



The French and British vocational training systems

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CAMIS set out to compare the French and British schemes and policies – paying particular attention to the action of the French Regions on the one hand, and the British Counties on the other – and to identify and promote the best practices and innovative schemes on both sides of the Channel.

NB: CAMIS primarily carried this work out in 2010 and 2011, and it does not factor in any developments that have occurred since.

1. General introduction

The vocational training system in France and the UK alike is complex and involves a great many stakeholders. Acronyms abound, and this is why a glossary has been produced (see Appendix).

For all that, the system in France seems to be more uniform due to legal provisions that must be applied across all regions in principle (for example, the CPRDF). In the UK, the system makes greater use of management by objectives, and paves the way to a wider variety of initiatives and schemes, which are sometimes very different from one county to the next.

The contexts are very changeable in this field, on both sides of the Channel, and it is therefore difficult to provide a stable overview of both systems.

To be able to compare these two systems then, a table presenting the vocational training framework has been drawn up per skills field and per target group (see Appendix).

One thing to bear in mind to avoid any confusion is that the training levels are reversed between France and the UK as indicated in the table below:

Niveaux		Levels	
Doctorat		PhD	EQF Level 8 Doctorate
Niveau I	Bac + 5 (Master 2)	MA Msc M.Ed	EQF Level 7 Masters Degree
Niveau II	Bac + 4 (Master 1)	BA / BSc / B.Ed (Hons)	EQF Level 6 Bachelors Degree / Honours Degree
Niveau III	Bac + 2	HND	EQF Level 5
Niveau IV	Bac	A levels HNC	EQF Level 4
Niveau V	CAP BEP	GCSE Levels	EQF Level 3
Niveau VI	Classe de 3eme		EQF Level 2
Niveau VI Bis	Classe de 5eme		EQF Level 1

(EQF: European Qualifications Framework)

Level 3 qualifications in England (General Certificate of Secondary Education - GCSE) correspond to level 5 qualifications in France (CAP – BEP).

Level 3 qualifications in France (Bac + 2 or BTS) correspond to level 5 qualifications in England (Higher National Diploma - HND).

2. Introduction for the French system

The most recent reference legal framework is the French Act of **24 November 2009** on lifelong vocational training and guidance. Whilst reasserting the leading role played by Regions in terms of vocational training, this Act introduces partnership conditions as regards drawing up, adoption, follow-up and assessment procedures. The Regional Vocational Training Development Plan Contract (CPRDF), drawn up by the Regional Council, is the fruit of a shared analysis and signed by the

President of the Regional Council, the Prefect, the local education authority and Regional Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Forests (DRAAF). The CPRDF is part of the more general framework of the Regional Plan for Territorial Development and Planning (SRADT) and provides a framework for the adoption of two other plans regarding training: the Regional Plan for Health and Social Training Programmes (SRFSS) and the Forward-Looking Plan for Training Programmes (SPF).

The SRFSS encompasses all degree programmes and preparatory programmes for qualification, whether these are taught at school, through apprenticeship or as part of continuing education for jobseekers or employees. This Plan intends to develop the range of training programmes available in this sector and improve the quality of this range as well as the living conditions for health and social profession students.

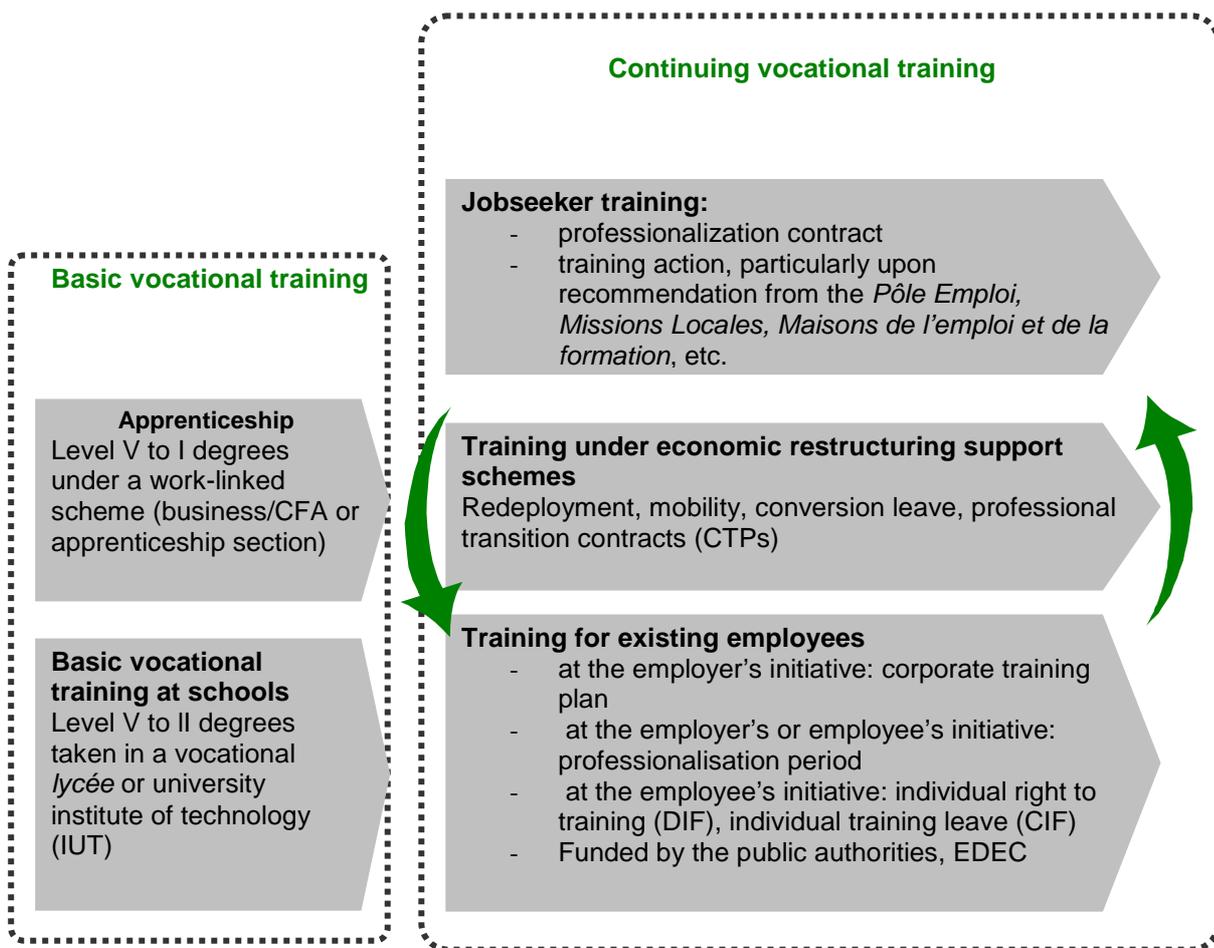
The SPF focuses on the field of basic education taught in general, technological and vocational public and private State-subsidised ("*sous-contrat*") schools: secondary schools, vocational *lycées* and agricultural teaching institutions, with account taken of national guidelines. It is drawn up in close partnership with the local education authorities and *Départements*.

Efforts must be made to ensure study pathways are complementary. CPRDF stakeholders must take a complementary and forward-looking approach to their decisions regarding adapting the range of training programmes available. This concerns optimising means, optimising possible links between pathways (at school and through apprenticeships) and bringing different target groups together to facilitate access to education for everyone.

It is also important to offer operational offshoots of this contract, particularly by signing contracts with professional sectors so that companies also help to define a range of lifelong learning programmes.

The Appendix contains a table presenting the French framework per skills field and per target group.

Below is a diagram of the vocational training system in France, excluding health and social programmes, Validation of Learning through Experience (VAE) and Civil Service.



3. Introduction for the British system

The workforce development policy is a national government policy through the Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS). The most recent document to date (**16 November 2010**) addresses Skills for sustainable growth. A summary of this document is provided in the Appendix. Until 2010, Regional Development Agencies were responsible for defining the key proposals at regional level in terms of the economy and skills. These proposals set out the priority skills that called for special attention from training bodies and provided information and skills analyses. They also presented an economic review of each region. The latest proposals comprised 2011/2012 forecasts. In practice, Regional Development Agencies completely ceased their economic activity in 2011 and were abolished in 2012.

The local authorities used to work closely with these Agencies and produced their own economic and skills strategies. Each county can define its own objectives concerning how it will support the national policy and, as such, will have its own projects for supporting businesses and residents. The strategies formed the starting point for plans of certain areas within regions, for example coastal areas or rural areas.

In 2010, when the Government announced the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the counties became important partners within these partnerships and the counties' strategies were used to determine the priorities for LEPs. The latter published their aspirations and objectives. Workforce skills and business skills are necessary factors for economic recovery.

Very specific examples can be found in the CAMIS working group on workforce development of mutual links between national, regional and county levels. These prove the present or past existence of programmes and projects as well as the different ways in which they have been used in counties. While this may amount to a great deal of repetition for some descriptions, it is still part of the mechanism that needs taking on board to understand how things work in the UK. Such national institutions as Sector Skills Councils provide a uniform approach which determines the demand for skills per sector and per degree for these sectors country-wide.

The Appendix contains a table presenting the British framework per skills field and per target group.

4. Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship in France and the UK does have a few things in common:

- the apprentice is an employee with the same rights and duties as any other employee
- s/he alternates periods of working with periods of study
- s/he gets paid by the employer
- s/he is supervised by an apprenticeship supervisor.

In the UK, apprenticeship schemes are open to all age groups, from 16 years of age, whether or not the person has just left school, has been working for a few years or is looking to begin a new career. 16-18 year olds are nevertheless the main target for developing apprenticeship.

In France, apprenticeship is a basic education sector for 16-25 year olds, under a work contract and carried out in the form of work-linked training in a public, private or consular Apprentice Training Centre (CFA). Apprentices over the age of 25 sign professionalisation contracts for adults (and these are in high demand among the public).

Apprenticeship in France generally involves alternating weeks spent in a company and weeks in a training centre. In the UK, the system designates one or two days of training per week and the arrangements for this training appear to be more varied: in a training centre or educational institution, as well as in-house in a company (see diagram). What's more, it is possible to split your apprenticeship hours between several companies over the same period.

Difficulties encountered on both sides of the Channel

In the UK, it appears difficult to find places for apprentices in local businesses, particularly in the south of England, in view of the economic fabric that mainly comprises SMEs and even VSEs. The red tape associated with apprenticeship is a hindrance for this type of business. Moreover, employers are looking for older people with more experience.

In France, there are problems with how apprenticeship is perceived, particularly in some sectors, and with apprentices dropping out during their apprenticeship (question of apprenticeship supervisor training in particular). Employers also favour the recruitment of young apprentices as their remuneration amount is partly linked to age.

5. Stakeholders

A few key organisations in the UK:

Skills Funding Agency (SFA)

<http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/>

The mission of the Skills Funding Agency is to ensure that people and businesses can access the vocational training programmes they need to play their role in society and make their contribution to the growth of the English economy. This is an agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). It exists to fund and regulate adult vocational training and skills development in England. Vocational higher education institutions are funded directly by this agency.

National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)

<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/>

The National Apprenticeship Service has overall responsibility for apprenticeship in England. It has been tasked with increasing the number of apprentice places available and with providing a specific service for helping employers and apprentices. Its role is to simplify the recruitment process of an apprentice by advertising apprentice vacancies and via an online service grouping together apprenticeship supply and demand.

Sector Skills Councils (SSC)

<http://www.sscalliance.org/>

Sector Skills Councils are independent, employer-led, UK-wide organisations. These Councils and the UK Commission for Employment and Skills are committed to working in partnership within the four home nations of the UK to create the conditions of greater investment on the part of businesses in developing skills, as a factor for developing businesses, creating jobs and sustainable economic growth. They share the point of view that the sector-based approach is suitable for achieving this objective.

UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)

<http://www.ukces.org.uk/>

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is a social partnership run by commissioners representing large and small businesses, trade unions and the voluntary sector. Its mission is to increase skills levels to help develop businesses, create jobs and boost economic growth.

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

<http://www.lepnetwork.org.uk/>

LEPs are local partnerships between local authorities and businesses for stimulating economic growth and job creation.

Jobcentre Plus

<http://www.jobcentreplusofficesuk.info/>

www.dwp.gov.uk/jobcentreplus

Jobcentre Plus is a service provided by the Department for Work and Pensions. It helps people of working age to find a job and employers to find staff.

Some key organisations in France:

For vocational training:

- Regions – *Directions de la Formation et de l'Apprentissage* (Training and Apprenticeship Directorates)
- *Pôle Emploi* (Job Centre)
- OPCA (*Organismes Paritaires Collecteurs Agréés*): the leading funders of vocational training in France for employees – a dozen in total at national level
- CARIF: Organisation which provides information about vocational training within the Region

- OREF: *Observatoire régional pour l'Emploi et la Formation* (Regional Observatory for Employment and Training)
- *Missions locales* (Local support centres for young people)
- *Maison de l'Emploi et de la formation* (Vocational training and job centre)

For apprenticeships:

- Regions - *Directions de la Formation et de l'Apprentissage* (Training and Apprenticeship Directorates)
- French Ministry of National Education/Local Education Authorities
- *Lycées*
- Businesses – Apprentice Training Centres (CFAs)

6. Best practices identified

Apprenticeship

- Swale Skills Centre (Kent): <http://www.swaleskillscentre.co.uk/>
- CFAI 80-02: IFTI (*Ilots de Formation Technique Individualisés* – Training tailored to suit individual particular needs)

Entrepreneurship

- Enterprise Village (<http://www.enterprisevillage.org.uk/>), Kent Foundation, Young Enterprise, Princes Trust, and Kent Association of Young Entrepreneurs
- *Entreprendre pour apprendre*: www.france.ja-ye.org/
- Women's Wisdom: <http://www.womenswisdom.co.uk/>

Reception, Information, Guidance

- Kent Choices 4 U: http://www.kent.gov.uk/education_and_learning/kentchoices4u_home.aspx
- Wise up 4 Work: <http://westsussex.wiseup4work.org.uk/>
- *Cité des métiers Haute-Normandie*: <http://www.citedesmetiershautenormandie.fr/>
- *Planète métiers Picardie* : <http://www.planetemetiers.picardie.fr/>
- Learning opportunities in the South East: <http://www.learning-opportunities.org.uk/>

7. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Glossary
- Appendix 2: Table of key words
- Appendix 3: France table
- Appendix 4: UK table
- Appendix 5: Skills for sustainable growth – Strategy document