples as well; in the Netherlands for example, some training centres have recently started with training courses for 'multicultural undertaking'). On the other hand, the "vulnerability" of an area like training for the unemployed to quick changes in policy and policy interventions. It seems that there

hardly is an area within vocational education and training that is so much liable to altering policies as training for the unemployed.

Some examples can illustrate this. As mentioned before, the planning of training for the unemployed (as other labour market categories) in the UK is highly decentralised in the sense that the TECs (on the basis of information of sectoral and branch organisations) decide on a year-to-year basis which type of training courses will be on offer. This means that depending on the specific (regional) economic developments, the offer can differ from one year to another and between the various TEC-areas. From a point of view of getting a complete overview of what is being offered and from the point of view of comparability with what is going on in other countries, this establishes a particular difficult situation. In Denmark, the specific UTB-courses have been abolished in 1994. Though different in structure and duration, to a certain extent the P47-courses could be perceived as its replacement. It is not fully clear whether the abolishment of the UTB courses was mainly caused by the dropping unemployment rates or by the 'lack of quality' of the courses (with at least the employers providing practical training stating that the course, and certainly the practical training period was far too short) or a combination of both. A last example concerns the Netherlands where unemployment has decreased steadily over the last three to four years, even among the long-term unemployed. At the same time, major restructuring of both senior vocational education and training and specific training provisions for the unemployed have been taken place, which have put the latter in a more competitive market position. Where formerly, especially the Vocational Training Centres provided more or less similar training programmes (at least on paper), there now exists a situation of confusion. On the one hand, there are training centres that attempt more and more to bring their training programmes more in gear with the newly established national qualification structures (even (considering) merging with the regional training centres that also provide regular initial training). On the other hand, there are training centres that increase attempts to customise training courses for specific enterprises (from early 1996 onwards, when the first regional training centres were established that by part of the Vocational Training Centres are perceived as competitors). The present situation is one in which it is known that the employment service (also the main funder of the Vocational Training Centres) only purchases about a third of their total training from the Vocational Training Centres, but without any knowledge or statistics where the rest of their training budget goes (this might be the regional training centres or private providers; cf. Brandsma c.s, 1996).

Concerning the level of training, national economic structures and developments as well as national policies have a comparable impact as on 'field of training'. However, a more specific factor concerns the actual unemployment situation in a country. In general it is presumed that unemployment, certainly long-term unemployment, is often concentrated among the least qualified and older workers whose skills have become obsolete. Though, overall this might be the case there are exceptions which are partly related to specific educational structures and traditions, but which are also related to new demographic and immigration patterns. Concerning the former it appears, for example, in Greece that unemployment seems to be relatively high among those who left general academic education (at the upper secondary level). Given the strong tradition of prioritising participation in general academic education (instead of vocational education and training) as well as gaining access to university education, it seems that

unemployment is more or less concentrated among those who in the end did not get access to university, but nevertheless have concluded education up to the level of ISCED 4⁴⁴, whereas in other countries long-term unemployment seems to be concentrated among those who did not receive (much) training beyond ISCED level 2. Such differences are of course reflected in differences in the emphasis of specific target groups, with all its consequences for comparability.

With regard to the level of training, it will be obvious that specific priorities set in national policies as well as the target groups that get the highest priority influence the differentiation between countries as well.

Given this, it is hardly avoidable that a certain incomparability ‘creeps’ into the design. Vocational education and training, and certainly (continuing) vocational training for either the unemployed or employed people, differs substantially between countries. Attempting to classify training activities and training measures in order to establish comparable data appears to be a very difficult undertaking (cf. Brandsma & Kornelius, 1998).

Comparative research is of course always somewhat problematic, but certainly if one wants to measure effects of particular training arrangements at an international level this appears to cause even more problems. Nevertheless it appears worthwhile not to stick to descriptive comparisons, but try to design ways to tackle the various incomparability problems in order to build and test new theoretical or conceptual frameworks.

Developing comparative research in the field of vocational education and training

Referring to the last statement in the previous section the question could be raised whether international comparative research in the area of vocational education and training and in particular in the area of training for the unemployed poses specific problems that are not encountered in comparative research in for example primary education or general secondary education. To a certain extent this appears to be the case. This does not mean that comparative research in the latter area is not complicated. But the VET-area (including the training for the unemployed) appears to have a much larger variation and differentiation between countries than e.g. primary education. It is rather complicated to take into account both the scope and intentions of the particular training measures -as set by national labour market policies- as well as the labour market conditions (not only unemployment rates and employment perspectives, but also the functioning of national and regional/local labour markets).

Which improvements would be possible? With regard to the specific research area tackled in this project, at least three options for improvement might be mentioned that, however, do differ with regard to the specific focus. The three options concern:

- A more thorough classification of different training measures before one really launches into selection of cases/courses: this will need more time than the rather quick and restricted inventory this project started off with. It will also cause new particular problems, e.g. in the case that ‘centralised’ information is not available and

⁴⁴: According to the revised ISCED classification.

trying to get an overall picture of the offer of training for unemployed might require a separate survey (as is the case in the UK);

- A longitudinal research design: this would at least cater for the problem that it is difficult to draw any conclusion of the possible effects of training in the longer run. Most cynical scholars often stated that much training for (long-term) unemployed focuses too much on the short term (which vacancies are expected within a couple of months) and focuses too narrowly on job-specific training instead of equipping trainees with sufficient (vocational) skills to maintain a position in the labour market. Such longitudinal research ideally should cover a period of 4 to 5 years after trainees leave the training. A 'retrospective' design as used in this study does not seem to be appropriate. It seems too costly to retrace former trainees long after they left the training (with the additional risk of producing skewed samples);
- A longitudinal design approaching trainees for the first time if they enrol at the training course: this might at least (partly) solve the problem of retracing former trainees. Moreover, attempting to establish some rapport with trainees at the beginning of the course might also increase the willingness to participate in the study, once they have left the training. Of course, new problems would emerge in such a design as well; e.g. practical problems of different or very flexibilised enrolment dates. In addition to this, a longitudinal study set up like this will be a rather lengthy study if one still wants to cover the 4-5 year period after the training is concluded, with still the chance of "loosing" trainees during the study.

From the perspective of further developing and elaborating joint comparative research in the field of (initial and continuing) vocational education and training and human resource development, a stronger focus on the specific problems and challenges one encounters in performing such comparative research in these fields appears necessary. Comparative research should be more than pure descriptions of national systems, developments and peculiarities put next to each other. International comparative research should go beyond such descriptive studies and try to embark upon studies which try to provide social scientific explanations for phenomena in education and training and for differences between countries in these fields. Such an 'explanatory oriented' approach might increase the mutual understanding of both our national systems and of what works in a particular situation (and not in another) and why. It should be emphasised that for a correct interpretation and good understanding of this type of comparative research, more descriptive and exploratory (national) studies can be of great value. The one does not exclude the other. But international comparative research could attain value added if it could get past purely descriptive studies and move a few steps further.

4.3 Issues and implications for further research

A first issue concerns the "creaming" or selection at enrolment. As shown, selectivity does enhance both the output and the outcome. More selective training organisations seem to have less dropouts and more trainees getting into a job. Together with the earlier addressed issue of accessibility, this raises the question of what happens to those unemployed that are not admitted to the course. What are their chances of getting

training and/or finding employment? Given the impact of training on the individual level, it seems to be of major importance to know what happens to those that have been denied access. The first question is whether there are alternative training options to which they can be referred or any form of a safety net which provides them with alternatives for training that has been denied. In the context of the last proposal concerning future research (previous section), it might be interesting and perhaps possible, to cover those that do not gain access to the training for which they submitted as well.

Directly related to this first issue is the question which training is needed to bring back the least qualified up to the level of skills with which they stand a chance of the labour market. In order to be able to answer such a question, first a basic understanding is needed of the size and structure of the group of least qualified. In this respect it does seem to make a difference whether it concerns those unemployed due to major economic restructuring (decline in particular economic sectors), due to obsolescence of skills or due to an overall lack of education and training (or insufficient quality of the education and training received). Such differentiations could be helpful, if not important, in setting out training strategies and designing particular training programmes. What kind of training is needed might differ (according to level and duration) depending on previous working and training experiences gained. Nevertheless, it is important as well that the training that is provided is sufficient to acquire skills that are recognisable and valued in the labour market. This directly relates to the earlier mentioned dilemma of designing training programmes that do fulfil this role, but at the same time take into account that lengthy training paths are not always the kind of training long-term unemployed seek for, given that their priority might be to obtain gainful employment. In this respect it might be worthwhile to explore the possibilities to design apprenticeshiplike training structures for unemployed, which might kill two birds with one stone: training unemployed up to a level which is profitable in the labour market and providing them with work as well.

This brings up the issue of tailor made design of training programmes, as mentioned earlier. Tailor made design is not necessarily individualised training. As can be concluded from this study, individualised training is not by definition the best way to choose. Apparently the social aspect of training can be important as well (as has been more often found in studies into adult education). Tailor made in this respect means tailored towards the needs and characteristics of different types of unemployed. Or in other words, different training models for different target groups. However, given the present state of the art in our knowledge what might work and what might not, it might need quite some 'experimentation' to find out which design is most suitable for a particular target group.

Finally, an important question to be answered in future research concerns the macro effects of training. At the micro level of the individual unemployed, training does seem to pay off. The question however is, what does the economy or society benefit from the investments in this training? Overall it is presumed that investment in training from an economic point of view is a good investment. Many policy documents link economic competitiveness and training to each other. The question is whether and to what extent such a link can be made for training of unemployed as well. Of course one can presume

that if training gets unemployed back into work this will save on benefits. But from a policy point of view it would be logical to try to measure the size of such effects as well as effects in terms of possible changes in productivity, economic growth or the general health situation.

5. Dissemination and exploitation of results

The dissemination of results has been somewhat under-emphasised until now. There are however concrete plans to take up dissemination more actively from here on. A first concrete action to be undertaken (for which first contacts with publishers have been established) is to compile a book on the basis of all available material, which preferably should be published by a scientific publisher. Given the abundance of available materials (not in the least the data sets of the survey research, which contain a huge amount of material that can be further analysed from different perspectives), this appears to be more than worthwhile. The preliminary outline for the book can be sketched as follows:

- introductory chapter
- a chapter on the specific methodological problems of comparative research in the field of vocational training (for unemployed)
- seven chapters analysing specific national issues arising from the material (in the context of the trans-national material)
- a chapter concerning policy changes in labour market and training policy for unemployed and the possible effects of these changes on the labour market position of long-term unemployed as well as the functioning of the labour market in general;
- a chapter concerning the differences in organisational and training culture between training organisations;
- a chapter on the issues of practical training, guidance and counselling (in general but also in direct relation to practical training) in relation to effectiveness;
- a concluding chapter which also particularly addresses issues of innovation in training for the unemployed.

In addition to this there are plans for presentations or a symposium during the next European Conference on Educational Research, which takes place in Finland in September next year. Work for this symposium and work on the book could run parallel and cross-fertilise each other.

Researchers from the co-ordinating unit are presently involved in a CEDEFOP project on behalf of drafting the second European Report on Research in Vocational Education and Training (expected publication will either be the end of 1999 or early 2000). More specifically this involvement concerns the contribution of a chapter on training for the low qualified, in which part of the research results of this project will also be used. This publication does not only focus on scientists and researchers but also on practitioners, which means a broadening of the potential public (if compared with the intended scientific publication).

Concerning the exploitation of the results there are three more or less concrete plans. First, there will be a follow-up research in the Netherlands (which has been granted by the National Research Foundation and actually is starting up right now). This research project will run over a period of four years. On the one hand it will focus on an extension of the research, including new and different training programmes. On the other hand it will attempt to push through the proposed longitudinal approach, by a follow up of the Dutch trainees that have been questioned in this project over the whole period of the research project to investigate the stability and characteristics of their further employment career as well as their possible further training careers.

The second plan is developed in Flanders, where a 'monitor' of all training provisions for unemployed will be undertaken to see to what extent characteristics identified as being effectiveness enhancing, are present in these training organisations.

The least concrete plan concerns the dissemination of the monitoring instrument. When disseminating this instrument among training centres in various countries (at least among the countries that participated in this project), the idea was to include an evaluation form that can be sent back with comments and suggestions for improvement. This of course requires that the centres attempt to use and implement the instrument. However, before this can be set in motion, some concrete problems have to be overcome concerning the financing of such an operation (not only post but also the processing of the data coming back) and the translation issue (which partially is also a financial issue).

6. Acknowledgements and references

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⁴⁵ : This is a new edition of the 1989-publication to which I referred in my earlier discussion paper.

Annexes

Publications and deliverables

- Brandsma, J. (1996). *The effectiveness of labour market oriented training for the long-term unemployed; the conceptual model*. Enschede: OCTO
- Brandsma, J. (1996). *Design, data-collection and analyses case studies in the project "the effectiveness of labour market oriented training for the long-term unemployed"*. Enschede: OCTO.
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- Brandsma, J. (1999). *The effectiveness of labour market oriented training for long-term unemployed. A transnational study into possible effectiveness models*. Enschede: OCTO (in progress).
- Monitoring the effectiveness of training for the unemployed; an instrument for training organisations (draft included).

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