

Country Report ITALY

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1. Background and country context

The institutional framework

Italy is a parliamentary democracy. The 1948 Constitution established a bicameral parliamentary system, which consists of a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate, an independent judiciary system and an executive branch – the Council of Ministers – headed by the Prime Minister. The Italian State consists of 20 Regions, 103 Provinces and 8.100 Municipalities with their own powers and functions. Five Regions (Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Valle d'Aosta, Sicilia and Sardegna) and two Provinces (Trento and Bolzano) enjoy a special autonomous status and are granted greater autonomy in various areas, including education and vocational training.

Significant changes to the institutional framework were introduced between 1997 and 2001, to mention the Law 59/1997 called “Bassanini” and the Legislative Decree 112/1998 on administrative decentralization; the reform of Heading V (*Titolo V*) of the Constitution introduced with constitutional Law 3/2001 concerning the role and function of Regions, Provinces and Municipalities.

The constitutional reform, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, was aimed at promoting a wider participations of institutions and citizens to the definition of public policies. The Law 3/2001 has attributed greater autonomy to local authorities and has changed how legislative function is divided up between the State and the Regions. As a result, the Regions have legislative power not only in matters of their “exclusive” jurisdiction, but also in those of the legislation concurrent with the State. Moreover the regional authorities have "exclusive" legislative jurisdiction over vocational training and education, save for relationships with the European Union, and "joint" legislative jurisdiction over general education, save for the determination of the fundamental principles, reserved to the State. The Provincial Authorities and Municipal Authorities undertake measures for adult education and guidance, also in the context of the management of the Employment Services. Likewise social inclusion measures are responsibility of the Municipal Authorities.

Labour market and economy

Whereas in the last four years the Italian economy has recorded an average rate of development barely equal to 0.4 per cent per year, in the 2006 there was a moderate growth of GDP (1,9 per cent), that attained 2,3 per cent in 2007. Still the Italian economic performance, affected by structural problems, is below the European average. The overall employment rate is one of the lowest (58,6 per cent) in Europe (it is equal to 63,8 per cent for EU25), and much lower for women (46,3 per cent). The employment rate also varies significantly according to geographical areas: much higher in the North of Italy (66,2 per cent) than in the South (46,6 per cent)¹. There are high levels of exclusion of young people, women and old people from the labour market.

Italy is historically characterised by a structural gap between the Northern / Central regions and the Southern ones (plus islands). Infrastructural weaknesses undermine the production system in the South that is more agricultural, covering the 15 per cent of Italy's

¹ See Istat, Italia in cifre, 2007.

industrial capacity. Another distinctive feature of Italian economic system is the large share of “*underground*” economy that is estimated around 12 per cent of the work age population (little less than 3 million people). The number of irregular workers accounts for as much as half of the total employment in some branches of activity in the Southern regions. The overall rate of unemployment recorded 6,5 per cent in 2006. It was almost the double (equal to 12.2 per cent) in the South, to be compared to the North (3.8 per cent) and the Centre (6,1 per cent). On the contrary North-East Italy is approaching the full employment.

The Italian labour market is highly fragmented. One Italian out of three is a self-employed worker through individual and small companies. Italy’s main economic strength has been traditionally based on small and medium size companies (SMEs). Some of these companies are currently facing increasing competition from Asian economies, especially from China. Comparing to the European enterprises, Italian ones are smaller, family-owned and specialized in low added value sectors (traditional manufacture and tertiary). One third of SMEs shows a low productivity rate and a lack of innovation and research. Italy is still weak in the high-tech and high-intensity knowledge sectors, characterised by higher levels of productivity and less susceptible to face the new challenges of the global market. The Italian system of enterprises supports a significantly lower labour cost (per worker) compared to the other European economies. Lower salaries have been facilitating companies to maintain a profitability and a competitiveness that is comparable to the European one. Nevertheless there is a number of enterprises, mainly concentrated in the productive districts (especially in the Northeast and Centre) that are present on the international markets, being specialised in the more innovative sectors of light manufacture, with higher levels of competitiveness and profitability.

The reform of the labour market, so-called ‘*Biagi reform*’ (Law 30/2003 and the Legislative Decrees 276/2003, 251/2004 and 248/2005) was meant to make the Italian labour market more flexible, enhancing the economic growth through the creation of new jobs and reducing irregular work. It contained many measures, mainly relating to job placement services and forms of employment relationship – such as staff leasing, on-call work, project work and work/training contracts – and the involvement of the social partners in management of the labour market. Apprenticeships and the integration contracts for young people aged 18 to 29 and disadvantaged workers are other aspects addressed by the reform. The reform was strongly criticized for its remarkable increase of forms of “precarious” contracts and the newly elected - April 2006 - centre-left wing government had the explicit mandate to amend it: the debate on the reform is still open. On the other hand, the reform of the labour market still lacks of an overall reform of “social shock absorbers” to protect workers by job losses, contract interruptions and enterprise restructuring with forms of concrete supports (except for provisional Law 80/2005 that revised the regulation of the unemployment benefits).

The Italian Education System

In the last ten years the Italian education system has been going through a period of continuous reforms. Therefore, new and old rules have been overlapping and sometimes contradicting each other. These reforms went essentially towards the autonomy of the education institutions, the reorganisation of the school cycles and the introduction of new – and European inspired - education tools such as the tutor and the portfolio of competences. These reforms were little welcomed by the majority of teachers.

A general reconsideration of the last and controversial “*Moratti reform*” (Law 53/2003 and the Legislative Decrees 76/05 and 77/05) is now under way. The reform introduced the

right and duty to complete educational and vocational training for at least 12 years², eliminating the previous distinction between the compulsory school until the age of 15 years³ and the obligation to engage in training activities until the age of 18 years⁴. In accordance with the new law 296/2006, since the 1st of September 2007, a new regulation has reintroduced the obligation to remain in compulsory school until the age of 16. The fulfilment of such obligation is to get an upper secondary school diploma or at least a three year professional qualification. Moreover new guidelines reforming the first school cycle and vocational schools, together with the suspension of the reform of the second cycle has been recently undertaken.

The Italian education system is divided into six levels (pre-school education, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, post- secondary – non-university - and university). Education pathways are differentiated on entry into upper secondary education: upper secondary schools with a prominence on humanities, sciences or art, (*licei*); technical schools (*istituti tecnici*) and vocational schools (*istituti professionali*), three years + 2.

The reform of the university system (Law 127/1997 and Ministerial Decree 509/1999) provides for academic courses to be organised in two cycles according the “3+2” formula. The reform has brought the Italian university system closer with EU countries’ ones; its main goal being to reduce the drop-out rate and to accelerate graduation and an earlier labour - market entry.

Notwithstanding Italy’s long-term commitment to the process of qualification of its population and workforce, the average level of educational attainment is lower than in the other industrial countries and remains a significant gap to the best performing countries in terms of quantity, quality and equity⁵. According to the last Italian Census (2001), 25,4 per cent of the Italians had at most a primary-school certificate. Those who held an upper secondary certificate accounted for 30.1 per cent of the total, while only 7.1 per cent achieved a university qualification (in 1991 Census the last percentage was 4,2 per cent), still far below the OECD average. Nevertheless there was a significant progress in female education: while 45-to-54-year-old women have been educated slightly one year less than men, the situation has now reversed and 25-to-34-year-old women are educated slightly half a year more than men. In addition improvement has been recorded in dealing with early school leavers, young people aged 18-24 who dropped out of school with low levels of education. In Italy social background plays an important role in students’ school success and young people access to the labour market. In the case of young adults with low levels of education, the transition from school to work is even more difficult. Anyway, the attainment of the lower secondary certificate and the transition to the upper secondary school remains a consolidated asset of the Italian education system: while in the early nineties the rate of school leaving certificate was around 51,4 per cent, in the last two- year period 2004 -2006 it increased till 76,6 per cent (still below the Lisbon objectives of 85 per cent of 22 year old young people obtaining an upper secondary diploma). The total public expenditure of the Italian education system is around 4,66 per cent of GDP, lower than the European average that is 6 per cent. The large share of it (78,3 per cent) is allocated for schools, the remaining part is for universities (16,8 per cent) and a small part to regional training systems (4,9 per cent).

The Italian Vocation Training System and the continuing vocational training

Since the 1990s the Italian vocational training system underwent a strong reorganisation process that is consistent with a significant decentralisation of the VET system, according

² This right and duty can also be satisfied by obtaining a vocational qualification.

³ The schooling obligation set out in Law 9/99.

⁴ The training obligation set up in Law 144/99.

⁵ See OECD Education at glance, 2006 (www.oecd.org).

to the 2001 Constitutional reform concerning the new role and function of Regions, Provinces and Municipalities.

In Italy there are 20 regional training systems fitting the needs of local labour markets, enterprises and workers. The challenge is to push towards integration and guarantee a good governance of the whole system that lacks of a repertory of professions and qualifications, common minimum standards and the certification and recognition of training credits.

While the Law 845/1978 on Vocational Training recognised the training as a strategic tool for young people, workers and enterprises, Law 236/1993 took the first step to set up and structure a national continuing training system, in order to modernize the entire vocational education and training system.

In addition, Law 196/97 launched the experimentation of sectoral and local in-company training plans, managed by the Social Partners, supervised by the Ministry of Labour, and agreed upon with the workers' and employers' associations. New legislation was introduced in the period 2000-2003 to set up an integrated and coherent policy system for continuing training, focusing on the Lisbon goals with regard to lifelong learning and the European Employment Strategy. In this context the Joint Multi-sectoral Funds for Continuous Training⁶, established under Law 388/2000 (amended by the Art. 48 of Law 289/2002) have contributed to the financing of continuing training, by enlarging the range of the available measures to finance actions of teacher training, in-company training plans and individual training plans. With the approval of the last education and training reform (Law 53/2003), initial vocational training acquired a different role in the Italian education and training system, completing the process begun with Law 144/1999, which introduced the new strand of Higher Technical Education and Training (*IFTS*) and the institution of compulsory training i.e. the compulsory requirement to remain within one of the three strands of the education system (education, vocational training, apprenticeship) until the age of 18.

Training for adults can be lifelong education and training (to acquire general and pre-occupational skills), provided by CTPs (Permanent Regional Centres for Adult Education) and continuing vocational training, finalised to vocational retraining and refresher training of adult workers. Major beneficiaries of the training supply are adult workers and apprentices. Most of the whole training supply (59 per cent) takes place in three regions (Piemonte, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Toscana), whereas southern regions are lately contracting their training activities⁷. Continuing training schemes for workers may be run by public and private enterprises, training agencies, bilateral bodies, professional associations and other institutions such as universities and employment centres. Even so the need to favour workers skills development and to offer adequate answers to their training needs is, by now, sufficiently taken into consideration, at least by a portion of the entrepreneurial world, mainly large enterprises. However, surveys carried out by ISFOL and by other national research institutes (ISTAT, Unioncamere), still register inconsistent and insufficient vocational training investment levels.

At the end of the Nineties, Italy was at the bottom of European classifications on continuing vocational training and displayed a major delay in comparison with other EU countries: indeed, if hardly one quarter of private sector enterprises (23,9 per cent) supplied vocational training activities (against a European average of 62 per cent), only one fifth of

⁶ Fondi Paritetici Interprofessionali per la Formazione Continua.

⁷ See ISFOL Rapporto 2006, Giunti, Roma, 2006.

the employees benefited from such activities (40 per cent in Europe)⁸. Large enterprises are the major training suppliers: as a matter of fact the level of training increases proportionally to the size of the enterprise and only large enterprises have a high tendency to provide training services. In *Friuli Venezia Giulia* (North East Italy) for example the opportunity to experience some training is likely to be the double than in Sicily. Indeed SMEs consider expensive providing in-company training, and medium companies sometimes turn to external training. In this scenario, the sectors paying special attention to training benefits are ICT and telecommunication services; companies advanced services; credit, financial services and insurances; education and private training services; health and private health services, and clients orientated services. In addition, during the 2000-2006 period, the gap between micro and large enterprises increased, reaching 57 percentage points in 2006, with regard to the indicator that measures the incidence of enterprises supplying vocational training, varying from 16 per cent in micro-enterprises, to 74 per cent in large enterprises⁹. In-company training activities take up little more than a work week per year, in companies with less than 49 employees. The national average is around 5 days per year. One structural difficulty of in-company training is due to the fact that enterprises draw up training plans as internal communication instruments not taking into account the real needs of the companies and their workers.

2. How is the work and training of trainers organised?

In Italy there isn't a strong tradition of continuing vocational training with formal education pathways, because the economic system, based on SMEs, ever needed high qualifications. Informal training used to be and is an important asset. Moreover large companies usually outsource training services to specialised external providers or to freelance trainers. Only a few have an internal educational department with full-time trainers (according to some estimations, approximately 1,000), in private sectors (above all banking and assurance, mechanic and chemical industry) and public sectors (above all in health services and public central administration). Public sectors and some private organizations invest in and perform training activities in order to guarantee services' quality and clients' satisfaction. Despite the wide spreading public speech on the importance of continuing vocational training, training is mostly considered a subsidiary activity and Italian entrepreneurs tend to regard it as a cost and not as a company's investment. On the contrary, public health services have a specific compulsory continuing professional development system based on credit points.

It's possible to become a CVET trainer through the pathways provided by public bodies (such as Regions, Ministries) or a private institution (trainers associations, business schools). Academic degrees in adult learning and training are available from the universities (bachelor and master's degrees). The typical CVET trainer is middle aged with (at least) a bachelor degree.

Actually there are two different career paths of trainers in Italy. The first one is informal and regards the training consultant's pathway, capitalizing the experience of working for years within a company. The second path is the academic one (training degree, occupational psychology degree). In addition to the degree, they might attend a *post lauream*, with a special focus on organizational topics. In Italy there are a few masters and Training of Trainers' courses, but not many would-be trainers attend them. Even in large organizations as well as multinationals, those who perform such a role often have never attended specific training courses.

⁸ See ISFOL Rapporto 2004, Roma, 2004.

⁹ See Unioncamere – Ministero del Lavoro, Sistema Informativo Excelsior, 2007.

3. How is the work and training of trainers financed?

The work and the training of trainers are mainly financed by public funds within framework of national laws (Law 236/1993 and Law 53/2000), the European Social Fund (ESF) and Joint Multi-sectoral Funds for Continuing Training (industry-based training funds).

Law 236/1993 established a fund for vocational training to finance in-company training actions, innovative and individual training pathways, training plans negotiated with Social Partners, training of trainers and system related actions to bolster the quality of continuing training provisions¹⁰. Since 2000, 678 million euros have been allocated.

Law 53/2000 marked an important step by recognizing to workers the right to continuing training through the institution of a specific leave (not exceeding 11 working months, either continuous or distributed over the whole working life) to participate to training initiatives. Training can be an independent choice of the workers or provided by the employer / enterprises through training plans negotiated with Social Partners. The Ministry of Labour allocates yearly to regional and provincial authorities 15,4 million euro. Through Law 53/2000 two main actions have been financed: workers training projects that provide partial reductions of working hours, on the basis of contract agreement; training projects submitted by the workers themselves.

The ESF represents more than 80 per cent of the resources that finance continuing training within the framework of Regional and National Operational Programmes. Actually during the ESF programming 2000-2006 approximately 2 million euro (71 per cent Ob.3, 29 per cent Ob.1) have been allocated for continuing training initiatives addressed to develop: a continuing training system, labour market flexibility and competitiveness of public and private enterprises giving priority to SMEs and Public Administration staff, skills and human potential in the ICT sector, training of trainers and equal opportunities for all in the labour market.

The **Joint Multi-sectoral Funds** are the most relevant innovation concerning the CVET in the last decade in Italy. They enable the Social Partners (trade unions and entrepreneurs) to participate in the planning and management of a significant part of the resources allocated to CVET. The aim is to encourage wider dissemination of the training culture, especially with regards to smaller and medium-sized enterprises, and to contribute to steering funds towards initiatives expected to be more in line with the real company needs. The funds finance the continuing training system, through actions of training of trainers, in-company training plans and individual training plans. They are 12 (see table below) managed at national level and regulated by law and by collective agreements. The funds collect the 0.3 per cent of global wages amount (coming from the annual contribution of the salaries paid by the enterprises to the Italian Istituto Nazionale di Previdenza Sociale - National Social Security Institute - as a contribution for the compulsory insurance against involuntary unemployment).

¹⁰ A good practice regarding "concerted" training is the Rubik Project. It has been promoted by SME Services Centre in Reggio Emilia, managed in association with other institutions and supported by National Trade Unions and by CONFAPI (Small and Medium Enterprises Italian Confederation) and launched in the context of Law 236/93. Its aim is to create a flexible and tailor-made "training pathway", to guarantee the consistency between corporate needs, workers' needs and the modes of training delivery, in line with the specific features and organisational aspects of small and medium-sized enterprises. Over 100 SMEs, mainly in the mechanical engineering sector, several hundred workers, social partners, training agencies, experts in specialised know-how, consultants and trainers were involved. The project also included the proposal of a portfolio of skills to be validated for the individual participants and also training of trainers.

Joint Multi-sectoral Funds (year 2006)	Economical Sector
Fondo formazione PMI	Industry (Fund for the continuing training in SMEs)
For.te	Fund for the continuing training of commerce – tourism services, lending-financial, insurance and logistic, dispatch, transportation
Fon.ter	Fund for the continuing training of tertiary, segment of tourism-distribution-services
Fondo Artigianato Formazione	Fund for the continuing training of handcrafts –SMEs
Fon. Coop	Fund for the continuing training of cooperatives
Fondirigenti	Industry (Fund for the continuing training of managers)
Fondir	Fund for the continuing training of managers who work in the tertiary, segments of commerce-tourism-services, lending-financial, insurance and logistic, dispatch, transportation.
Fondo Dirigenti PMI	Fund for the continuing training of SMEs managers
Fondo professioni	Fund for the continuing training of professional offices and associated companies
Fond.E.R.	Fund for the continuing training of religious organizations
Fon. Arcom	Fund for the continuing training of tertiary, handcrafts, SMEs
Fondimpresa	Fund for the continuing training of the associated companies of Confindustria

Companies' total expenditure for training was around 1 billion in 2006, including public funds such as Regional ones and Joint Multi-sectoral Funds. The trend of training expenditure is rather positive, especially for large enterprises.

4. How are trainers selected and how are human resources allocated?

In Italy no official statistical data exist concerning trainers, neither detailed information concerning gender, age, education distribution. According to some estimation, approximately 50,000 trainers are involved in adult learning activities. An Isfol survey¹¹ shows that the population of trainers working for vocational training centres – public and private - is gradually ageing (average age 43), especially among male trainers, while the number of fixed-term and flexible contracts and female trainers is rising. Concerning the educational level the number of graduate trainers is increasing and more than 50 per cent of trainers have an upper secondary diploma.

Most of the trainers work as freelance outside the companies that outsource training services. Only a small part of them work as full-time employees in SMEs or large companies. In most cases trainers work part-time, often hired by different training providers¹², employment services, Social Partners' vocational training centres, in a flexible way or as freelance. The shortage of in-company trainers is due to the fact that companies' man-

¹¹ ISFOL, I formatori della formazione professionale. Come (e perchè) cambia una professione, I libri del FSE, Roma, 2005.

¹² Such as private and public vocational training agencies/centres, consultancy units providing in-service training, business schools, chambers of commerce and industry, non profit organisations.

agement does not consider sufficiently training as a strategic dimension to develop. Indeed in the culture of the Italian management a strong regulated training system is often considered more as a bond than a real opportunity. In the future large companies might come to an agreement with training schools for a gradual insertion of employees with training background. In that case the recognition of trainer's role would be much easier for companies than for internal employees that need to be trained as trainers and to be contracted differently within the company. Some large enterprises have also exploited the experience of aged employees to train new young employees, transforming a risk of obsolescence into a resource. So far, these experiences have been financed through public funds.

For the recruitment and selection of trainers each enterprise or training provider has its own prerequisites and / or management guidelines (in terms of technical expertise, qualification, years of experience in a subject or in a field, etc.). Recruitment takes place through informal channels such as a response to job-offers by enterprises, vocational training bodies, as former students, etc. On the contrary, formal recruitment procedures take place mainly in public VET centres (e.g. by public examination) or certificated private ones.

The trainers are engaged in a large number of fields for updating and continuing training promoted by entrepreneurial organisations and trade unions directly or through the Joint Multi-sectoral bodies. CVET trainers and, in particular, in-company trainers have above all the workers as customers target, especially the more qualified ("white collars" and technicians). Public providers have less qualified adults as privileged target group.

5. How are trainers qualified?

In Italy there is no formal recognition and qualification of the in-company trainer profile – and no specific national standards for trainers, but only general standards for employees of Certified Training Providers by Regions. According to the National Decree 166/01, training providers should be "certified" in order to be granted public funds. The certification implies to meet some requirements such as: organization and logistical capacity, financial aspects, efficacy and efficiency, territorial relations and, last but not least, professional competences. Training providers can choose to work in different fields of intervention, mainly: compulsory education, continuing training and higher education and training. The Decree also states that the Ministry of Labour in accordance with the Regions should define minimum standards of trainers' professional competences.

In SMEs the only trainer's profile formally recognised is the so-called *tutor in enterprise for apprenticeship*¹³. The *tutor* is generally the employer or a qualified employee with at least three years of professional experience. The *tutor* deals with the reception and insertion of young apprentices, planning and supporting learning process and in-service socialisation pathways, keeping the relations with the training centres, to maintain positive integration between formal training and on the job experience; the *tutor* does the follow up and assesses the results achieved by the apprentices. At the beginning of the course the tutor has to attend a compulsory training course organised by the Regions. The minimum duration of this course is 8 hours, up to 32 hours.

¹³ The profile of tutor for apprenticeship has been introduced by the Law 196/1997 in order to promote employment and qualify the learning on the job by apprentices. This law was reformed by the legislative decree 276/2003 so that the apprenticeship was completely renewed, by assigning the Italian Regions and Autonomous Provinces the exclusive competences on the matter.

Generally trainers can develop their competences by self training (studying, reading and researching), by non formal training (participating to workshop, conferences, to professional networks) and by formal training (training courses, distance learning, coaching). Continuing learning activities very often take place on voluntary / self-initiated basis. Much depends on trainers' responsibility. Personal and professional self-empowerment is also important for trainers to persuade the management to invest more in the function. The Italian experts¹⁴ indicated as main topics of the continuing training for trainers: social competences (communication, counselling, leadership), management, planning and training activities organization, monitoring and evaluation of training activities, ICT. Only a few of them indicated budgeting and financial aspects, tutoring and guidance as topics.

Formal continuing training is provided by some national providers, offering modular training (i.e. ENAIP¹⁵, IAL). The main association of trainers is Italian Association of Trainers¹⁶ that organizes 2,500 professional trainers. This association includes in-company trainers, adult learning trainers, human resources staff, and above all freelance trainers. It promotes adult learning quality, supports trainers development and professional national and international networks. Since 10 years AIF has developed a trainer competences certification process that is recognized by all clients participating to AIF training courses. To acquire such a certification, it is compulsory to attend technical and qualifying courses and to develop competences in a continuous way. The recognition/certification of trainers' previous learning carried out by AIF is only for freelance trainers and it's granted on the basis of: the quality of training courses; the number of training hours supplied; competences acquired through qualifying training.

In-service training of trainers is more likely to be structured for trainers who work in private vocational training centres accredited by Regions and located in the Centre-North of Italy. According to the Italian experts a major professionalisation and qualification of trainers would be important for those who work with training. With regard to trainers continuing learning, it would be very useful a competences' portfolio to be constantly updated. Trainers employed by largest organisations may profit (rarely) from specific continuing professional development programmes.

In Italy a national collective agreement in the sector of CVET training doesn't exist. Only the teachers and trainers employed by public and private certified Vocational Training Centres / providers have a collective agreement established on the same basis of the rules applied to IVET teachers and trainers.

6. How is the reputation of trainers and how are they integrated in enterprises/society?

In Italy there is no recognition of the trainers' role. As a matter of fact a trainer's status is rather weak except for companies attributing an important role to training. As external training providers or freelance, trainers are often considered business-oriented; in-company trainers are often work-motivated by their personal interest and the opportunity to broaden their experiences, in order to get more chances on the labour market. Generally they don't enjoy employer-related incentives such as higher status, pay etc. The recognition of trainer's status depends mainly on companies' investments in training policies and the programs of the internal management. If training were really a strategic tool, the

¹⁴ The experts interviewed within the Eurotrainer research project, 2007.

¹⁵ Ente Nazionale Acli Istruzione Professionale.

¹⁶ Associazione Italiana Formatori (AIF).

internal trainer would be crucial for enterprises and workers' development processes. For that reason the trainer's status in SMEs depends on the trainer himself / herself, on his / her ability to be credible and behaving consistently within the organization. On the contrary, in large companies there is more acknowledgment of trainer's status than in SMEs where the training investments are poor and the trainers are freelance or work for external training providers. According to the experts the motivational factors to assume the role of a trainer in an enterprise seem to be related especially to personal interest and to qualifying aspects (such as broadening the range of skills). Other motivational factors are linked above all to general career perspectives in the occupational domain.

7. How innovative is the work and training of trainers?

There are some innovative training experiences dedicated to the managers of the large companies who are involved in human resources management and need to develop training competences. They have been trained in order to develop training culture and skills. Other enterprises (especially the public ones but also banks and assurances) prefer to qualify a training referent employee on topics such as needs analysis, tutorship, evaluation of results and ICT learning tools (such as e-learning). Also some Italian Regions, big municipalities and medium and large companies (the bank sector) developed some interesting good practises concerning the preparation of a training referent who is in charge of the training activities. This profile should be able to identify the training needs of the company and workers, to support and monitor training processes when outsourced, in order to dialogue with training providers, and to take care of the evaluation of results.

Among the innovative experiences it's worth mentioning a national, online permanent training system. Since 2005 SPF online, promoted by the Ministry of Labour and carried out by ISFOL, has been set up as public and free continuous training project, based on new technologies (e-learning). Its main goal is to improve the competences of trainers who operate in the training / education / labour market system. SPF online combines traditional online courses with collaborative learning environments to promote the creation of professional communities¹⁷.

A recent research¹⁸ carried out by the Ministry of Labour has been finalised to identify a competences evaluation model for the profile of the in-company *training referent* able to manage and develop the whole training process. The research has designed a specific profile of the in-company training referent with the following features: between 30 and 50 years old, employed (76 per cent) and consultant (16 per cent), with high education (80 per cent graduated, 20 per cent high school diploma), a rank job from 5 to 30 years, a lack of degree coherent to the role of *training referent* (graduation in Psychology, Educational Sciences) versus less specific degree (Political Sciences); more than 50 per cent of the interviewed is a *training referent* since less than 5 years and altogether 88 per cent since less than 10 years. The role of the *trainer referent* seems to be very complex and the competences most developed are related to training needs analysis and processes management.

¹⁷ See www.xformare.it; www.europalavoro.xformare.it.

¹⁸ The research analyses 200 training company models among the main Italian enterprises and has defined a theoretical and ideal model of training company, focusing on training evaluation systems as well as on company training referent's skills.

In some Italian regions SMEs trainers and *tutors in enterprise for apprenticeship* are developing community of practices in order to update their competences through ICT tools. Web facilitators provided by SMEs professional categories help them to keep the community animated.

According to the current debate some issues are very likely to be risen in the next future:

- the role of the *tutor for apprenticeship* should be more valorised dealing not only with apprentices but also with all new employees. The tutor should be also a kind of “*referent*” for the training processes and be enough qualified to identify the competences acquired by the apprentices; this could be the first step towards apprentices’ competences recognition and certification.
- the recognition of trainer’s role in collective agreements would be also of great help to enhance the function of the in-company trainers, to avoid the risk to compel companies within a training model, they do not believe in. Also it would be important to plan training services with Social Partners (entrepreneurs and trade unions). In the large companies – where training services are outsourced – it would be necessary to invest in a profile enough skilled to deal and dialogue with training providers and assess the results of the training delivered.
- it would be also useful to work with external training providers, to be sure that trainers fit some kind of standards, bolstering the creation of a national system of trainers competences recognition.
- more investments in the training of trainers and the improvement of its quality and efficacy through a real training needs analysis.

Resources

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