



Training trainer in Italy

The capitalised training units as a tool for vocational training.

Higher Education and Technical Training (IFTS) courses:

"d) they are structured in modules and/or important units meant as a group of competences, autonomously relevant, recognisable by the working world as a component of specific professional skills and identifiable as a result of the training course".

"As far as the training courses are concerned, the important competence units become the reference goal of the different didactic sequences which form the course itself.

These sequences are named "training units", and can or cannot correspond to an important competence unit.

Each training unit is defined by a specific denomination (title), aim, contents, duration, training methods and foreseen evaluation methods.

Since a training unit is finalised for the development of competences, it could happen that in order to reach such objective the articulation of the unit itself into "training modules " might be useful.

According to this approach the training unit can be defined as a reference prototype unit to reach or recognise the professional competences of the student and is therefore considered a codified tool to plan training actions for the acquisition of professional competences.

Training Units usually have the following characteristics:

- *modularity* – Each unit is planned in such a way that it can be possible to connect it with the other units (or other credits acquired in a different form rather than training courses).
- *Autonomy* – Each unit sets goals and learning contents able to form a value which is recognised on the working market.
- *Multiple disciplinary trend* – The activities usually require the knowledge and ability in different disciplines, as well as the ability of implementing "professional behaviour plans";
- *Standardization of the describers* – Each unit is limited to recall the descriptive elements that form the essential standard for the development or the recognition of the competences.

Observed under this point of view the training unit, allows the composition and fruition of an educational and training offer which is flexible and adequate to the needs of a coherent planning.

The adoption of a standard form points out the role played by the trainer, showing transparency of the results. The use of this type of training methodology is capable of satisfying the general situations of reliability and transparency which are features of the network protocols, avoiding, in the meantime, the risk of forming courses based on a combined mechanical logic of units "always and universally" suitable to every context.

The reason why in the IFTS, training units are used, is based on a principle of economising the transition costs: in reference to a variety of rigid and preset standards or, on the contrary, to the total freedom of *format* and methodological approach to planning, it allows to generate greater conveniences since it is flexible for local specifications and extensions.

The contribution of the training units to the reduction of costs for planning and setting up training emerges also from its functionality to activate different types of training *benchmarking*: internal (*carried out inside own organisation or project*) competitive (*carried out with other organisations or projects which are in*



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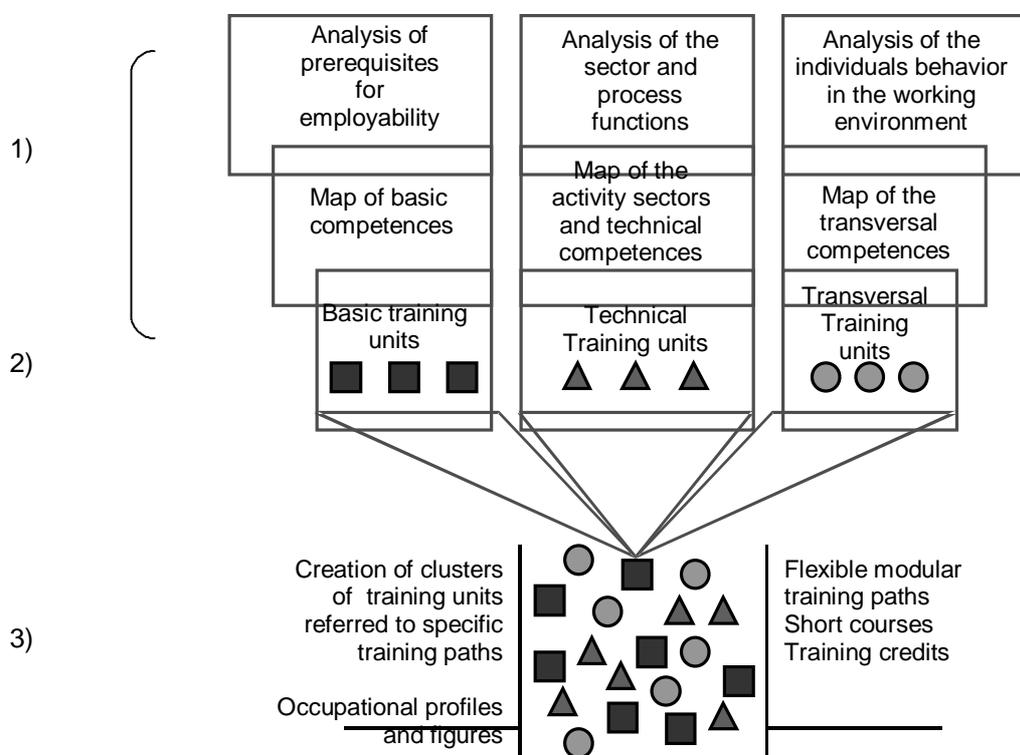
competition), functional and process oriented (*carried out with organisations or projects not in competition outside own sector of intervention*).

This way, within the IFTS the use of stand alone training units sensibly favour the research of the excellent procedures and the individualisation of the factors and the efficient methods to adapt and apply the best experiences to own exercising context. The competitiveness research induces the organizations to a more careful management of planning operational costs *competence based*, and increase the quality-price relation of own products and reduces feedback time to questions, favouring changes.

Besides favouring the possibility of capitalising the most innovative experiences, in order to learn as much as possible from the testing that took place in the sector, being a network protocol, communication and exchange it establishes a matrix for reference useful for negotiation of the training goals by the subjects that, belonging to different education and training and therefore starting from different languages and cultures, have to form an integrated and shared path. This negotiable valence of standalone training units has a decisive role both in creating the assumptions for capitalization, the competences acquired in own training and professional path, and also on a systematic plan, in creating the assumptions for a reciprocal recognition (between vocational training systems and education systems; between these and work environment) of training credits and the related competences acquired.

Greater responsibilities and the strategic function assumed by the operators in the integration logic impose a greater need of competences for all individuals and community of practices which have to interact during the definition process of the *competence-based* training offer. Furthermore it should be pointed out that, *benchmarking is not a service that can be bought, but finds its main assumption in the reciprocal exchange of information. Therefore it is convenient that people directly involved (final beneficiaries and planners of training)* can start a systematic confrontation between different experiences carried out, evaluating together the methods experimented and the results obtained, nourishing, even through training units, interaction processes as a joint network and to use the prototypes, experiences ideas elaborated by different subjects in different areas.

As shown on the scheme, the standalone training units process is articulated into three macro phases, chronologically arranged:



1. The analysis processes that have as *outputs* competence maps, aggregated and related to the *basic, professional and transversal competences*;
2. the “interpretation” of the aggregated competences into correspondent standalone training units;
3. the composition of the single training units in *clusters* which allow to train the professional profiles, with the consequent definition of the modular training paths.

Therefore the professionals of learning defined as “trainer” is not sufficient, since with this definition professional areas which in reality are radically distant are herein shared.

Such observation is confirmed in a confrontation among curricula experiences of various European countries which show, on one hand, a strong turnover of jobs in training, and an instability for the other professions, while on the other hand an overlapping of competences involved in the learning process (tutor, counsellor etc...).

This brings to an inevitable fragmentation of the roles, closer to the various phases of the process rather than to a general transfer of knowledge.

In the perception agreed up to now, the trainer/teacher was he/she that allowed the student to learn knowledge, and transfer took place based on the fact that the trainer had the notions to be transmitted. In a similar traditional meaning know how appears as a specific group of notions, learning as the process of notion transfer even when not fully aware (mnemonic learning).

In the asserted model, the transfer of knowledge, mediation of knowledge has greater value.

In this range trainers are an element of the learning process, distributed in many roles, from the training needs analysis, to the evaluation after the training.

The trainer profile is becoming similar to a process consultant, and its sector can be defined as “learning engineering”.

A need of continuous updating of the competences opens a discussion on which can be the devices open to continuous training based on the modular approach and on the valorisation of training credits.

Remarkable opportunities are supplied by information technology and communication in the definition of the training methodologies, confirming the necessity of concentrating on innovation-training. Sophisticated



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techniques and technologies are used as didactic media but the didactics themselves is not evolved. Learning didactic has taken very short steps; technology has instead taken very long steps. The only possibility to fill the gap is to work on training the trainers.

Distance training and the profession of trainers

If we think about the different distance learning methods (ODL) which are spreading rapidly (tele-training devices - video conferences, etc...), we can see how all this opens a discussion on traditional methods of time, place and action units. Therefore training which does no longer take place exclusively in a classroom but that reaches the working site and even the home of the trainees, fragmenting the learning time according to the availability and the capacity of the trainee.

Satisfy more and more complex training needs and a growing number of individuals, allows to consider training from an economical point of view, market, similar to other professional sectors. Today training is thought in terms of quantity, costs, profitability and quality. The main challenge that training planners face is to adapt rapidly to the evolution of the clients demands in training, in relation to the growing relevance that learning process assume in companies.

In parallel to the need of continuous and wide spread training, the organisational liens set by the clients grow, such as the necessity of containing training costs, allowing flexibility in methodology, involving wider populations, limiting the time spent away from the working place, personalize the training paths.

These needs cannot find separate or subsequent answers, but they must be held together by a unique training project which standardizes and personalises the contents and the fruition methods. In other words, in front of complex training processes, we have to think in terms of training systems and didactic engineering. All subjects involved in training process (trainers, trainees, IT experts, graphics, specialists of tools architecture) are linked to the good running of this process. The trainers, being simply one actor involved in the training process, can no longer be independent artisans but actors of a system where each one carries out a specific role. Training is tailored planned by the beneficiaries in the field of general culture and technology. The duration, the goals, the learning methods are specific to each person. The training is defined by an equipe of actors which englobe all the functions of the trainer. All the functions foreseen – from pedagogy to logistics – are carried out in a collective manner by the subjects involved.

This cooperative process that is developing in different countries and mainly inside big companies, modifies the traditional roles of the trainer: the trainer is no longer at the centre of knowledge that he distributes, but becomes a resource of knowledge among many others.

We are therefore in front of prototype profiles which evolve from the diffusion of knowledge – which is the traditional function of the trainer – towards mediation functions between knowledge and the trainee.

The content expert remains the dominant profile: he/she knows the public, needs and the learning process.

The trainer-tutor (coordinator, coach) in the resource centres, which assists and advises trainees.

The mentor (distance tutor), which accompanies the students to their courses but is not physically present in the resource centres: offers a guidance service and personalised consultation to the users.

The expert in communication technology that plans and adapts the training programs. He/She is the architect of the network.

New groups of training profiles are outlined inside the companies.

Roles and function changes for trainers: which consequence do they have for the trainers?

- A strong identity crises of the trainers which live the new technologies as competitor elements, which can substitute the role of the trainer.
- A cultural resistance of the trainers to the network functioning.
- An average low knowledge of technological tools, which is notwithstanding connected to the fact that most of the active trainers at present have not been trained through new technologies.

The trainer remains always and in any case the guarantor of coherence among the training goals and the results reached and needs however a long training experience, and training in the classroom.

Which are the competences required for a trainer?

The core of the job remains: pedagogic experience and training engineering.

Besides these traditional competences, the trainer, the training planner needs to have today new competences.

He/She should know how to evaluate the efficiency, the advantages and disadvantages of the new technologies (therefore must first of all know how to use them) and must be capable of knowing how to plan in co-design with the client. The trainer becomes the engineer which suggests, plans and realises the architecture of the system, identifies the tools and the most efficient media for the clients goals, the



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evaluation of costs-advantages, suggesting traditional training rather than distance training, CD-Rom rather than the paper manual, videoconference rather than a self-learning course.

In order to reach this type of expertise, there is a need of competences belonging to a traditional trainer-planner: the knowledge of the mechanisms and the learning processes and communication continue to be an essential requisite like a strong instructional design methodology which starts from the needs analysis to the evaluation of the results. On these competences other specific competences are triggered:

- specific competences linked to new technologies;
- transversal competences: should be able to work inside an équipe of professionals: content expert, technology expert, software analyst.

There is need to ask what is the reaction of the training system towards these changes. The training systems have reaction rhythms which are much slower compared to a company system. There are however, some experimental training experiences which try to bring answers to these new needs.

In Europe even positive experiences have taken place. There is, however, the necessity of systemising and regulating the professional community, which is meant to pursue a functional and social legitimization of the sector.