Qualification profile "Second Hand" on the basis of work process-related standards

Quality standards for a sector-specific qualification concept in the European Second-Hand sector

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1　Introduction

Against the background of the objective of the Leonardo project „QualiProSecondHand" to analyse the European Second-Hand sector and its employment and qualification structure in order to develop a sector specific qualification or initial training, proposals for quality standards for further and initial training have been developed in addition to the creation of a concept for the development of qualification profiles. The recommended quality standards have been developed in close cooperation with the 7 partner countries (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Finland, UK, Slovenia and Bulgaria) and discussed at each national level with sector experts. Basis for the development of the quality standards for a possible sector specific qualification or initial training is the analysis of the working processes and tasks within the sector by operational case studies as well as the results of the conversations with various sector experts. The used vocational educational scientific research instruments that are developed by the project coordinator the "Institute of Technology and Education (ITB) at the University of Bremen" allow a very detailed analysis of operational structures and working procedures, processes and tasks, so that an accurate picture of the job requirements and training needs within the enterprises can be drawn. The results of the operational analysis allow not only the creation of a sector specific, working process-oriented qualification profile, but also first proposals for a possible future design of a qualification/training. Based on these considerations the quality standards (see Chapter 3) that are shown here could be developed. At this point it is mentioned that it is primarily a recommendation which should be taken into account for the development of a sector specific qualification or initial training (which has to be develop and implement in a follow-up project). According to a final structural and content of a future qualification or initial training the individual quality standards should be eventually optimized and completed.

Because the terms "quality" and "quality standards" are very broad and the understanding of quality varies in the different countries and sectors, we introduce at first in Chapter 2, a narrowing or definition of these terms. The need of quality standards for a development of a European uniform qualification/training will be explained in the last chapter.

2　Definition of the item "quality" and "quality standards"

Quality (Latin qualitas = quality, feature, state), according to DIN EN ISO 9000:2005, the applicable standard for quality management, is defined as the "degree to which a set of inherent characteristics meet requirements". This definition removes the formulation of the DIN EN ISO 8402:1995-08, the former standards for quality management. After this, quality is defined as "the totality of characteristics of a unit in terms of their suitability, identified and required to meet needs." Units are products, services, concepts, designs, software, work processes, procedures and processes.

Although the term "quality" itself contains no rating, the term is often used in everyday life in a judgmental way. So quality will be understand as the opposite to quantity (quantity is not the same like quality). "Quantity" in reality describes only the quantity of quality properties and therefore it expresses in quantities or measuring values. The phrase refers, however, that in everyday language quality is often a synonym for the value of a unit. Therefore you often speak from "good" or "bad" quality. Is a customer e.g. buying a product or service that fulfils its purpose, so the product or service has in common usage a "good quality". It is very difficult to

comprehend this subjective, unique understanding of quality in particular through market research, because the understanding can vary individually. In a lot of areas of the economic life the term "quality" already is established as a general measure of value. In areas where the quality is measurable with quantitative sizes, you speak about technical quality. In this understanding quality is the agreement of the actual and planned status that is the fulfilment of needs and expectations. According to the definition of the norm EN ISO 9000:2005 "quality" specifies to what extent a product (e.g. goods, services, and concepts) conforms to the existing requirements. Crucial to the quality of a product in accordance with ISO 9000 is not its price or the quality of the used materials. It is crucial that the requirements of the product are conformed. This involves both the objectively measurable characteristics and requirements of the producers as well as the subjective expectations of customers. According to the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) quality is the match between the observed properties and the demands of a predetermined viewing unit.[1]

Considering the term "quality" in terms of vocational education and training, so it is equally from here. You speak of a "good" quality if the fixed requirements to a qualification measure are fulfilled and certain goals or properties are reached. Quality is reflected in the degree of compliance with the requirements. The concept of quality in the education is in the meantime documented in the education policy by national and international debates (see European Commission 2004, EC 2005) about performance of education systems. Furthermore it is connected with numerous initiatives in the direction of quality improvement in the vocational education. This trend will continue for some time, because the concept of "quality" sounds positive, is close to the industry, has no partly political previous impacts and is enough imprecise (see Euler 2005, p.13). But what represents exactly the training quality? Precisely this is one of the main difficulties of the current discussion about quality. It is now indisputable that in addition to the input quality (the conditions) and the process quality (the implementation) the output quality (the results of the training) and the outcome quality (the professional performances, practice success) are responsible for an overall picture of the quality of education (see Sloane 2005, p.484 et seqq.; Sauter 2001, p.42 et seqq.). How these various factors and components have to be evaluated and measured, is still quite unclear.

A possible way could be the establishment of quality standards. They are criteria which should underlie e.g. a qualification concept or qualification measures - they are the basis of such concepts. Quality standards should be criteria that have to be operative overall (independent from the region) and they should contribute that qualification concepts conform certain requirements and policies. They should make qualifications measurable. The measurability delivers a contribution to the comparability of the skills and the competencies that have been acquired by the qualification (training).

The quality standards which are set here in the list for a sector-specific qualification concept for the Second-Hand sector can be only a recommendation. It is simply a suggestion for criteria in terms of a later development of a sector-specific qualification concept. They act as a kind of base or as a basic framework for a later qualification concept. In a later development of a sector-specific qualification concept the quality

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[1] Source: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualit%C3%A4t (access: 23.06.2008)

standards have to be adapted to the selected structure and the content of this qualification concept. To clarify the relevance of different quality standards we have pooled them in clusters that are called input, process and output. The input covers all quality standards that describe the framework of the qualification, the process covers sector-specific criteria and the output covers the results which have to be reached by the qualification.

3 Quality standards for a qualification in the Second-Hand sector

Quality standard = QS

No.	objectives and quality standards	instruments
Input "quality standards"		
1	*Number of and conditions for participants* The number of the people who are qualified (participants) per qualification measure is limited to an appropriate number of participants in the context of teaching and learning content, the resources and the target group The participants get at the beginning of the qualification the possibility to inspect all relevant content online through an Internet platform of the qualification institution. The participants have to show certain requirements (e.g. a certain education).	The number of participants will be limited through an admission breakpoint by the qualification institution. There are predetermined deadlines for registration/ application for the qualification as on the Internet (e.g. in the form of lists). The structure and the content of the qualification will be freely accessible through a transparent medium. The qualifiers check before the acceptance of the participants their requirements based on their certificates. The qualifiers provide a counselling for candidates
2	*Consideration of previous knowledge and experiences* In carrying out the qualification it should be flexible about the previous knowledge and experiences of the participants. This can cause priorities regarding individual modules or contents and/or include the renunciation of some individual modules.	The action of registration/application allows the qualifiers to enquire the individual previous knowledge of the participants. The action of registration/application allows an individual combination of individual qualification modules and the evaluation of these against the background of personal pervious knowledge. By the act of registration/application collected data will be needed for education, career and past activities/ experiences have to be collected.

3	*Teaching and learning places*		
	The qualification place must be easily accessible and the training rooms must have an adequate teaching and learning atmosphere	The qualifiers should have a good infrastructure and a large catchment area. The qualifiers should have the necessary facilities in accordance with multimedia-based equipment to guarantee an ideal teaching and learning atmosphere.	
	Depending on the different qualification levels are determined appropriate teaching and learning places	The qualifiers ensure appropriate material and staff conditions.	
4	*Fixed uniform time frame*		
	The time frame of the total qualification should be flexible, but altogether uniform. In relation to the individual learning units (e.g. modules) it should be equal.	The time frame of the whole qualification and of individual learning units is fixed in the qualification concept.	
	The share of theory and practice units are fixed in time.		
5	*Qualified teacher/trainer*		
	The qualification should be carried out by teacher/trainer who have sufficient previous experiences in the field of trade goods and bring in sector-specific knowledge and the educational experiences as well as social skills in training trainees.	The selection of appropriate teacher/trainer is safely supported by selection and award procedure and the qualification of them and the actual format of their qualification has to be closely examined.	
	The teacher/trainer will be selected by the qualifier by a special selection and award procedure.	Teachers with not enough experiences in the field of Second-Hand sector have to pass training programmes	
6	*Adaptation of the qualification concept to national conditions*		
	The qualification concept should regard the respective features of the national/regional education systems as well as the legal framework and experiences with introduction of new qualifications.	To comply with this quality standard the qualification concept will be adapted to the respective national conditions of the education and it will be present in total to the policy makers (as well as proposals for implementation has to be developed and presented)	
7	*Fixed basic structure of qualification concept*		
	The qualification concept should cover basic knowledge as well as specialised knowledge and expert knowledge. The different knowledge (the different levels) should build on each other in the form of modules. The aim is both the procurement	To comply with this quality standard a modular training concept has to be created that makes the breakdown of the different performance levels (beginner knowledge, advanced knowledge and expert knowledge) transparency.	

	of know-how that is relevant in all business fields as well as sector-specific knowledge. The modules are graduated so that different skill levels can be achieved. The used teaching method is based on up to time teaching methods and provides a close vote of theory and practice.	The structure includes the possibility to offer candidates the different modules. The qualification concept covers theoretical as well as practical learning units. Depending on the qualification levels the share of learning by doing and mentoring learning (learning in the working process) in the enterprise have to be differentiated	
8	*Support through networking and co-operation* A major objective of the qualification concept is the close link between theory and practice and thus in the networking and co-operation with sector-relevant actors. Actors who have nothing to do with training measures should get the possibility to support the qualification as experts, e.g. by offering the possibility to visit enterprises and sector-specific working places. Thus contacts between the participants and the free economy should be arranged and their chances on the labour market can be encouraged.	The qualifier will ensure that external actors and partners can participate as experts in the qualification by cultivating the contacts to them.	
9	*Curriculum* As a part of the qualification concept a curriculum is explicitly developed as a basis. The curriculum should cover all contents of the qualification as well as it comprehensible determines all teaching processes.	The qualification concept underlying curriculum will be presented to decision makers and it will be generally made transparent for everyone.	
10	*Regular exchange between the qualifier and the teacher/trainer* If different skilled teacher/trainer are employed to teach in the qualification and against the background of optimising the implementation of the qualification a regular exchange will take place between the qualifier an the teacher/trainer. Thus, a uniform quality should be achieved by the implementation of the qualification. Furthermore the experiences of the teacher/trainer should become available for a possible modification of the qualification.	To ensure a uniform quality in the implementation of the qualification all teacher/trainer take part in regular feedback meetings. These act as an exchange of experiences and information on practical examples from their work. Furthermore the meetings act as a protection of the results and they contribute to the implementation methodology in the future. The qualifier organises these meetings and evaluates the results for the purpose of quality assurance.	

11	*Teaching and learning materials* Teaching and learning material that covers all content of the qualification has to be available. Furthermore the teaching and learning materials should help to understand the appropriate know-how. And the materials should help to consolidate the know-how, to make it long-term useable and to enhance someone's competencies.	The qualifier makes all teaching and learning materials that are used in the modules available. Learning materials are prepared by prescribed methodology.
Process „quality standards"		
12	*Performance test and quality check of the learned knowledge* The acquired knowledge as well as the competencies will be checked during the qualification through performance tests. The use and the correct application of the acquired knowledge in the practice will be checked in the context of the practical teaching units.	The qualifier uses for the performance test standardized test documents and carry out the inspection in specific intervals and in terms of the different content (of the modules). The control of the practical implementation of the acquired knowledge will be made by specified control criteria which are listed in a kind of list of attributes or an evaluation paper.
13	*Qualification leaving examination* At the end of the qualification is both a theoretical as well as a practical examination. This will take place depending on the qualification level after the conclusion of the appropriate modules that have to be finished for the different levels. The examination is based on criteria, especially concerning the extent and the testing time. Successfully completed individual modules are valid for a fixed period and can be resumed at a later stage in the overall qualification.	The qualifier examines by fixed testing and evaluation criteria which are exactly defined as a part of the qualification concept.
14	*Regular quality control* The participants will be questioned during the qualification about their experiences, about the abilities of the trainer and about the used teaching methods. Thus, in the case of deficits it is possible to modify the choice of teaching method or the teacher/trainer in time.	The qualifier uses harmonized feedback questionnaires.
15	*Overview over all relevant sector-specific business fields*	The qualifier designs the content of the

	In the context of the teaching of sector-specific knowledge the participants should get a comprehensive overview over all Second-Hand relevant business fields and their specifics. The placement of the corresponding knowledge happens on the theoretical and practical level.	individual modules on the way that the specifics of certain business fields are included. The participants get the possibility to get to know all business fields during the qualification in the context of practical exercises or time-limited placements. The qualifier establishes adequate contacts to enterprises of the different business fields, maintain them and establish a connection to the participants.
16	*Overview over all courses of business and working processes* The teaching of the know-how takes place generally against the background of the aim of a comprehensive and practical oriented knowledge transfer. The specific contents should always take place in the overall context of the whole business and working processes of an enterprise. The individual contents of the modules should be taught not detached from overall business processes, but the overall context should be in the foreground of the teaching of sector-specific contents. That will be done against the background of making the business processes transparent and comprehensible.	The qualifier coordinates the individual modules and creates comprehensible bridges between the individual contents of the different modules. The participants get in the context of the practical learning units insights into all business levels and working processes. Thus, the coherences should be made transparent.
17	*Sector-specific know-how* As a part of the qualification next to general contents (contents that are also relevant in other branches) Second-Hand specific knowledge should be taught. Referring to this chosen topics are obligatory for all qualification levels of the qualification. These can be e.g.: - Procurement - Pricing - Quality check - Customer service - Environment aspects - Legal requirements for waste management at the European and national level - Social skills like crisis (conflict-) management, motivation, communication	The sector-specific contents are fixed in the individual modules and will be taught theoretically as well as practically.
Output „quality standards"		

18	*Certificate for the qualification*	
	At the end of the qualification the participants receive a certificate or diploma if they successfully pass the final examination or all modules.	The certificates are standardized and show the taught contents and topics as well as the performance that are achieved in these modules. Furthermore the certificate includes a final evaluation that give information about the performance of the final examination.
	For the different qualification levels exists analogous different certificates.	
19	*Partly qualification*	
	The offered modules concerning various topics and contents are arranged also as a part qualification (as single modules) to replace missing know-how.	The qualifier creates the qualification concept flexible. It must be able to modify dependent on requirements and it must offer space for different partly qualifications.
	The qualification is divided into different qualification levels that cover respectively each individual and completed module.	

4 Need of quality standards for qualifications in the European Second-Hand sector

A key prerequisite for the competitiveness and enhancing the professionalization of enterprises that are operating in the European Second-Hand sector is the implementation of European quality standards for future qualification measures. Because of the growing globalization in the Second-Hand trade and the expected increasing growth in the sector, the pressure of professionalization of the pressure on Second-Hand enterprises is also growing. The future developments and the increased demand of quality regarding to the goods, that is the result of these developments, bring the enterprises to a higher qualification requirement. The in the sector established enterprises are increasingly aware that well-trained employees are the key to coping with the future requirements. Future qualifications or initial training in the European Second-Hand sector must qualify for the effective preparation of the employees of the sector on the professionalization pressure and so the combined challenges as well as to satisfy the certain quality standards. This means to interlink the business objectives with the individual and societal goals. With the present and in the framework of the project "QualiProSecondHand" identified qualifications, which are mainly selective, sector non-specific qualification measures, a systematic training that satisfies the sector specific requirements will not be guaranteed. To be competitive at regional and national level, and at European level (the cross-border trade), it is not only necessary to develop sector specific qualifications or an initial training, but these should be base on European-wide uniform sector specific quality standards to guarantee a certain quality. The need to introduce quality standards for qualification or initial training in the Second-Hand sector is not only based on the aspect of quality improvement, but thus it can and should be created a transnational comparability. With the standards a qualification or initial training gains a European uniformed framework, so that the comparability of the work performed in the context of qualification and initial training is possible. Furthermore the comparability in terms of cross-border trade plays a decisive role. Only by a standards of quality-oriented

and European-wide uniform qualification, which in turn guarantee a certain quality within the enterprises (in relation to the organisation, working processes and thus the products and services), the enterprises and their offers can make comparable and transparent. Furthermore it enables the implementation of quality standards and the possibility of recognition of competencies of the employees (especially for the group of disadvantaged people who are often employed in the sector). By a European-wide accepted qualification that is developed on the basis of quality standards the employment prospects for the employees in the European Second-Hand sector can be improved and their prestige in the labour market can be increased.

The results of the analysis of the Leonardo project "QualiProSecondHand" illustrate on one hand the heterogeneity of the European Second-Hand sector and on the other hand many overall country and business field similarities regarding to sector specific working processes and tasks could be identified. In order to make the necessary competencies and skills European-wide, which are necessary for the fulfilment and implementation of the various working processes and tasks, comparable and to reach a certain standard, is the implementation of quality standards essential. Thus it can be ensured that, in spite of different national education systems the future trainees have the same knowledge. By teaching a uniform knowledge it will be ensured that the quality in the enterprises and the professionalization in all countries will be advanced.

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