

Opening Speech
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Mrs. Cornelia Pieper, Member of German Parliament and Vice-Chair of
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Excellency, Mr Dieter W. Haller, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of
Germany

honorable guests, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends.

In the name of my German colleagues I would like to extend a warm
welcome to all of you.

Thank you very much that you have decided to attend Q-Africa 2007.

I am sure that the next two days will be a wonderful time with a lot of
learning opportunities, interesting discussions and may be at the end
with a lot of new partnerships based on thrilling and promising ideas.

In the focus of Q-Africa 2007 are occupationally directed Qualification
within the qualifications framework.

This perspective has been very carefully selected and it brings together
the three most important challenges international vocational training and
educational systems are facing today.

The adjective „occupationally directed“ makes clear, that changes in the
world of work have a direct impact on vocational training and further
education which has to react on these changes in order to produce
results which match the demand at the workplaces.

Therefore an important questions is „What is currently changing in
occupation?“

Global changes, which happen currently in many countries, are:

1. Merging of real national labour markets to real regional ones.
2. Merging of virtual national labour markets to virtual global ones.
3. Merging of working and learning to a new concept of life-long learning.

The opening of national labour markets and the merging to regional
markets has a lot of positive effects.

The migration of work leads to a better ballance between offered and
requested jobs. It increases employment and strengthens the

competitiveness of companies because it reduces the lack of competencies.

But: It requires mobile work and it requires to increase the mobility of work.

Currently the mobility is reduced, because in many regions certifications of the one national educational system are not comparable to those of other national systems.

Therefore since many years in Africa and since two or three years in Europe National Qualifications Frameworks are discussed and developed.

NQF's are based on levels to which the whole range of different national certifications are fixed. If this is done by all participating countries and if the various National Qualification Frameworks have been put into relation among themselves than a certification of country A could easily be compared to a certification of country B.

This is the theory so far.

The practice shows us that it is a little bit more complicated because of many reasons. Let me just explain two from Germany.

Many stakeholders of vocational education and linked groups think that now the time has to come to do those changes which they had planned for long.

In Germany some of the political and economical leaders believe, that the apprenticeship system, which is based currently on a 3 years period, should be broken down to 6 or 8 months modules. Each ends with an examination and gives you credit points. To become a skilled worker, who needs a certain number of credit points, some more of these modules must be passed.

Proponents argue that these modules will increase the flexibility.

Opponents do not believe in this argumentation but are convinced that it will lead on the long run to lower wages and to the end of skilled work and skilled workers. Skilled and professional work will be substituted by jobs with a small range of different activities, based on a tayloristic approach.

Political Parties as well as social partners are currently having an intensive and controverse dispute on this matter in Germany.

Another dispute can already been foreseen. It will take place between the representatives of general, vocational and higher education and discuss questions whether a master artisan certification has the same level as bacchalar degree or not.

These two examples make clear that the more or less easy theory of building an accepted NQF will meet a practice in which groups of different interests fight on the question which way the best one is to go.

NQF is a subject of this year's conference programme. It is a subject of high importance to all of us. I am convinced that my colleagues and I can learn a lot from your experiences.

2. Modern information technologies allow companies to build teams beyond national and cultural borders.

It opens to them a totally new world of cooperation which leads to an increasing productivity of work and on the same hand to an advantage in competition.

Currently it is mainly a subject of big companies with worldwide subsidiaries. But in the future more and more SME's will also be involved to this process.

What does it mean for the educational system? What can we learn from this example. How must education react on this development?

Well, I think that educational systems should adapt the principle of this successful system of virtual cooperation.

Education should initiate virtual networks between schools and training companies, between vocational schools and universities and also between national systems.

A new concept of learning has to be developed in order to fill the networks with learning life. New learning tasks must be designed, which support and promote a cooperation of network partners in virtual reality.

The web 2.0 philosophy could be the leading pedagogic idea. Virtual communication concepts based on podcasts, blogs and wikis allow active learning independent from time or location.

Classic eLearning, which means individual, passive, electronical learning based on instructions will be reduced to an instrument to adapt knowledge, whereas active virtual learning will lead to qualifications, competencies and soft skills, which are required at the workplaces of the global economy of tomorrow.

Already today you will find in Germany at more than 60 percent of all workplaces a computer. Nearly 50 percent of all workplaces are connected to the internet. Both percentages are dramatically increasing from year to year.

Computer are not only be found at high-quality technical workplaces or in office. They are everywhere. At hairdressing companies as well as at

farms. Experts asked in a currently conducted Delphi study believe, that in short no one in Germany will get a job without basic IT competencies. Therefore it makes much sense to develop learning arrangements which have a similar structure as the virtual communications arrangements in companies.

It would allow learning by learning and prepare students and apprentices best for the new challenges at work. One example is the concept of „master artisan training online“ which runs very successfully in Germany and will be presented on this conference.

3. Another deep change is also caused by IT-technology.

Some month ago on a conference in Cologne the HR-Director of a big German steel-company said:

„Learning is coming home. Twenty years ago we spent a lot of money to separate learning from work and built training centers and equipped seminar rooms. Now, we will spend the same amount of money to bring learning back to the workplaces, where it is needed.

Learning in the future must become better and cheaper. Bit-Learning – only learning what you need and not on stock – and JIT-Learning – just in time learning – will be the way to go.

Within our company learning will be understood and handled as intern business. When we decide to invest then we need to know what the return will be.“

These three examples show that profoundly changes are happening and that education has to react intensively if it wants to keep abreast with the fast changing developments at workplaces.

Let me summarize

- open labour markets need comparable qualifications in order to work
- virtual cooperations need new digital competencies, e-skills.
- virtual Learning is a new challenge and at the same time chance for education

learning arrangements in vocational training should be designed comparable to working arrangements in companies

learning networks need a new concept of learning tasks and coached team learning

„learning is coming home“, especially further education will return as bit- and jit-learning to workplaces

The role of teachers and trainers, but also of training providers will change. The teaching function will decrease and the coaching and advise giving funktion will increase.

Other trends worth to watch besides these are: talent managment via internet, quality assurance via benchmarking and school to work transitions via mentors. You will find presentations to all mentioned subjects in your programme.

I am convinced that a conference of interesting presentations, intensive exchanges of experiences and ideas, and fruitful dialogues is waiting for us.

Therefore boredom will not have a chance within the next two days.

Thank you very much.