

Title

Thematic profile of European research in vocational education

Subtitle

EU projects and VETNET ECER papers in comparison (1995 to 2003)

Author

Sabine Manning

Location

<http://www.b.shuttle.de/wifo/vet-pr/themes.htm>

Last update of web page

28 September 2004

Date of pdf reproduction

13 January 2006

Number of pages

12

User rights

Printing and copying for personal use without permission, provided the source is acknowledged

Publisher

Research Forum WIFO Berlin www.wifo-gate.org

Contact

Sabine Manning sm@wifo-gate.org

Thematic profile of European research in vocational education



EU projects and VETNET ECER papers in comparison

Research Forum
WIFO

Contribution to the VETNET Programme at ECER 2004 in Crete

Sabine Manning, Research Forum WIFO Berlin

[WIFO Gate Themes](#)

>>> Basic tool for thematic analysis: [Descriptors](#) ([map with explanation](#)) ([figure](#))

[Introduction and summary](#)

Figures (medium size with text/ large size without text)

- 1 EU projects 1995-2003 : Thematic descriptors ([medium+text/ large](#))
- 2 EU projects 1995-2003 : Thematic categories ([medium+text/ large](#))
- 3 VETNET ECER papers 1998-2003 : Thematic descriptors ([medium+text/ large](#))
- 4 VETNET ECER papers 1998-2003 : Thematic categories ([medium+text/ large](#))
- 5 VETNET ECER papers over 6 years : Thematic categories ([medium+text/ large](#))
- 6 EU projects and VETNET ECER papers : Thematic categories ([medium+text/ large](#))
- 7 EU projects and VETNET ECER papers : Thematic descriptors ([medium+text/ large](#))

[Top of the page](#)

Set up: 08/09/2004

Latest update: 28/09/2004

Contact: [Sabine Manning](#)

© [WIFO](#)

Thematic profile of European research in VET and HRD

EU projects and VETNET ECER papers in comparison

Introduction and summary

In a preceding analysis of European research networks in vocational education and training (see [presentation](#)), both EU projects and VETNET ECER papers have already been investigated. While the network analysis focused on partnership activities in carrying out projects and producing papers, the present thematic analysis is concerned with the contents of these products.

The **outcome** of the thematic analysis of VET/HRD research in Europe may be summarised in the following points:

- the focus of research is on processes (learning, work, competence etc) rather than systems;
- the importance of processes, identified in papers, gradually increased over the six year period;
- other aspects (actors involved, socio-economic framework and institutional environment) appear to be less relevant.

The projects and papers investigated in the thematic analysis are briefly described below:

Projects have been supported by the European Commission via the Leonardo programme, the research framework programmes (FP4 and FP5) and similar programmes. Included in this analysis are 30 projects (from the period 1995 to 2003) carrying out research in European vocational education. The project coordinators and partners under contract are institutions only; however, in reality the formation of partnerships rests on individuals; this analysis is therefore concerned with partner and coordinator persons.

VETNET, the Vocational Education and Training Network, was set up in 1994, in the context of the European Educational Research Association (EERA). Its main function has been to organise the VETNET programme at the annual European Conference of Educational Research (**ECER**). The VETNET **papers** presented at ECER have been collected in annual proceedings (printed or on-line). The present thematic analysis of papers refers to the proceedings of the period 1998 to 2003 (six years, with 131 papers in total).

The thematic analysis of projects and papers has been carried out by applying **descriptors**. These have been developed as part of the WIFO Monitor (see page on [descriptors](#) - return by using the back key!). For each paper or project, up to five descriptors have been selected (on average, three were sufficient or available for describing the contents concerned). In the figures, the descriptors are reproduced in abbreviated form (the main terms only) - the full presentation of the descriptors should therefore be viewed in parallel.

The details of the analytical results are presented in graphic form with explanatory text > see [Figures](#).

As major **reference** of the thematic analysis, complete collections of both the projects and the papers are supplied below:

- the EU **projects** (1995 to 2003) selected for analysis > see [Annex](#) ;

- the **papers** contained in the ECER VETNET proceedings 1998 to 2003 (chronological order)

In Mulder, Martin (ed.). European vocational education and training research. Proceedings of the VETNET program at the ECER conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 17-20 September 1998, pp. 151-158.

In Lasonen, Johanna et al. (eds.). Conference Proceedings: ECER 99 Conference: EERA Network 2 programme; VETNET and AHRD; Lahti, Finland, 22-25 September 1999. Jyväskylä: Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, pp. 141-158 [parallel [Internet version](#) by British Education Index; Education-line: Electronic texts in education and training].

In Manning, Sabine; Raffe, David (eds.). VETNET ECER 2000 proceedings: Current research in European vocational education and human resource development. Berlin: Wissenschaftsforum Bildung und Gesellschaft e.V. [<http://www.ecer.wifo-gate.org>].

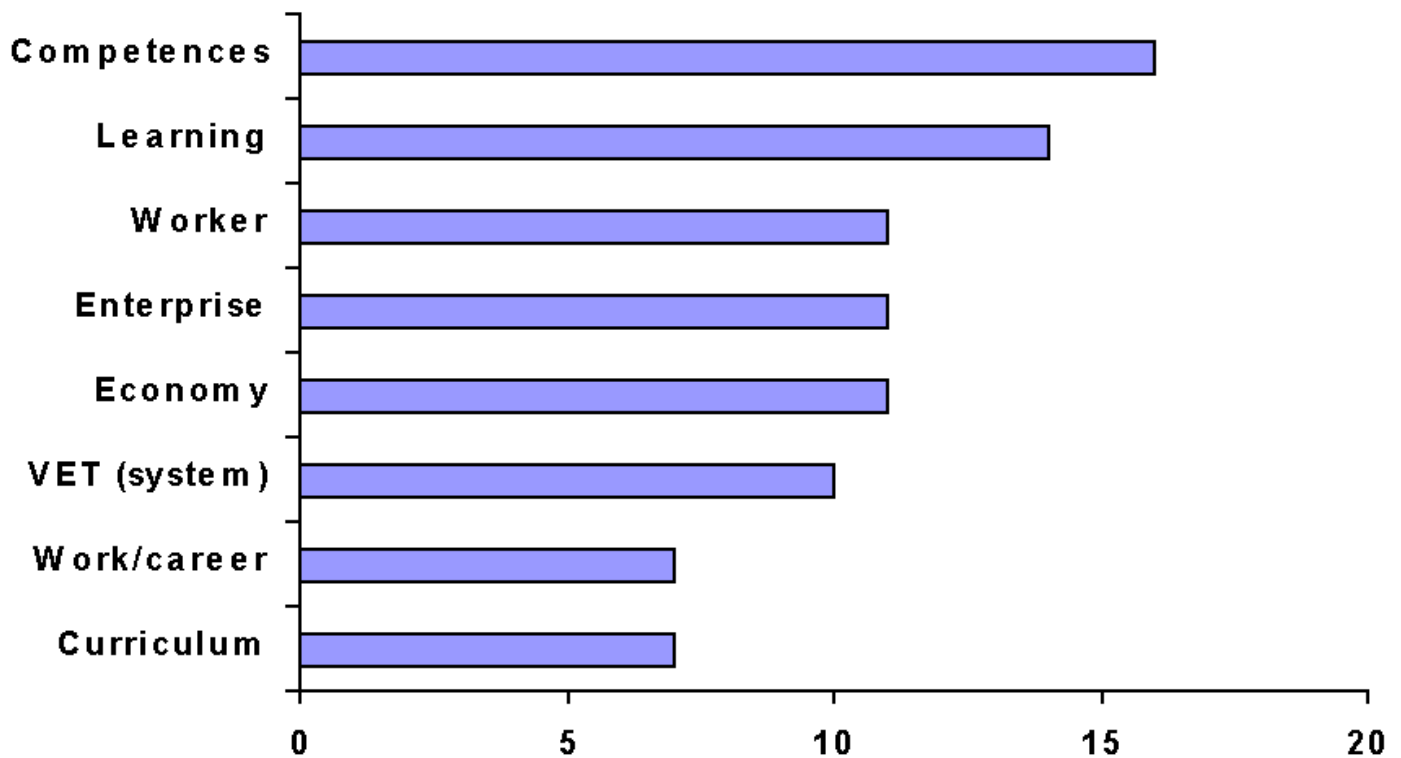
In Manning, Sabine; Dif, M'hamed (eds.). VETNET ECER 2001 proceedings: Current research in European vocational education and human resource development. Berlin: Wissenschaftsforum Bildung und Gesellschaft e.V. [<http://www.ecer.wifo-gate.org>].

In Manning, Sabine; Griffiths, Toni; Oliveira, Teresa (eds.). VETNET ECER 2002 proceedings: Current research in European vocational education and human resource development. Berlin: Wissenschaftsforum Bildung und Gesellschaft e.V. [<http://www.ecer.wifo-gate.org>].

In Manning, Sabine; Griffiths, Toni; Deitmer, Ludger (eds.). VETNET ECER 2003 proceedings: Current research in European vocational education and human resource development. Berlin: Wissenschaftsforum Bildung und Gesellschaft e.V. [<http://www.ecer.wifo-gate.org>].

Full details of the individual projects and papers under investigation can be obtained from the database of the European Research Overview ([ERO Base](#))* which is maintained as part of the CEDEFOP Research Arena (CEDRA) in the European Training Village (ETV).

EU projects 1995-2003 : Thematic descriptors (top group)

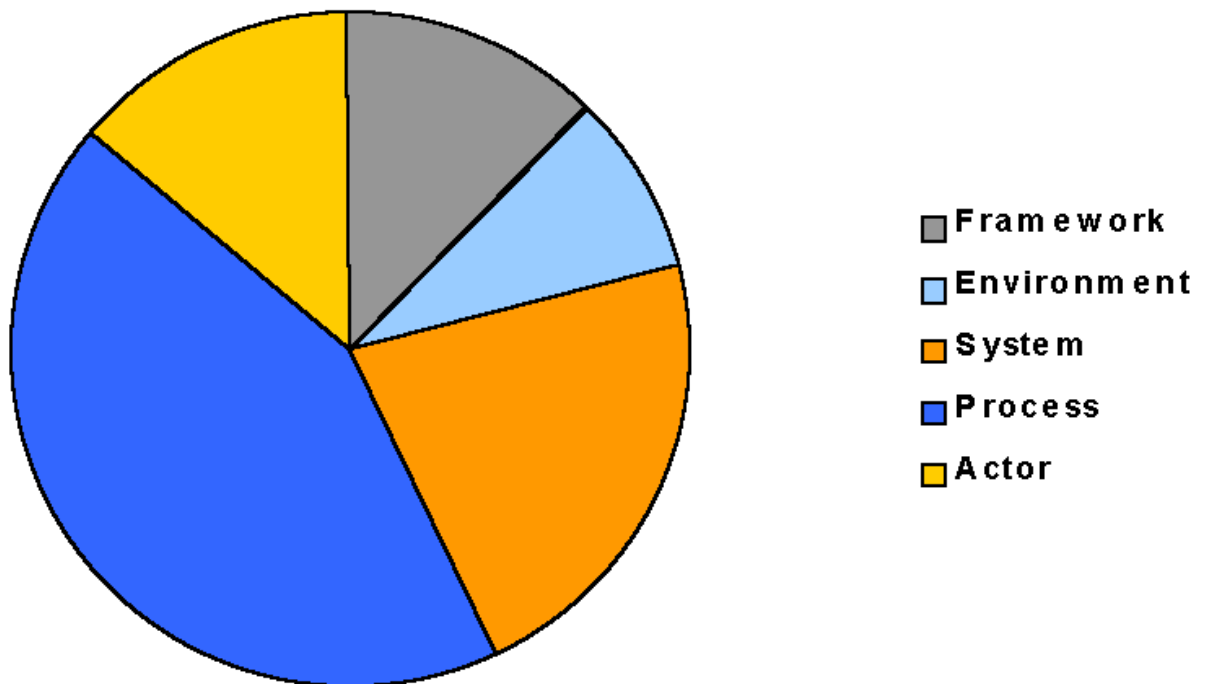


The EU projects have been analysed by applying thematic descriptors. This figure shows those descriptors which have been chosen most frequently (above average among all descriptors). The bars indicate how often the individual descriptors were used. The focus of project themes is clearly on competence and learning, followed by aspects of the work situation and economy. The VET system also has prominence.

The (invisible) bottom end of this scale is worth mentioning too. The descriptors which were not applicable at all include administration, lifelong learning and region. This indicates a certain deficit of contextual aspects among VET and HRD related project themes.

For more information on the thematic analysis see [introduction](#) and the map of [descriptors](#) (return by using the back key!).

EU projects 1995-2003 : Thematic categories



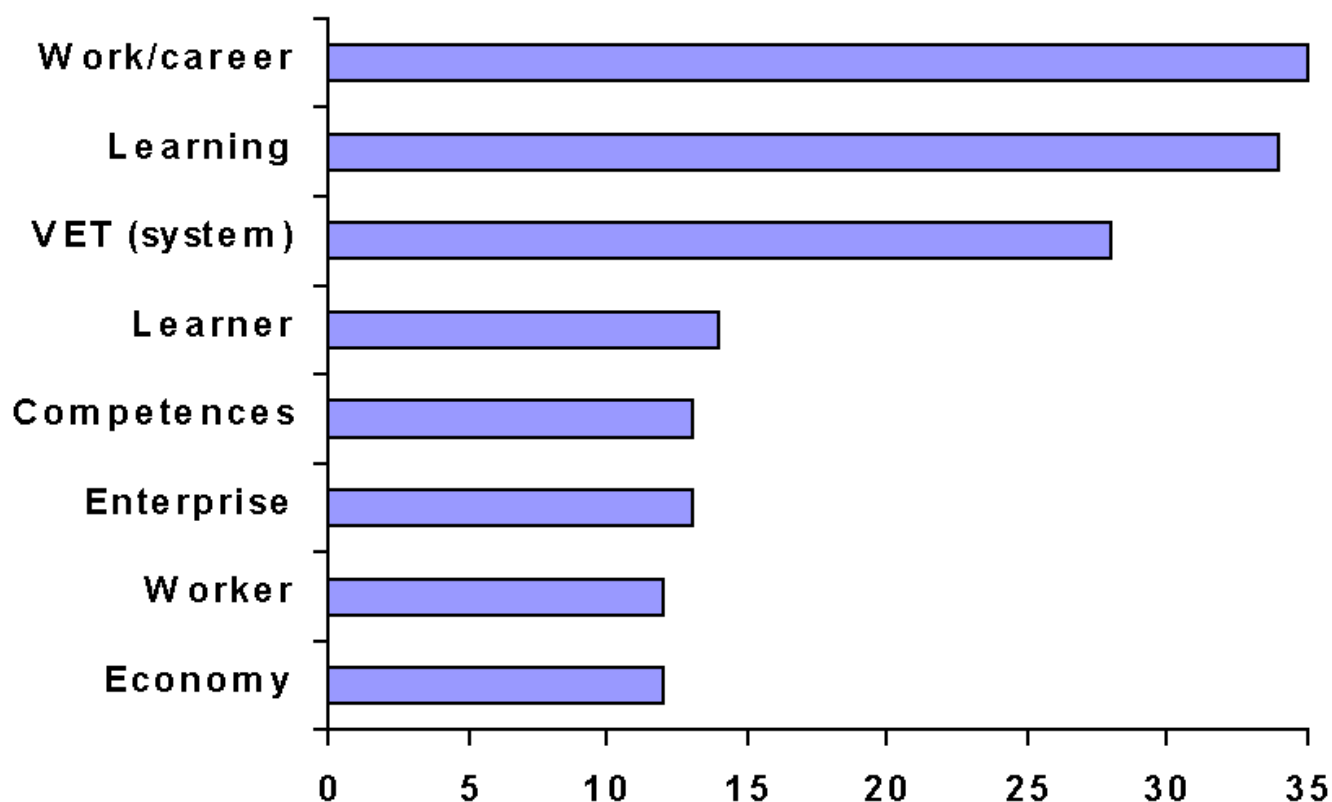
This figure shows the five thematic categories related to EU projects. These categories are associated with groups of descriptors which have been applied to the projects. The most frequently represented category is *process*, which includes, above all, the descriptors competence and learning.

The other categories appear to be less important. Next in frequency is the category *system*, which particularly represents the descriptor VET. The category *actor* mainly refers to the descriptor worker; the category *framework* to the descriptor economy, and the category *environment* to the descriptor enterprise.

This breakdown reveals that, among the projects, each category is related to at least one major descriptor (see the top group of descriptors in [figure 1](#)). However, the category *process* stands out, not only in the overall frequency of descriptor applications, but in representing quite a range of frequently applied descriptors. This particular feature will be taken up again in comparison with papers ([figure 7](#)).

For more information on the thematic analysis see [introduction](#) and the map of [descriptors](#) (return by using the back key!).

VETNET ECER papers 1998-2003 : Thematic descriptors (top group)

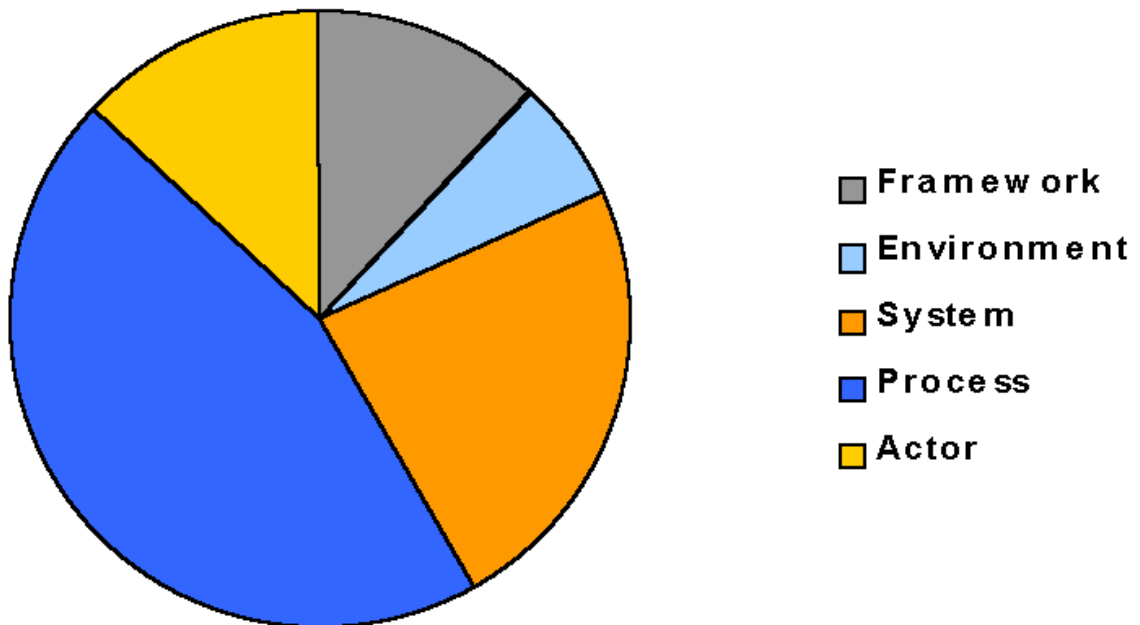


The thematic descriptors have been applied to papers of the VETNET ECER proceedings, first of all in total (covering six years). This figure shows those descriptors which have been chosen most frequently (above average among all descriptors). The bars indicate how often the individual descriptors were used. The focus of project themes is clearly on work or career, learning and VET as a system. The remaining descriptors of this group are fairly close to average application.

The (invisible) bottom end of this scale contains quite a range of scarcely applied descriptors, without however indicating any deficit of general relevance (in contrast to the projects - see [figure 1](#)).

For more information on the thematic analysis see [introduction](#) and the map of [descriptors](#) (return by using the back key!).

VETNET ECER papers 1998-2003 : Thematic categories



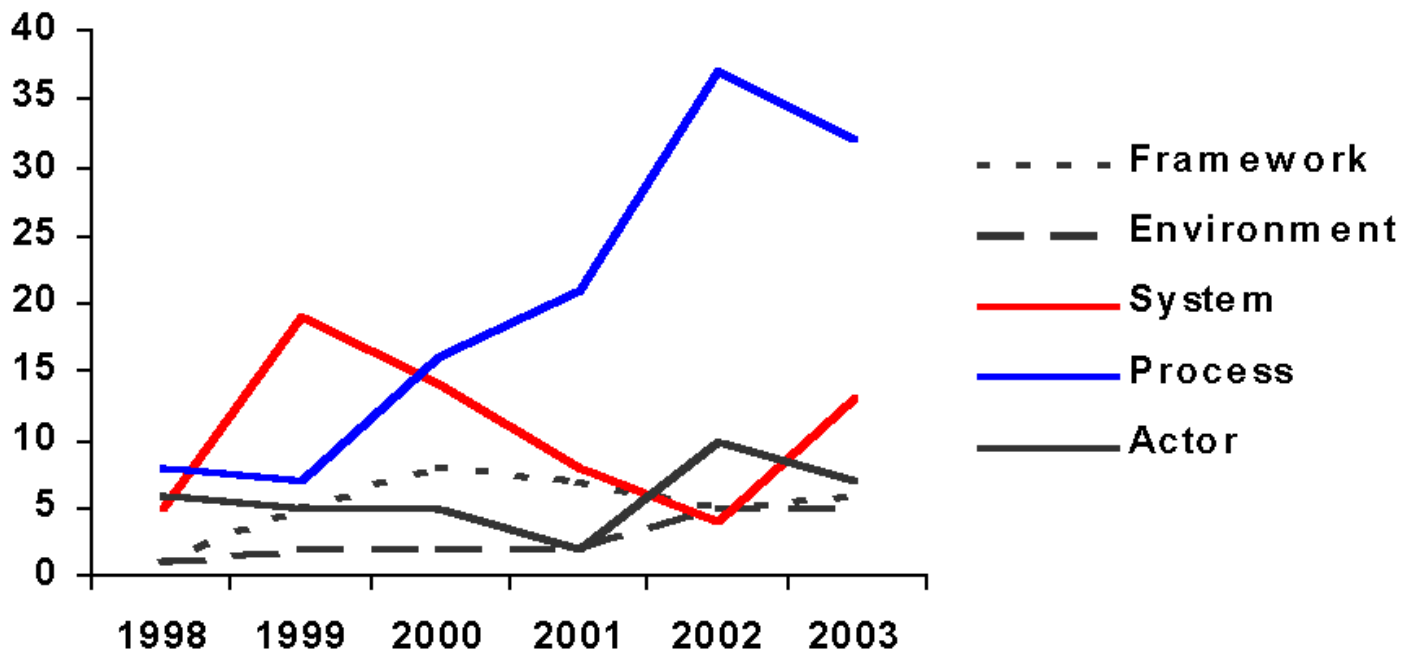
This figure shows the five thematic categories related to VETNET ECER papers. These categories are associated with groups of descriptors which have been applied to the papers. The breakdown of categories in this figure clearly resembles the one shown for the projects ([figure 2](#)). There are only certain differences in the pattern of frequency observed among the descriptors related to these categories.

The most frequently represented category is *process*, which includes, above all, the descriptors work/career and learning. Next in frequency is the category *system*, which particularly represents the descriptor VET. The category *actor* mainly refers to the descriptors learner and worker; the category *framework* to the descriptor economy, and the category *environment* to the descriptor enterprise.

As is the case for projects, each category related to the papers represents at least one major descriptor (see the top group of descriptors in [figure 3](#)). Again, the category *process* stands out, not only in the overall frequency of descriptor applications, but in representing quite a range of frequently applied descriptors. This particular feature will be taken up again in comparison with projects ([figure 7](#)).

For more information on the thematic analysis see [introduction](#) and the map of [descriptors](#) (return by using the back key!).

VETNET ECER papers over 6 years : Thematic categories

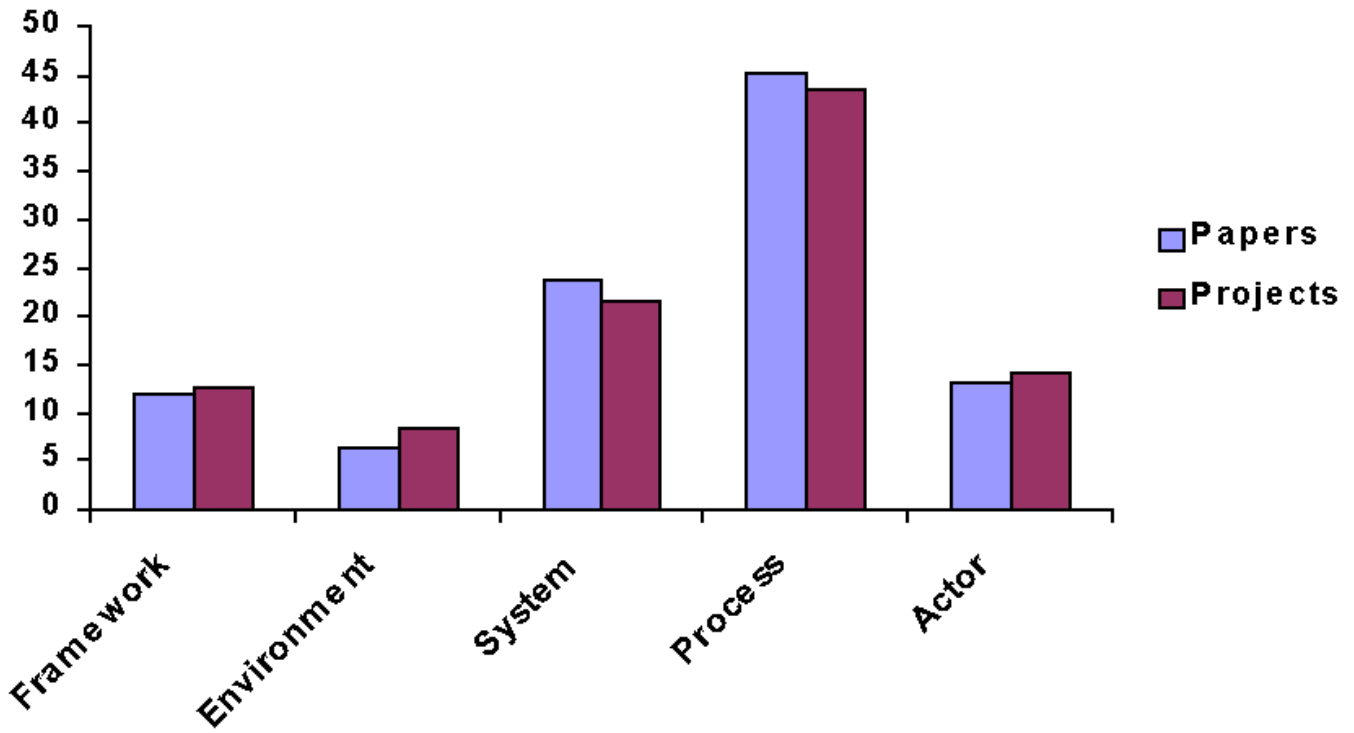


This figure on VETNET ECER papers is closely connected with the previous one (see explanations provided for [figure 4](#)). It shows how the relative importance of the five thematic categories developed over the period of six years. The lines indicate the number of applications for each category per year. While the least represented categories (framework, environment and actor) show little change, the more prominent ones (system and process) indicate identifiable trends.

The category *system* faces ups in the beginning and downs later on, while the category *process* exceeds the rest by a marked rise. The overall importance of the latter for the total period (figure 4), therefore, only results from its increase in more recent years.

For more information on the thematic analysis see [introduction](#) and the map of [descriptors](#) (return by using the back key!)

EU projects and VETNET ECER papers : Thematic categories



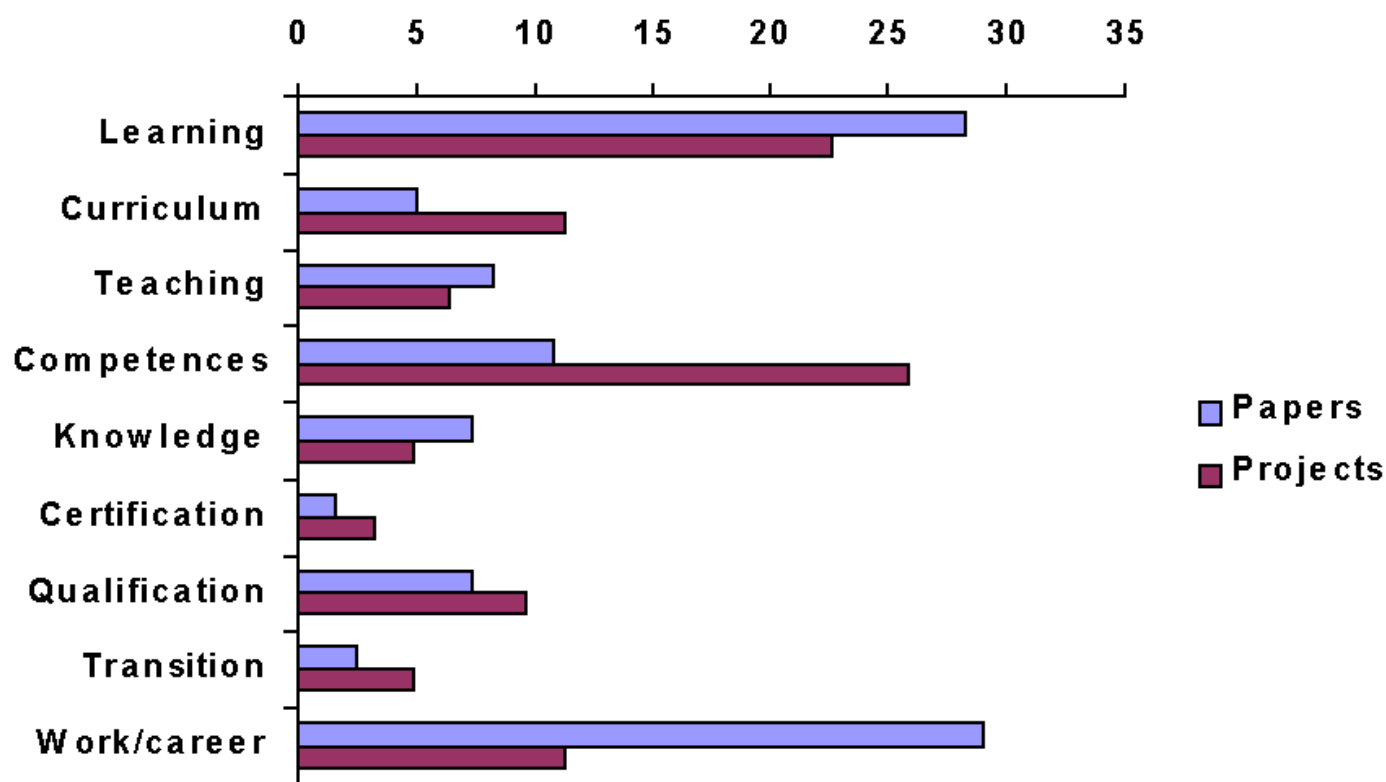
Both the projects and the VETNET ECER papers have been analysed by applying thematic categories (see [figure 2](#) and [figure 4](#)). These two breakdowns, which resemble each other closely, are put together in the figure above. The result is a close match between papers and projects in the distribution of thematic categories.

There is of course a partial relationship between the two sets of data. A fair number of the papers concerned are based, by their very nature, on outcomes of EU projects. Also, one criterion of relevance applied for selecting the EU projects was their presentation, as a paper or other, in the VETNET ECER programme. However, the papers under investigation by far outnumber the projects (131 papers as against 30 projects), and those related to projects are in a minority.

The high degree of matching between projects and papers, therefore, allows to draw a tentative conclusion on VET and HRD research covered in this analysis: the focus is on processes (learning, work, competence) rather than systems, while other aspects are less relevant (actors, framework and environment).

For more information on the thematic analysis see [introduction](#) and the map of [descriptors](#) (return by using the back key!).

EU projects and VETNET ECER papers : Thematic descriptors (process)



This final figure shows a breakdown of all the descriptors belonging to the most important category, *process*. The frequency with which these descriptors have been applied to both papers and projects is shown in comparison (as percentage of all descriptors within the category concerned).

While the relative importance of the category *process* is nearly equal between papers and projects (see [figure 6](#)), the distribution among the descriptors is fairly different. In particular, papers have been more concerned with aspects of work/career, while projects have focused more on competences.

However, both papers and projects cover the complete range of descriptors within the category *process*. This observation underlines the relevance this category has got as focus of the thematic profile.

For more information on the thematic analysis see [introduction](#) and the map of [descriptors](#) (return by using the back key!).

Descriptors

for mapping the contents of research resources in VET and HRD

The Research Monitor offers a simple set of terms for describing the contents of research resources which are related to vocational education and training (VET) and human resource development (HRD). These descriptors, arranged according to categories, are applied for mapping and analysing these resources. The 25 Monitor descriptors have been developed from an original set of 12 descriptors used for the European Research Overview as part of the CEDEFOP Research Arena [[ERO descriptors](#)].

Category	Descriptor
Framework	(01) Technology/ information and communication technology (02) Politics/ society/ culture/ population/ community/ person/ gender (03) Economy/ business/ labour market/ social partners/ human capital (04) Administration/ finance/ management/ entrepreneurship
Environment	(05) Region/ city (06) Educational institution (07) Enterprise/ organisation
System	(08) Lifelong learning / adult education (09) General education/ academic education (10) Vocational education and training*) (11) Initial education and training/ apprenticeship (12) Continuing education and training/ higher vocational education (13) Human resource development*) *) Descriptors to be applied only if the system as such is the objective of analysis.
Process	(14) Learning (15) Curriculum/ pedagogy (16) Teaching/ training/ mentoring/ coaching (17) Competence/ skill/ experience (18) Knowledge (19) Certification/ accreditation/ assessment (20) Qualification/ degree (21) Transition/ access/ recruitment/ guidance (22) Work/ occupation/ job/ career/ assignment
Actor	(23) Learner/ student/ trainee (24) Worker/ unemployed person/ personnel/ manager/ work team (25) Teacher/ trainer/ professional
Category	Descriptor