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Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe

Issues arising from an institutional analysis

Round table discussion at the HRD Conference in Tilburg 22-24 May 2006

Participants: Magdolna Benke, Rick Holden, Hedley Malloch, Sabine Manning, Barry Nyhan, Hanne Randle, Jim Stewart, Tarja Tikkanen, Claire Valentin

Chair: Barry Nyhan > [Introduction](#) (PPT presentation)

Contribution: Sabine Manning > [Theses for discussion](#) (the discussion below refer to the initial version of the theses - May 2006)

Barry Nyhan

This is an open discussion that begins with a number of very short comments by people on the issue of mapping HRD and VET research across Europe. The question posed is: what is the relationship between VET and HRD in a European context? This is a Cedefop driven project in many respects. From the outset it has to be said that it is part of the European Union agenda, so there is a vested interest in promoting a European concept of HRD, linked to a European concept of VET. In the European Union context, and Cedefop is involved in that, the task is to construct a European project, creating European meanings. It's about creating shared meanings about the way we live, the way we sustain our economy, the way we sustain our society. There are lots of debates about a deeper or enlarged Europe, but the context is about building European values around HRD and VET, even if they are being debated on a daily basis. European values are about combining social inclusion with competitiveness.

When we look at HRD and VET we see that, while they have very different origins, the picture today is a picture of overlap, and some people use the terms interchangeably. Other people are very specific about VET and there are lots of theories about HRD. Here we are interested not so much in the theory of HRD and the theory of VET, but what are the practices, how are people living the HRD tradition, and how are people living the VET tradition. In the work that Sabine Manning is undertaking you see there are lots of disciplines, lots of values, lots of different perspectives shaping VET and HRD. VET and HRD are multidisciplinary subjects, they are not like other disciplines such as economics or law, but they are shaped by lots of different disciplines, and also shaped by the country context. So that's the purpose of this round table, to discuss these issues and to see where we are going. Is it a good idea to talk about a

European context today?

In the next few minutes, I will talk a bit about the origin of the two traditions. Generally speaking, the VET tradition, which is much older than HRD, focuses on workers. One of the driving forces behind the formation of Cedefop were the European trade unions. There is a focus on workers, on intermediate and lower level skills; VET is traditionally about socio-political systems, about participation in working life and industrial democracy; improving the lot of the ordinary workforce through education and training, improving the quality of life and contributing to a more effective and economically prosperous society. The main focus of HRD, and certainly in its origin, is more about the performance of business and a focus on management.

But these boundaries are shifting enormously. There is a total overlap now, and maybe a certain degree of confusion and lack of clarity, but some of the debates I participated in have been about theory, and that doesn't often help us. It's much better to focus on the practice, what are people teaching and learning in the HRD curriculum, what are people teaching and learning in VET. For example in Germany, VET is more of an academic subject, there are faculties of VET teaching, which is very different maybe to the UK, to Ireland and other countries. But what's going on in these faculties, what are the values underlying their studies, what are their traditions?

Just to continue on the comparison of VET with HRD – origins of traditions [see [PPT](#) presentation, pp 3 to 5], this is an elaboration of what I said earlier about VET on the one hand where the focus is on professional identity, and HRD where the focus is on organisational identity. In its origin certainly, and in many practices today, there are two distinct orientations. For instance in Ireland, where I come from, VET is not an academic subject at all, it is hardly in universities; if you look at the Master's degree in an educational faculty, it is very unusual to find VET topics. It is largely concerned with general education. HRD is growing in importance in Ireland, but it is very much influenced by American, as distinct from European continental or Nordic thinking, social model.

Finally, the strength and weaknesses of VET and HRD. One of the great strengths of HRD is that it brings organisational development into focus. VET on the other hand is very individually orientated, focusing on technology. Whereas VET is operating in the socio-political domain, it has lots of weaknesses in terms of a lack of modernisation, and innovative concepts. HRD doesn't often concern itself at the issues of the workers, and is promoting stressful high-performance work practices that are not contributing to quality of work for employees.

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Tarja Tikkanen

This discussion about VET and HRD in relationship in research and this new analysis on institutions is very interesting. I started wondering about this on my own, with the paper I wrote for the Limerick Conference in 2004, but I was looking at it in a more theoretical sense. My background is in adult education, in Finland in the department of education and in Norway in the research institute in adult education, so it's VET basically, but not in practice. Then I joined a working life research institute, and I'm

looking at all of that from the point of view of learning and education. .

The HRD approach also comes into the picture. The paper I mentioned was titled "Reconciling learning, HRD and well-being in the workplace". I come from the Nordic countries, so this well-being is very important. As I see it, there is not only the difference between vocational education and training and HRD, but separate from this, there is work-place learning, which is the learning taking place for example in small companies. They don't really have this HRD discussion or HRD departments, they don't have professionals in that area, but they do develop their employers too. There is learning and learning promotion taking place. In the research field, there are researchers who don't define themselves as researchers within HRD either, but they are very much focused on work-placed learning, like Stephen Billett from Australia.

HRD seems to be more about an issue of bigger companies, really the large companies,. But also in terms of research, it's more connected with organisations, it's not that individual. Work-place learning has both an individual and a collective focus, but HRD brings in a different context, and VET is very institutional, it's very formal, and there is a struggle within VET people how to match the reality at the moment. So in my opinion there are actually these three: HRD, VET and work-place learning. All this is about the knowledge and skills, we call it confidence in the Nordic countries. I know that British people are very uneasy about confidence, but it is a very broad concept for us. This work-place knowledge, this confidence, is also very much about the relationship of practical and theoretical. And the questions is how we grasp this from different disciplinary backgrounds.

The discussion on working life in Norway is very similar to the rest of Europe, but the corresponding institutional response to that doesn't exist. So who are the winners: the consultants! It is true, if the companies need help they get it from the consultants. Research receives very little public funding for this area, and in the higher education system there is not a single professorship in adult education, whereas Finland has seven and Sweden has about two.

In the discussion we are trying to look for synergies, how to make sense out of these fragmented fields. But they have different disciplinary background: VET comes from an educational background, the adult education people are behind that; HRD is more related to economics and business and organisational studies etc. Both make valuable contributions, but probably it doesn't make sense, it's a lot of wasted energy and scarce resources in research, when it comes to participation in meetings and conferences etc, but that's a problem for academia rather than research I think. It reflects this division, the increasing complexity of work-related knowledge.

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Magdolna Benke

This is a personal view, not an official opinion. A few words about the general picture of research in Hungary. There are serious regional inequalities, as higher education and most of the research is concentrated on Budapest. More than 40 % of research and development institutions are located in

Budapest. Nearly two thirds of those who are employed in the research and development sector are working in the capital.

Another point is the prestige of VET and HRD research in the country. There are differences between VET and HRD research. The prestige of VET is very low, it lags behind the prestige of every other scientific subject.; While HRD is an academic subject, VET is not an academic subject. And this influences the connection between these two fields very much. Why is the prestige of VET research so low? This originates from the fact that education is not connected institutionally to the framework of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. There was a very good, high quality pedagogical institute which was closed down in 1981. Since that time, VET is somehow missing a strong professional background. Also, the connection and cooperation between VET and HRD research is not very deep.

Now I'd like to make some comments on the theses of Sabine. I found approximately 25 institutions in Hungary which are dealing with VET and/or HRD research. Research is combined with teaching in the case of the universities and colleges, about 50% of the institutions belong to this group. The combination of research and development has a much higher role among our institutions, I would estimate two thirds of the institutions. Probably the reason for this is money; development is something that has existed for a long time. Fewer institutes are dealing with research and consulting, a much lower number than the European average. I found only one or two institutions where research is the only activity.

The connection of research and other fields of sciences: 'education' is the strongest; I assume that 'psychology' is involved here. 'Sociology' is much stronger than 'economics'. 'Work related studies' have a very low contribution. HRD/VET research on its own is only carried out in two or three big institutes. According to my experience, the embeddedness in other fields of sciences makes HRD/VET research more prosperous, but I have to stress that many research topics are missing.

The proportion of VET specific research institutions is higher than the European average (according to the searched sample), maybe two thirds of the institutions belong here. The HRD specific research activity of institutions is lower in my country.

HRD research is mostly focused on the labour market and employment patterns. There is not however too much emphasis on education and training unfortunately. HRD research is not about organisations. Before the 1990s many HRD research projects were based on research in organisations, in companies. Unfortunately nowadays it is nearly impossible to visit a company, we are not able to carry out research because they do not allow us to go into a company. This is the case especially in the multinational companies. So this has an important influence on research topics.

I would be glad to see more balanced research activity in Hungary, dealing with a much broader field of relevant topics. Some spheres of research are still missing, for example some theoretical subjects in VET. HRD research is much more academic, so the problems are mostly related to VET research, not to HRD.

These categories (framework, environment, system, process, actor) are coming together, should work together and support each other. Sometimes there are no links between the research topics and the real demands. E.g. methodological issues are important, but cannot be utilised on a higher level without the precise knowledge of the framework, the environment, the contextual factors etc.

Hedley Malloch

My background is that I got into VET and HRD relatively late in life. For the last six years I've worked at the Catholic University of Lille. I became involved in a project launched in the North East of England to send a set of British apprentices through the French apprenticeship system. This came about because the group of business men and local authorities were disillusioned with the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme. In the first stage we were looking at the response of the British system to a demand for a Europeanisation or internationalisation, and later we were looking at the part of the French VET system through which they passed - the wonderful world of the French compagnonage. They are the oldest worker organisation in Europe, having been doing VET for 600 years, and also one of the largest VET providers in Europe.

In the first instance we looked at the lack of response with regard to a European perspective. I would first suggest before we have a European perspective we need an international one. We found that it was very difficult to get any type of response out of the British VET system to a demand like this; there is no demand for internationalisation, there is no demand for Europeanisation. There are up to 40 different agencies in the British VET system, but once you start going European you can add another twenty to that, such as Leonardo and Socrates. So if you've got to do research in this area you better make sure that your networks are in good order and that you've got a large stock of social capital. It has also got implications for some of the research skills which you need to do - because if you are going to these types of agencies you need to have a constructivist perspective on it.

We found that these institutions are all revolved around local targets. So they wouldn't supply any apprenticeships to this scheme, because it didn't do anything for local youth unemployment. The local colleges wouldn't supply the best kids for this scheme because that would mean that this would hit on the failure rates and in some cases on the performance related pay. The local skills council wouldn't do it either. So if you are interested in developing a European perspective on VET I think it would really require a revolution in the way in which the British agencies are structured. A colleague and I wrote a paper on this, and we came to the conclusion that not only is the British VET system incapable of providing upskilling, you couldn't import it either. So that's one of the perspectives that I came to from the research.

Later on we started doing research on the French compagnonage. I want to pick up a response here which Jim Stewart made in a paper which was circulated round on the HRDI. We came up against some of the effects of working in an institution which is dominated by positive economists, and also of working in an atmosphere where research is increasingly being termed by what sort of journals you find. I know that this is the case in the UK, but certainly in France too. Here the list of publications in which you can appear is given to you. So you write anything with HRD or VET in the title and you are told that you should publish this in the area for organisational studies. It's crazy.

Coming now to the slide on the 'type of field related to HRD/VET within institutions' - what isn't on here? Management isn't on here, business studies isn't on here. Why not? For me that reflects a perception that HRD isn't really seen as mainstream, and VET isn't seen as mainstream either. And this is reflected all the way through the structure of universities. The reason is there is no demand for it.

Recent developments in VET have pointed to the importance of things like communities of practice, situated learning, learning which takes place within institutions. You could argue that if VET was to have a disciplinary base then that should be anthropology, rather than economics or sociology. But we live in institutions in which economists and sociologists are the dominant groupings. VET and HRD is what people who work in the field do. It's an entirely respectable area of study in its own right. I think whether it constitutes a separate field or academic discipline is an interesting argument, and one which perhaps reflects a wider concern, but at the end of the day it's what people in this field do, and we shouldn't really concern ourselves whether or not it's linked to another discipline.

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Barry Nyhan

Just a comment - management and business probably comes under economics.

Sabine Manning

Sorry, that's the problem of simplifying for a presentation...

Barry Nyhan

... but probably that doesn't take from Hedley's point that there's an economic kind of a foundation to much of HRD and indeed VET.

Jim Stewart

First an observation, as we are sitting in the Business School of Tilburg University: This has no connection at all with the faculty which is organising our conference - strange! It is called the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration and our conference is organised without any help or involvement from anybody in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences.

I have also got to thank Hedley for giving a British perspective, and that's not what I'm doing, I'm giving Jim Stewart's perspective, so you have the benefit of both.

I'm going to make some observations on Barry's opening, and then some answers to the questions posed by Sabine in her presentation.

First on the theory - to the extent that we do have to theorise, in my theory at least I wouldn't suggest that HRD is the same as VET. On the European point, and again I agree with Hedley - he was suggesting that in the UK there is no national theory of HRD or VET. There is lots of research which demonstrates

that there is no European model of HRD.

Moving on to Sabine's questions, in thesis one on 'research activities' - what struck me was that research into and on teaching is something that is common within both HRD and VET, so it would be interesting to find out to what extent those two major activities are actually connected within institutions, to what extent these institutions who do a lot of research and a lot of teaching actually also research teaching, since teaching is a common interest to both HRD and VET. Furthermore, I think the links with consulting are much more important in HRD than they are in VET.

Thesis three on the 'distinction between VET and HRD' - the thought that occurred to me there was that the overall picture suggested by institutional websites probably doesn't reflect institutional structures. The slide is suggesting a large quantity of shared HRD and VET. My suggestion is that that doesn't reflect what happens in institutions. It might be that institutions engage in both, but the people in institutions like here, in a business school, are doing things entirely independently, entirely separately; they are even avoiding areas of mutual interests and activities. So I think that amount of sharedness suggested by that slide probably doesn't reflect the kind of sharedness that is actually going on.

I'm now addressing your question on the European research communities in HRD and VET - speaking for myself and briefly as Chair of the University Forum of HRD: we certainly do support links between the academic and professional networks, and the Forum will be establishing contact with the VET network. I belong to the small group of people who have been to both conferences, I've been to ECER three or four times, and there is a lot of overlap in our research interests, a lot of overlap in the research being carried out, and a lot of valuable learning for each of us. We need to build much stronger links between the HRD and VET research communities.

Thesis four on 'HRD and VET profiles' - the thing that occurred to me there was that the findings and comments support what I said earlier about the European model of HRD. The previous research would suggest that it's very difficult to identify any description or definition of HRD which would fairly accurately describe what is happening in the different countries in Europe. So there is no European model.

Thesis five on the 'European focus' - the observation that occurred to me again is the disparity between what might be suggested by institutional websites and what actually happens in practice. I think the conference papers will reflect the personal interests of individual academics. I think, to a significant extent, individual and personal interests of academics will be reflected in the projects, because whatever programmes are put on what comes back is what people are proposing in their own personal academic interests.

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Barry Nyhan

Would you say that they don't necessarily reflect institutional interests?

Jim Stewart

Correct, that's what I'm saying. So what I'd say is that the conference papers and the projects, to an extent, are explainable by personal interests of individual academics. I can't explain the institutional results, I am fairly certain the institutional results will reflect political and perhaps economic priorities rather than the interests of academics.

Barry Nyhan

A comment about the European model: I'm arguing for European practice – lived values -rather than a European model.

Rick Holden

I kept thinking what's the problem, the European problem in terms of research or practice. There are a whole series of national problems, and that led me to think it would be a shame if there were all sorts of national differences. And the other kind of observation I made was - who controls the public funded research activities within different countries in Europe, and who are the gate keepers of those processes, and how are those people influenced in terms of how they see us, the agenda for HRD or the agenda for VET, or the extent to which they are interlinked or separate. So those gate keepers of public funded research, to me, would be an interesting extension of the research you've done today, to look at that kind of dimension.

Claire Valentin

One thing that has struck me - what's the difference between HRD and VET? It seems - I think I agree with Jim to some extent - that VET is focused on society whereas HRD is focused on individual organisations. They've obviously got many intersections, as we know, but VET has generally featured national strategies and funding coming from the EU ,and thinking about which way we need to go, in terms of skills that we need for the future. That is quite a problematical area, and I think that is something where HRD could have a bit more input.

HRD and VET have been two parallel universes - often with different literatures, but different people saying similar things and looking at similar things. Now it's no reason why everybody should get together, - , there are reasons why they are separate, but there are reasons also why they should collaborate. The experience of people in HRD and organisations might be useful to feed back to the development of VET policy, because both are basically about what we need to make our societies and businesses and organisations better for the future. And those are really important issues that people who are working in organisational learning need to be involved in.

Hanne Randle

I'm working at a small research centre (www.apel.nu) in Sweden which has grown quite a lot in the last four years. The reason why we have grown is because our methods to combine research and development are in demand and traditional academic institutions do not supply this kind of developmental support through research. We have developed a method to work together with the practitioners, where we combine developmental work together with research, in order to develop both the academic knowledge and the practical use through a joint learning experience in a shared knowledge building process. We seem not to have a problem to find funding for research from the European social funds or from national sources because the financiers find us as an interesting party as we use untraditional research methods where we involve our practitioners in the research process in the aim to learn from developmental work and where new knowledge can change practice. There is a lot of demand to research issues that relate to developing the future society in general and developing new competences for future demands in specific. Research methods that seek to combine learning from practice and simultaneous trying new solutions with the support from researchers is highly demanded from different stakeholders such as government agencies, public employers, the health sector, SME's and trade unions.

Sabine Manning

Just a point which Jim raised - you very rightly say that sharing themes of research doesn't mean that they jointly do this research. In the analysis, 'sharing' is simply used as a technical term to describe the overlap between HRD and VET research.

NN

I lived in France and in Norway, and what I was thinking of when you were speaking was that the labour market is so different. I was just wondering if we can have such a shared HRD policy or European way of HRD. The context of HRD you are working in can be so different that it needs different policies and different ways of working in different contexts. So I wonder where the idea of a European HRD comes from.

Hedley Malloch

I think this idea comes from the idea of a common market, a common labour market, a common capital market, that does have some implications for transferability of labour between different countries. But if that's the only problem then perhaps research might be better concentrated on policy, on something like VET practice, what we have in higher education, how do you move students about between countries. I think as long as this isn't realised you won't get harmonisation between different national systems of higher education. The collaboration around a credit transfer system might be one way forward - how do you do credit transfers for plumbers, for technicians.

Barry Nyhan

I am looking at the European aspect in a sense of promoting certain values about social inclusion, for example creating a strong - if you call it - apprenticeship system. These things matter. The apprenticeship system is under threat because in many cases the employers don't want to pay for it any more, even in Germany. But there's a concern in many countries about the generation of skills for people who want to go to higher education, but at the level of the workforce. So the argument would go - in a European context, can countries learn from each other, not just copy each other, but can they learn to support and encourage each other to preserve these things like social cohesion as well as greater competitiveness. From an individual country perspective – each country is probably no longer strong enough to withstand competition from the US, China, India. The movement in society is largely towards the neo-liberal tradition, so if countries don't cooperate together to come up with something strong in response, then there are problems in safeguarding of these traditions which are behind the humanistic tradition of HRD - getting a better balance between your work and your life. These are practical issues, they are political issues, but they are not about coming up with a grand model. It's not one grand theory – with everything is the same, but European countries do share lots of values and the future has to be constructed. It's not a question of having a model - I mean the Swedish have had their Swedish model, which has been spoken about, and in many ways it's totally changed today. Social models can only be sustained by trade unions, by employers, working together. For example in the UK, the voice of trade unions to me has been so weakened that it's a great shame. I would think from any point of view that this is something that is weakening VET. HRD can become very instrumentalist, just in a neo-liberal kind of discourse. To me the European Union model is very often driven by a top-down ideology. This is different from the efforts of our countries to preserving their culture. This is about a multiplicity of practices, learning from each other, but also trying to identify certain values around working life. I'm a great fan of the Nordic countries in the sense of that they have got some kind of a balance between VET and HRD traditions.

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Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe

Issues arising from an institutional analysis

Round table discussion at ECER (VETNET) in Geneva 13-16 September 2006

Chair: Barry Nyhan

Proceedings of discussion

Barry Nyhan: **Introduction**

Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe - A round table discussion on diverse patterns and common concerns
([PPT presentation](#))

Sabine Manning: **Theses for discussion**

Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe - Issues arising from an institutional analysis
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Hans Werner Franz: **Contribution**

Statements on HRD and VET research in the German speaking countries
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Krista Loogma: **Contribution**

VET and HRD research in Estonia
([PPT presentation](#))

Discussion

Participants: Graham Attwell, Magda Balika, Magdolna Benke, Ludger Deitmer, M'Hamed Dif, Hans Werner Franz, Johanna Lasonen, Krista Loogma, Barry Nyhan
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Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe

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Discussion

Johanna Lasonen

First Hans Werner's concept that he elaborated on VET. I think it's very important because it decides how you analyse the data. Hans Werner's way of defining is closer to Cedefop, how Manfred Tessaring has officially defined VET. There also is more about this training part, and when you said that in Germany it is more labour system than educational system, I would say in Finland, and also when I reflected the Swedish and Norwegian situation, it's more educational system than labour system. But it also considers very much labour market trends, and of course young people are educated for the jobs in Norway and in Finland; Sweden is a different story.

But what makes it more educational than labour market, this VET, this education part really provides another kind of learning environment for young people. Young people are sixteen when they select the vocational or general education track, so the vocational education track provides different option, different learning environment for secondary education students. The second aspect is that vocational education and training is very strongly integrated in the educational system, but the labour market has been emphasised in the reforms in the last ten years: tripartite negotiations and establishing and reforming curricula and also the new structure of VET.

Now, going to Krista's presentation, which was really a good analysis. I'm looking at one last point you made - the focus of VET research: what proportion of the research is focused on vocational pedagogy?

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Krista Loogma

I would say that historically there were vocational topics (in labour market analyses for example). Now there is the need to widen the scope of researches and analyses taking into account new trends and challenges (contemporary vocational pedagogy for example). But the share of analyses and researches in learning and teaching in VET comparing with researches at system level is rather small.

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Magda Balika

One of the questions I just came up - what actually drives research on HRD or VET in our country (Romania)? For instance, in Romania the research was done more in a reacting way, so we needed specific research, because we

formed projects in education in a specific area. So research doesn't have yet its own logic, so to day. And also, things are still not so coherent, if we look at research, it doesn't matter whether HRD or VET.

And the second question is: Even if research is there, how relevant is this for the policy makers? I am coming from an institute that is supposed to carry out research as a basis for decision of the ministry of education, and I am often very frustrated that our researches are not even read by ministries, or sometimes the researches are just requested in order to justify what decision they have already taken. So I think it's also very important to see what is the relevance of research in this context, because sometimes the developments are still parallel. Even at the European level, research and policy decisions are quite separate.

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Ludger Deitmer

I just want to go back to the question of the mapping of VET and HRD research across Europe. I think what Hans Werner Franz has said is pretty right, but still there is a rather deep gap, also in Germany, between HRD and VET research. HRD is discussed much more on the side of the business management disciplines as well as at certain European conferences like EGOS (European Group for Organisational Studies). I go there, I am the only one on the border line between these two worlds, and the ITB is also partly doing similar things because of our enterprise oriented pilot projects, so we are much more in this enterprise field. On the other hand, there is quite a lot of VET research in Germany. There are 280 VET researchers, professors and lecturers who are organised in the German Association of Educational Research. This is where VET research is allocated.

So you can see, even from the organisation, there is a certain kind of split, therefore there isn't really an interaction. They have their own circles, congresses and dialogues in these different teams, and they hardly go across, as I understand that for Germany. We do the mapping for certain countries and look what's going on. That split is the reason why this is still apart in the German practice of research at faculties, and only occasionally some institutions like ours will mix that.

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Graham Attwell

The experience of Romania isn't sort of limited to Eastern European countries. I mean, the UK is no better and possibly worse in terms of research being linked to any kind of policy. I would say there is absolutely no linking of research and policy whatsoever.

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Magdolna Benke

It was very interesting to find a lot of common things with Estonia and Romania. I mentioned in Tilburg (HRD Conference May 2006) that, in Hungary, there is a big difference in the prestige of VET and HRD research. VET has hardly got prestige at all, but HRD research has very strong traditions and high prestige. It was interesting to see a parallel situation in Romania and Estonia. The reasons of our problem are that there is no strong academic research tradition in VET. HRD has a very strong academic and university base, but traditionally VET hasn't got strong theoretical academic connection or background in the past. There are some new efforts to change this situation, but it is a very hard work.

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Hans Werner Franz

I think in general it is true that academic research has not very much to do with political decision making. Nevertheless, with projects and programmes, at least as far as they are politically motivated programmes, there is definitely some influence of research. At least part of the Commission's programmes and their internal justification are in the pursuit of political objectives, obviously. And the same applies at least to the German research programmes as far as they are politically motivated. There is some political interest of finding research results to make political decision. Whether they always are taken into consideration is a second question.

We have for example a programme on learning regions. It has definitely to do with questions like: Shall we foster cluster construction or shall we not? Is a cluster organisation good for economic policies or not? And I could give other examples where research programmes clearly have political interest in the background.

Just one remark on what Ludger said. I agree with him: talking about HRD in terms of research is very much separated in many cases from VET research. VET research belongs to the educational area, we talk about how to learn and how to make learning better, whereas in the HRD sector it is much about how to make company organisation better and what can HRD contribute to that. But nevertheless, over the last ten years, even more, 15 years, with the organisation of learning discussion, there is an increasing mix of both approaches, because organisation developers and many managers have learned that they will achieve organisational flexibility only over organisational learning and the organisation of learning processes within companies. Therefore the learning approaches of adult learning theories have come into fashion, so to speak, very much nowadays. So there is a step from HRD to VET also in the research area, and this is the reason why we should continue developing the interlinking elements of both.

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Ludger Deitmer

But to add to this, you are absolutely right what you said that there is learning to be discussed in HRD, but there is very little VET research that is moving into HRD - these people are coming from somewhere else.

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Hans Werner Franz

That's true!

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M'Hamed Dif

I think there is a very important link between research in HRD and VET research, which emerged during the last decade. As I found in my projects, this link to VET is considered as an instrument for the development of human resources. And we cannot talk about this tendency if we don't talk about learning organisations. What are the instruments? The means for that is VET. So the research is now moving, in a forward-looking approach, to look at the two together. The tendency now is moving towards this complementarity and overlapping. This has been confirmed by European projects.

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Barry Nyhan

What I find interesting is that there are discrepancies between what is happening at the national level of research and what is happening at conferences like this and at HRD conferences. They don't fit these stereotypes. In the countries you find research focusing on labour market issues or qualifications frameworks. Speaking for Ireland, they are putting money into this, but as far as I know very few institutions are putting money into pedagogical research or learning organisations

research, trying to look at the social construction of knowledge.

Take the European Commission, the DGEAC (General Directorate-General for Education and Culture). It used to be part of the DG dealing with social affairs, looking at social change in society, employment, equality for women, and education. It has now become an educational directorate, liaising with educational ministers, so it's losing its link in many ways with wider social issues.

There are lots of different ways of looking at VET and HRD research in practice. Some institutions like ITB Bremen never have a problem talking about HRD research, but there are other institutions which say that HRD research is only for pin-striped suited people within business, whereas VET is about looking after the welfare of society and workers. There are lots of stereotypes - "Cedefop - you are dealing with technical training for workers, metal worker apprentices!" Well, I say, we are, but we are dealing with much more than that. You know, there are strong biases and misunderstandings. Maybe researchers like ourselves are the focal people who participate in different forums, sharing experiences with researchers from other countries, trying to break down these stereotypes.

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Krista Loogma

Two remarks about the logic of the VET research programme. I think the national VET research programme should be really connected with the political information and strategy for development of VET; the strategy should be connected with research.

Second, on Magdolna's suggestion about the prestige of VET and HRD research and academic traditions. I think that there are also historical reasons: VET used to be always something very practical, and theories are not connected with this research; HRD research has been better equipped theoretically, because it is based on management theories and organisational theories. These histories might be very different in other countries.

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M'Hamed Dif

I would just like to add to what was observed by other colleagues. I think this background you could find on institutional level, this is linked to the traditions of two spheres: the production or the training and the educational systems. As you find in France, the education system is completely separate from the production sphere. And behind economics, the economies are more concentrated on human resource progress. But now the tendency is changing, in the last ten, 15 years. When we now talk about learning organisations we have to look at HRD in connection with the basis of VET.

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Ludger Deitmer

I think we even have to go to the policy to overcome the gap between VET and HRD: the social question on the one side and the economic question on the other side. Even in the policy fields - in the economic, industrial, social and educational policy - there has to take place some kind of integration, of coordination, which is not existing. The gaps between ministries can be very strong, they are different worlds, there is no connection. This is needed, definitely on the regional level, when we talk of a regional entity which is taking care of the local VET system. It's not only a question of the social ministries in that case, it is also a question of the economic or the industrial strategies in that region. That's a huge idea which has to be looked at in the future, to create VET coordination of these different policy fields and also more integration between HRD and VET.

Johanna Lasonen

Magda mentioned this nature of research, how reactive this is, and maybe quite in many countries research is evaluated. Hans Werner and Ludger referred to this co-acting nature. Of course, if there is basic research in VET, good basic research is also proactive. The question is now: who is reviewing, who is anticipating the future needs of labour markets? These 250 institutions, which were investigated, may also include the different national agencies working under ministries of labour or ministries of education. They seem to be in charge of doing this proactive type of studies, anticipating the needs of labour markets.

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Barry Nyhan

Just as a final reflection on our discussion on HRD and VET research. I think the central thing is the content, the purpose of the research and the projects that are going on. That's much more important than the labelling. Sabine mentioned the Researching Work and Learning conference which took place in Sydney in December 2005. It had another kind of culture round it, which is different to VET and HRD conferences. It seems to cross both, and also interestingly enough, it had a very left-wing critical edge to it. There was a critique of policies of the Australian government and the American government. It has been an interesting experience participating in three kinds of conferences (ECER, HRD and Work and Learning) where there are distinct cultures - there is no question about that. We should continue to explore these differences, and keep an open dialogue going.

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Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe

– A round table discussion on diverse patterns and common concerns

Presentation at VETNET strand
of ECER Conference 2006

Geneva, 13-16 September 2005

Barry Nyhan,
Cedefop, Thessaloniki
(bn@cedefop.europa.eu)

'Constructing the European project'

- Creating shared European meanings
- A 'constructivist project' to build a shared working-life culture that is sustainable economically and socially
- Debates about a 'deeper' or merely 'enlarged' Europe

Comparison of VET with HRD – origins of traditions (1)

VET	HRD
Focus on 'public goods'- workers (intermediate and lower skill levels)	Focus on 'the private needs' of an organisation - management
Socio-political system - participation in society - 'industrial democracy'	Efficiency of businesses

Comparison of VET with HRD - origins of traditions (2)

VET	HRD
'Professional identity'	Organisational (company) identity
Close links with educational system	Close links with 'business schools' and private consultants (HRM)
Origins in/close links with trade-union demands	Origins in management efficiency (management development – HRM)
Close links with traditional qualification systems	Promoting change, flexibility and multi-skilling

Strengths and weaknesses of VET and HRD

VET	HRD
Conserves boundaries between disciplinary/occupational contents and contexts	Tends to be 'content-context' free' facilitating boundary crossing
Over-identified with technical education to the neglect of organisational development	Close links with 'organisational development/learning' concerns
Focus on the learning of individuals	Focus on the learning of a social system (organisation)
Knowledge is possessed by individuals	Knowledge is collective

Research on VET and HRD in Europe

Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe

Issues arising from an institutional analysis

Sabine Manning - Research Forum WIFO Berlin

June 2006 (revised version)

Theses for discussion

Introduction (see below)

[Thesis 1](#) - Research and related activities in HRD/VET

[Thesis 2](#) - HRD/VET and related research fields

[Thesis 3](#) - Distinction between HRD and VET

[Thesis 4](#) - Profiles of HRD and VET research

[Thesis 5](#) - National and European HRD/VET research

> [Round table discussion at the HRD Conference Tilburg 2006](#)

> [Round table discussion at ECER/VETNET Geneva 2006](#)

Introduction

This study is part of a Cedefop supported project, carried out in the context of the European Research Overview (ERO). The initial mapping of HRD and VET related research, presented in this study, is based on an institutional analysis. The aim is to identify thematic profiles, without any assessment of the quality or capacity (size and manpower) of the institutions. The present analysis starts out from a selection of 250 institutions across 22 European countries, which carry out HRD/VET related research ('HRD/VET' stands for 'HRD and/or VET').

The institutions have been selected from country reports supplied by a Cedefop network of experts, the ReferNet (ERO National Research Reports - ENRRs). While the basic list of institutions for this study is identical with selection provided by the national reports, the relevant information on these institutions has been compiled mainly from the institutional home pages concerned, partly supported by the descriptions given in the ENRRs.

At the present stage of the project, the research profile of the institutions is investigated for Europe as a whole; at a later

stage, clustering by country is envisaged. The analysis has been done by applying content-related indicators and descriptors. This approach allows for linkages with previous thematic analyses of European projects and conference papers (see [Monitor](#)).

The following five theses highlight interim outcomes which are focused on those institutions that are characterised by both significant research activities and significant HRD/VET components in their profile (total 176 institutions). The graphical figures, which serve to illustrate the outcomes, are all related to this group of institutions. Each thesis leads to a few questions intended to stimulate the discussion.

Two round tables of European experts, who have been involved in both HRD and VET research, are arranged for this discussion in 2006: the first one at the HRD Conference in Tilburg and the second one at ECER (VETNET) in Geneva. The panel group at each round table is invited to take up major points from the theses, questioning or confirming them in the light of their national and European experience, reflecting on possible reasons and implications, and putting forward their own views on the HRD/VET research landscape. The proceedings of these two round table discussions are included as part of the study outcomes.

[\[Thesis 1\]](#) [\[Thesis 2\]](#) [\[Thesis 3\]](#) [\[Thesis 4\]](#) [\[Thesis 5\]](#) - [\[Round table Tilburg\]](#)

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Thesis 1 - Research and related activities in HRD/VET

The standard pattern 'R&D' only partly applies to HRD/VET related research: this research is in fact linked with a variety of activities (single or combined): mostly teaching, fairly frequently development or consulting, less often information or administration [Figure 1a]. In most cases, research is combined with one other activity, in less cases with two or more; only a fairly small group of institutions carries out research on its own [Figure 1b]. The combination with other activities often implies an integrated approach: research may incorporate related activities in its wider profile or, being in a minor role, research may be an integral part of these activities.

Questions:

Which are the most important linkages in qualitative terms (adding value to research): possibly research plus development and research plus consulting? How significant is the (quantitatively dominating) linkage between research and teaching in HRD/VET?

Figure 1a

Combination between research (R) and other types of activity at institutions (total: 176)

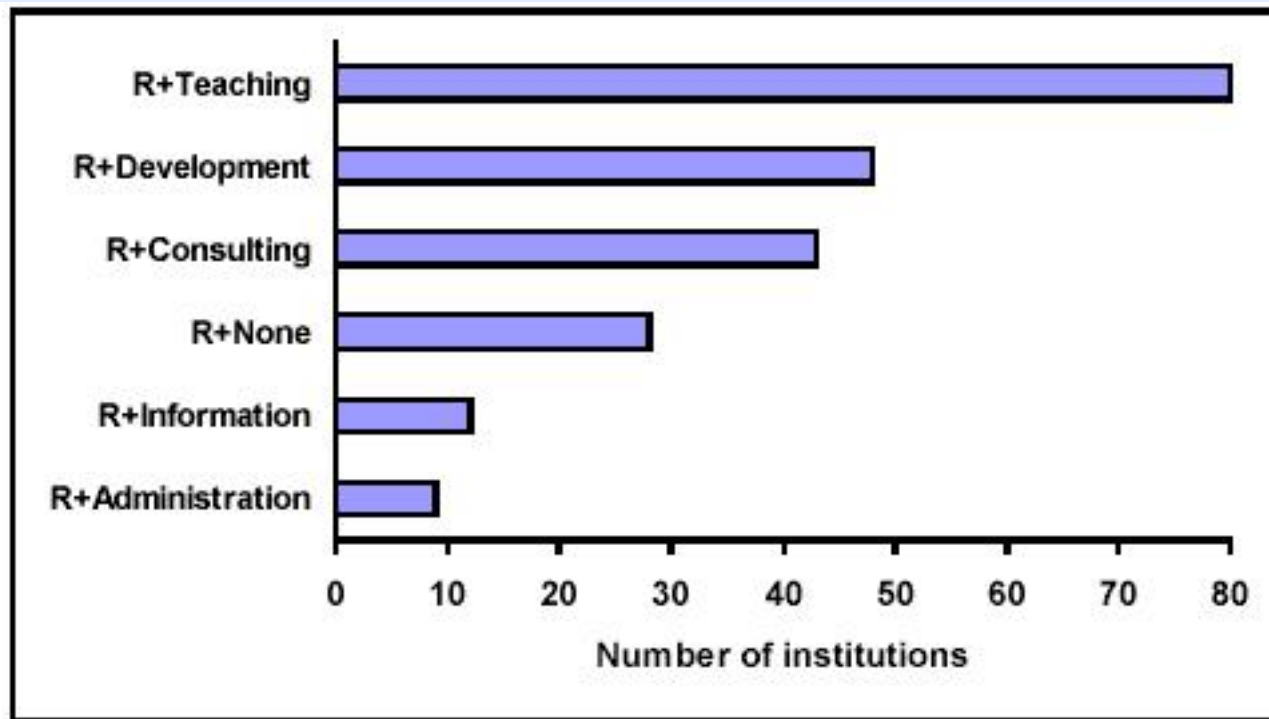
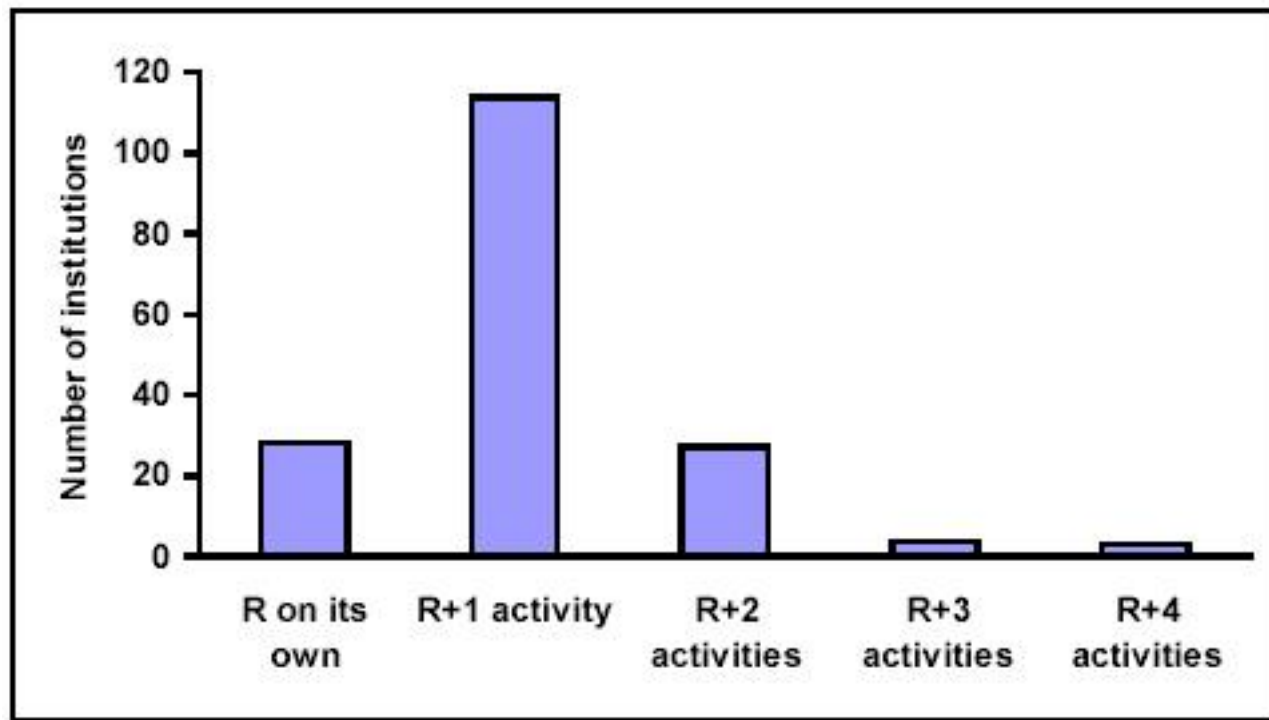


Figure 1b

Combination between research (R) and other types of activity within individual institutions (total: 176)



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Thesis 2 - HRD/VET and related research fields

The cross-disciplinary nature of HRD/VET research is reflected in the institutional context of related research fields. Mostly, HRD/VET research is linked with educational studies, followed by economics (incl. business studies), sociology (incl. political studies) and work related studies (incl. technology/ ICT) - [Figure 2a]. A substantial part of the institutions cover several related fields [Figure 2b], above all linking HRD/VET with both economics and sociology. Only a small group of institutions is concerned with HRD/VET (mostly VET) on its own [Figures 2a/b].

Questions:

How to assess the linkage of HRD/VET with contextual fields of research? Does this make HRD/VET research more prosperous or more dependent?

Figure 2a

Type of field related to HRD/VET within institutions (percentage of total =176; partly overlapping)

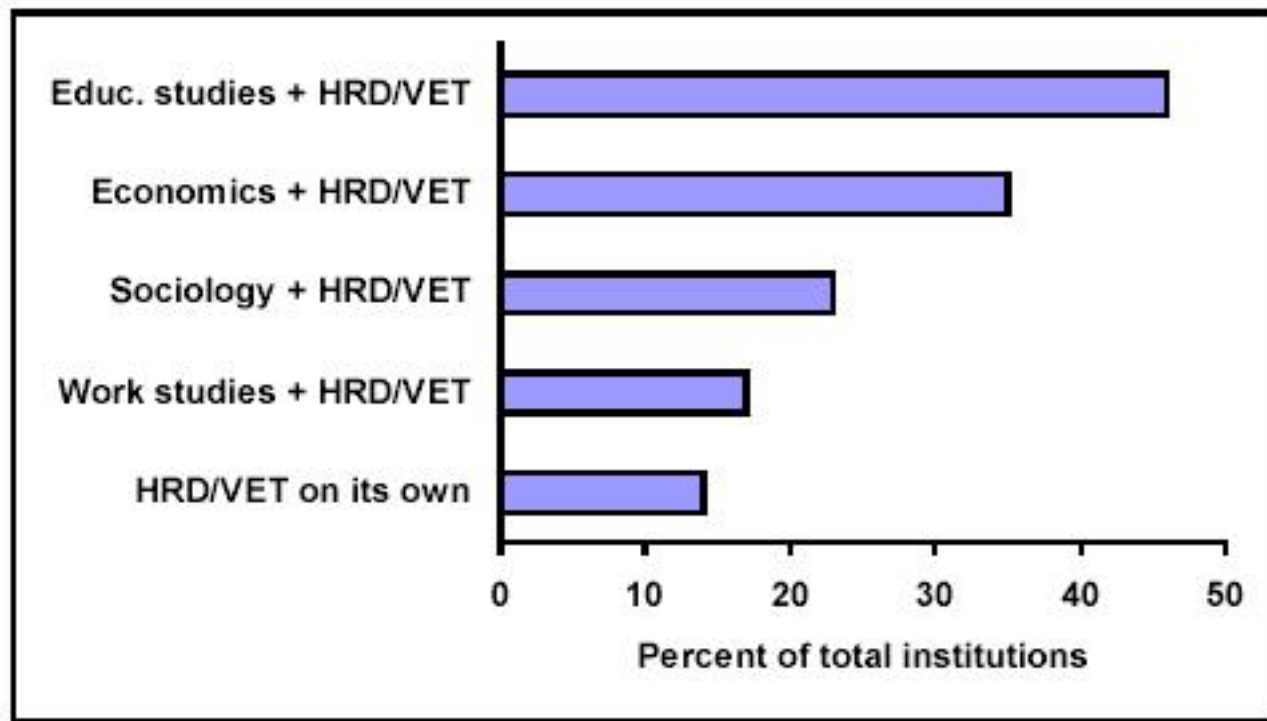
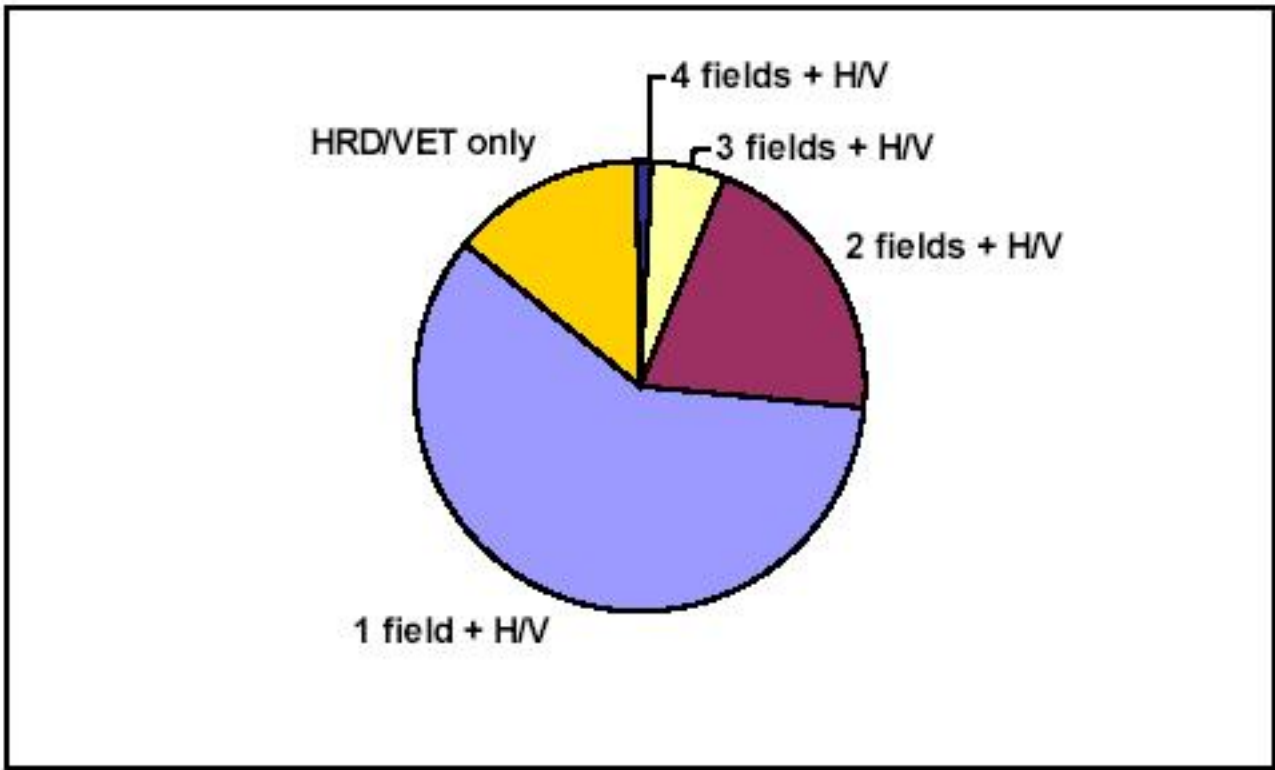


Figure 2b

Number of HRD/VET related fields within individual institutions (proportion of total =176)



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Thesis 3 - Distinction between HRD and VET

The constellation of HRD and VET as two fields of research, which for instance seems to match the two European conferences (HRD conference and ECER/VETNET), does hardly apply to the institutional landscape in Europe. There are only a few institutions where both the name and the profile of activities clearly points to HRD or VET, but a large number where neither the name nor the profile relates to HRD or VET [Figure 3a].

If the profile of activities across all institutions (irrespective of their names) is considered, the following picture appears: The largest proportion of institutions include overlapping aspects of VET and HRD (such as learning and work, continuing education or skills development); less frequent are those institutions that conduct VET specific and/or HRD specific activities; and finally there is a small group including both HRD and VET as specific activities [Figure 3b].

Questions:

How can we assess the large area of overlapping research (such as learning and work): Is it subsumed under either HRD or VET, or is it rooted in either HRD or VET? What is the role of the two parallel European conferences (HRD Conference and ECER/ VETNET), both of which have a lot of this research in common? Is perhaps the international conference 'Researching Work and Learning' a step toward developing a field in its own right?

Figure 3a

HRD/VET identity according to name of institutions and to activity at institutions (total: 176)

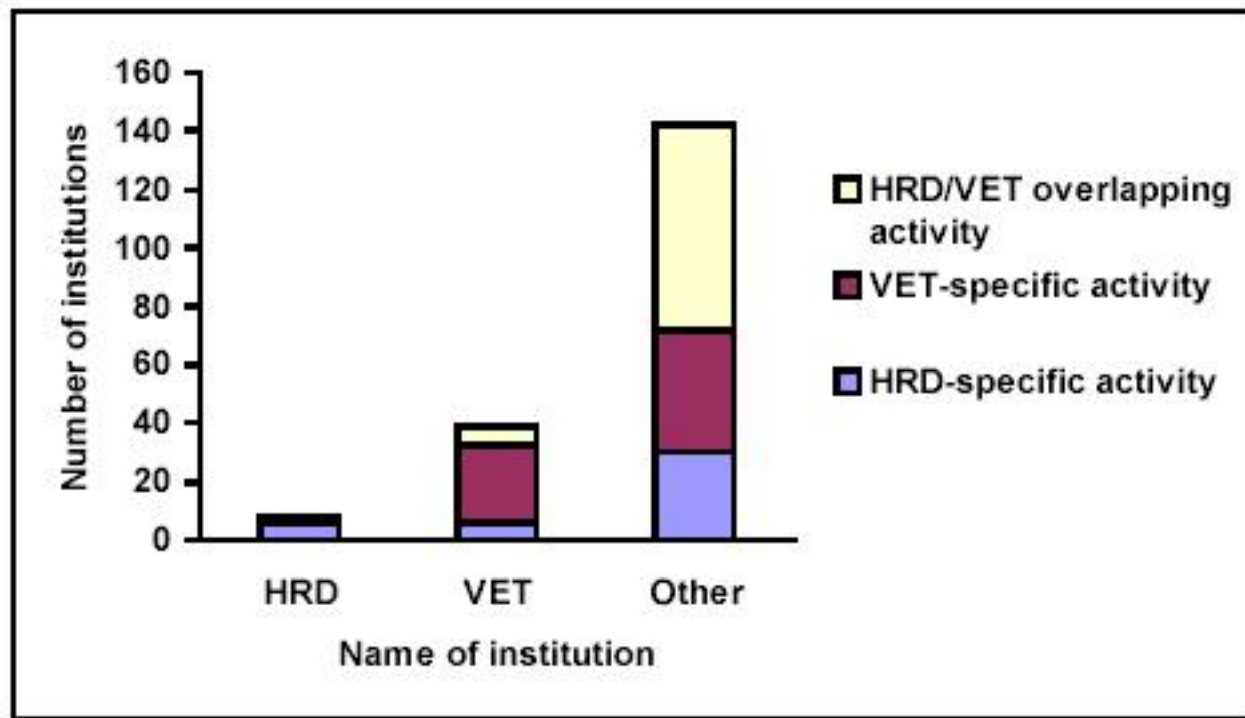
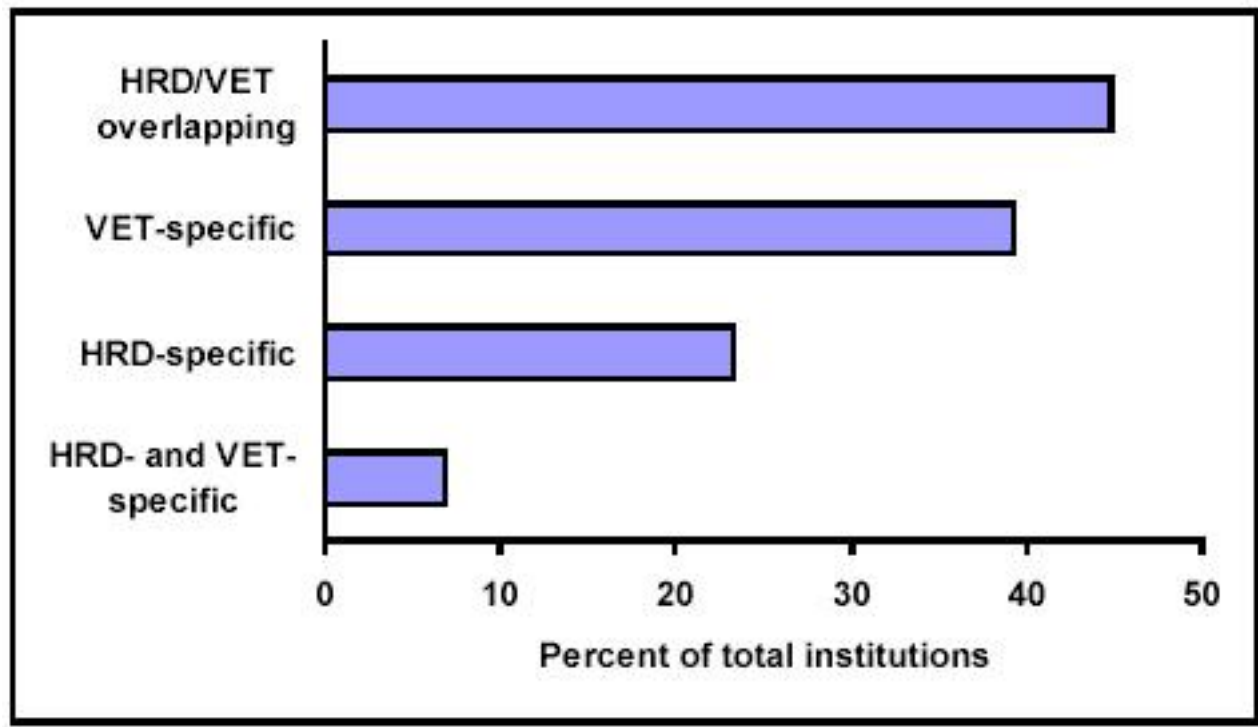


Figure 3b
HRD/VET activity at institutions (percentage of total =176)



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Thesis 4 - Profiles of HRD and VET research

HRD research is related to a broader thematic profile than VET research. This is evident from comparing the range of themes, identified by thematic descriptors of VET/HRD related research (see Monitor > [Descriptors](#)), within institutions [Figure 4a]. In cases where both HRD and VET are covered, the overall thematic profile is particularly broad. On the other hand, research in the overlapping area between HRD and VET (e.g. 'work and learning' - see thesis 3) tends to have a more narrow profile. 'Narrow' in this case means that individual aspects of VET/HRD (e.g. 'competence development') are addressed, but these may be embedded in a neighbouring research field (e.g. labour market surveys).

Furthermore, the identification of HRD and VET related research by thematic descriptors, also across languages, reveals conceptual differences: While VET is identified as a fairly common concept (despite the variety of training patterns), HRD has got various orientations. In general, HRD related research across European countries is focused more often on the labour market than on the organisation, only partly it covers both [Figure 4b].

Questions:

What can we associate with 'HRD' in European research? Is there a field of HRD or rather a variety of HRD features linking up with VET in broad thematic profiles? Where do we find European research on HRD in the labour market?

There is little evidence of this research at the present European conferences on HRD or VET!

Figure 4a

Thematic profile of research in relation to HRD/VET focus at institutions
(percentage of each group)

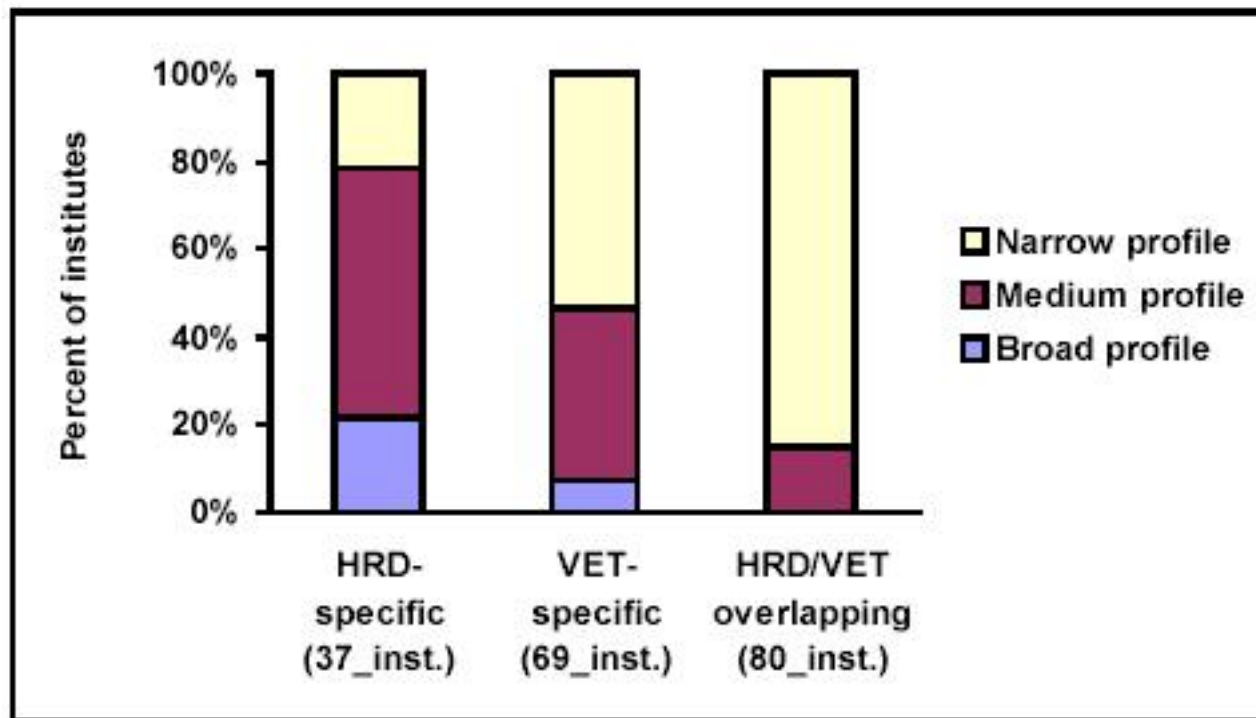
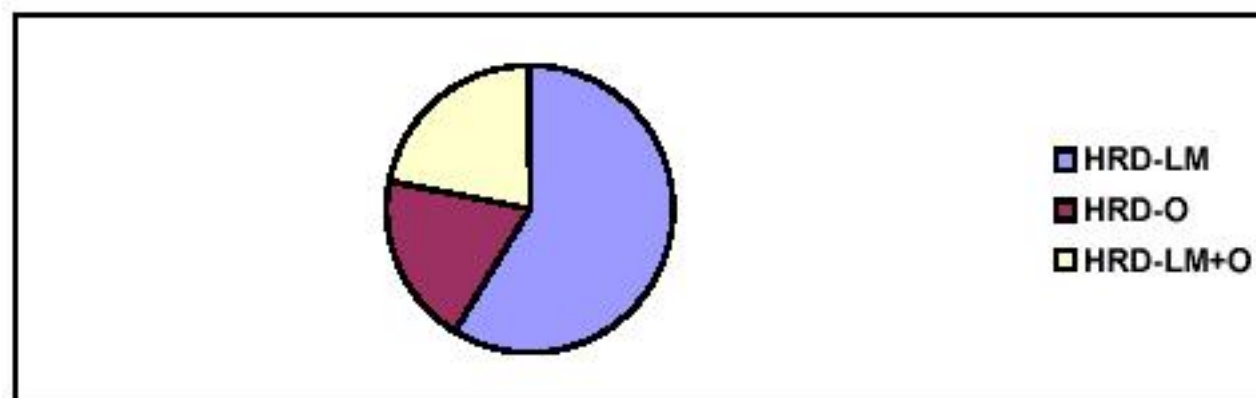


Figure 4b
 HRD related research within institutions - focus on labour market or organisation (total 41)



Research on VET and HRD in Europe

Mapping HRD and VET research across Europe

Issues arising from an institutional analysis

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Thesis 5 - National and European HRD/VET research

The thematic pattern of HRD/VET related research, which has been identified for the institutions in individual countries (thesis 4), differs considerably from that found for papers and projects at European level. Both the papers at European conferences (HRD conference and ECER/VETNET) and the EU projects of recent years have a strong focus on process issues (learning, competence development etc), while the institutions have high proportions shared by three areas: system (such as adult education, IVET), process (learning and work etc) and framework (labour market, society etc) - [Figure 5]. The basis for this comparative analysis are the thematic descriptors of VET/HRD related research (see Monitor > [Descriptors](#)).

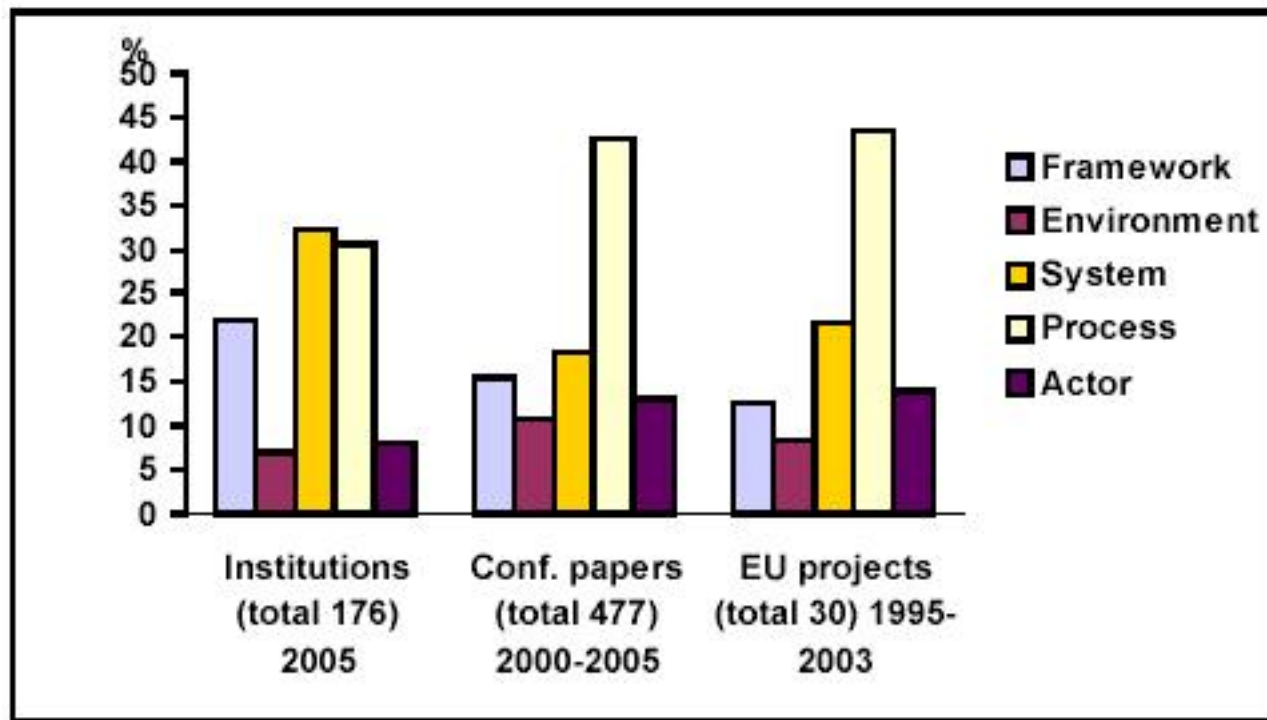
Questions:

How can we assess the difference in thematic patterns of research between national institutions and European conferences and projects? Are European activities, by addressing process issues rather than system and framework aspects, more forward-looking? Or do they neglect issues that are no less essential for national development?

Figure 5

Thematic pattern of VET/HRD related research:

Institutions, conference papers and EU projects (percentage of each group)



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ECER Roundtable on HRD and VET, Friday 15 September 2006

Statements **Hans-Werner Franz**, Sozialforschungsstelle Dortmund

In order to make accessible what I am going to say I have to provide some information on the type of research sfs is conducting and how we do this. The Social Research Centre, as of 2007 a central institute of the University of Dortmund, is one of the oldest and largest social research institutions in Germany. Founded in 1946, it presently has about 80 employees, 45 researchers, and a turnover of approx. EUR 5 million. Three quarters and more of these € 5 million come from the mostly public research market. Sfs is a Mode 2 institute. We pursue an empirical research concept which we call "Social Science Production": production of social science and social production of science. The output of our production is social because the production process of science is social, at the same time, scientific because we consider ourselves to be in a double-bind situation, on the one hand with a link to the scientific community obliged to follow scientific quality criteria; on the other hand, with a link to practical fields of action who provide their own quality criteria of usefulness of science.

We work exclusively in projects. Nearly all these projects are conceived in close contact with social actors in their specific action fields. These partners actively participate in the definition of the problem giving rise to the project and consequently the research questions to be answered by the project; the projects are carried out together with them; and the projects' products must comply with scientific and practical requirements. All project consortia include several partners depending on the problem and its possible solutions. The research process is organised as a shared re-search and learning process of which usually we are the network managers. Thus, most projects are a mix of research, development and consulting.

As to my own fields of activity, along with being the institute's financial manager, I am a researcher and consultant with a focus on the development of organisation and human resources (I cannot separate them), organisational learning, VET and quality management (mostly EFQM and ISO 9001 in educational and training organisations), but also regional, network and cluster development.

What I want to say: I tend to have an integrated view on HRD and VET issues as my practice is highly integrated. And: I tend to have a greatly non-academic view as our research is very untypical for the bulk of what academic research in HRD and VET represents.

Statement 1

Barry Nyhan's summary of HRD and VET research coincides greatly with mine concerning HRD. It heavily collides with the reality of VET-related research in the German speaking countries (for once, including The Netherlands). HRD is a management-oriented construction which has come from the Anglo-saxon countries, mainly US, merging in Germany with what we used to call "personnel development". I share Nyhan's ascriptions throughout the three transparencies ha presented in Tilburg. Concerning VET, the "German speaking world" and much of the Scandinavian world, too, cannot share many of his descriptors.

Statement 2

VET, vocational education and training, in the German speaking countries is not focused on “public goods”. Companies are the employers and trainers of trainees, they pay for them, and they mostly train them to employ them afterwards. “Berufsschule” is a one-day-a-week element in this training career which is greatly spreading far beyond industrial workers into white collar work and services. The links with the educational system are by no means close, they are loose. The origins are also, but not at all exclusively linked to trade union demands; the Chambers of Crafts as well as of Industry and Commerce are the most important pillars of the system. There is no longer an over-identification with technical education nor is there a focus on individual learning. On the contrary, the most highly valued asset of VET is “organisational socialisation”. This still is the state of affairs, although under the impact of globalisation there is a cultural shift going on in these issues.

Statement 3

For the German speaking countries, it is necessary to distinguish initial VET which is highly formalised, and continuing VET (CVET) which is mainly structured as a free and open market system; so there are two separate systems with separate systemic logics. It is impossible to speak about VET in general.

Statement 4

In the German speaking countries, since the seventies of last century, research related to VET has achieved a high reputation, at least within the social sciences. It is the most advanced research on learning and learning methods and its findings are widely institutionalised within the vocational standards. The VET system is miles ahead of the academic system which still is a teaching system throughout Europe. At least in Germany, vocational school teachers are trained at universities.

Statement 5

HRD and VET in organisations tend to be separate systems in large organisations; HRD looks at the upper people, VET at the lower ranks. But even so, organisational traditions in Europe are very different. In France, an engineer with a university degree in many cases will do the same job as a Meister in the German production organisation. The difference is that the Meister comes from the lower ranks, has a much more practical training and experience and a full organisational socialisation, while the French engineers considers himself an academic, has a lack of practical experience and no organisational socialisation which makes him an alien in the eyes of the workers. In Germany, HRD normally includes the Meister level thus reaching farther down than in France, although modern concepts of HRD practised in most German large enterprises do not distinguish any more as they include the whole workforce in their systems.

Statement 6

I agree with those colleagues who assumed that individual scientists and programmatic representations of institutes need not coincide. At least in our case, we have two basic types of practice concerning papers and presentations at conferences which mirror the double-bind situation of our work: one is to present innovative approaches, methods or results of specific projects; the other one is to present theoretical or methodical reflexions across projects and individual work areas in order to reflect on a higher theoretical level what individual projects frequently do not allow me to reflect.

VET and HRD research in Estonia

Krista Loogma, PhD

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Institute of Educational Research

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VET and HRD – historical background

- HRD and VET researches have been and still are rather separated
- HRD researches dating back to the end of 1970s: combined with adult teaching and consulting activities and management and organisational sciences (departments of economy of universities, R&D institutes of different industrial sectors)
- VET researches dating back 1980s: very few narrowly oriented psychometric analyse, aptitude tests for low&medium level workers but also professional orientations, values (universities, institute of Academy of Sciences, institutes of different industrial sectors)

Changes in the transition period

- Restructuring the network of academic research institutes (from AoS to Universities)
- Dying out of sectoral R&D institutes
- No public funding for research on VET, HRD (project based activity)
- Emergence of private consultancy R&D units
- No academic research traditions in VET, just couple of research institutions (IER of Tallinn University)

Mapping HRD and VET

HRD research	VET research
universities private consultancy firms	universities private research units (very few, not academically oriented)
HRD+psychology, economy, organisational disciplines HRD+(adult) education, development, consulting	VET+labour market,

VET researches

- System (economic, social and labour market context of VET)
 - Inner structure of the VET (school network, curricula development)
- 3) Competences, learning (incl. learning at work) and teaching in VET