

DECP's guide to analyze skills gaps

for employers' organisations





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Part A. Discovering skills gaps





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Get started!



1. First explorations

- Are labour market research reports on a national level available? Good. They most probably are rich, informative sources. But if they are not available, don't wait for them
- Choose for an identification of skills gaps with focus. Good indications are (nearly) as good as statistical significance
- Even if research reports on a national level are available, it will be a good next step to explore skills gaps in focused areas





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2. Select 2 or 3 promising economic sectors

Possible criteria:

- They are important for national or regional economy
- They have the potential to grow
- There are both large companies and SME's active in this field
- They most probably suffer from skills gaps





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3. Select one of these sectors to start with

- Select 7-10 companies
- 2 or 3 larger companies that are illustrative for the sector
- 5-7 smaller companies
- Invite the decision makers for a round table discussion
- This should be CEO's or company owners together with an HR officer or production manager



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The round table session



Step 1: Identify a long list

- Use a brainstorm approach to identify 10 functions for which in general it is difficult to find qualified employees
- Do all participants agree? Okay!





Step 2: Select a short list

- What are the three most crucial functions for which it is difficult to find qualified employees?
- Use ranking lists per participant. Have them first fill in separately. Then rank a top three



Step 3: Identify tasks

- Identify the most important tasks for each function
- For each function, list 10 tasks that the participants agree on



Step 4: Identify crucial competencies

- What do these employees have to know?
(knowledge)
- What do these employees have to be able to?
(skills)
- What kind of working attitude is essential?
(attitude)



Intermezzo: get inspired by

- <https://www.onetonline.org/>
- www.jobsandskills.wa.gov.au
- www.prospect.ac.uk

Let us do an exercise and compare our outcomes with the outcomes of those who have already taken these steps!





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Be smart and use existing sources as much as possible

They most probably complete the results of the round table with regards to:

- Tasks
- Technology skills
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Abilities
- Work activities
- Detailed work abilities
- Work context
- Job zone
- Education
- And more





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Step 5: Draw up a list of competencies that are lacking structurally

Here a group discussion will reveal the most important skills gaps perceived by employers. Asking questions like:





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- How do you notice these competencies are lacking?
- What goes wrong if you have incompetent employees do these tasks?
- Can you give some examples how things went wrong?
- What can you do (what have you done) to overcome this disadvantage?
- Which employees in your organisation do have the right competencies?
- What can they do to coach new entrants and existing employees to their level?





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The result of this round table session:

- A good indication of the competence needs of the sector
- Complete insight in crucial functions in the companies
- Complete job profiles
- An overview of missing competencies
- This picture is shared and understood by those who 'designed' it
- The nature of the problem is revealed
- The employers' organisation can share this result with their stakeholders
- And this activity opens the door to create solutions!



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Part B. Taking action to fill in important gaps

- Mapping
- Diagnosing
- Developing
- Continuous improvement



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Let us just imagine that

The majority of companies have identified

**The maintenance
worker,
machinery!!!**



..... as an important function for which new entrants lack crucial competencies

Step 1. Mapping



Create the job profile

- Maintenance workers undertake scheduled and breakdown maintenance of machinery and other mechanical equipment (simplified)





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What does a maintenance worker do?

- Inspect, operate, or test machinery or equipment to diagnose machine malfunctions.
- Dismantle machines, equipment, or devices to access and remove defective parts, using hoists, cranes, hand tools, or power tools.
- Perform routine maintenance, such as inspecting drives, motors, or belts, checking fluid levels, replacing filters, or doing other preventive maintenance actions.
- Diagnose mechanical problems and determine how to correct them, checking blueprints, repair manuals, or parts catalogs, as necessary.
- Repair machines, equipment, or structures, using tools such as hammers, hoists, saws, drills, wrenches, or equipment such as precision measuring instruments or electrical or electronic testing devices



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Required knowledge

- **Mechanical** — Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, repair, and maintenance.
- **Building and Construction** — Knowledge of materials, methods, and the tools involved in the construction or repair of houses, buildings, or other structures such as highways and roads.
- **Customer and Personal Service** — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
- **Public Safety and Security** — Knowledge of relevant equipment, policies, procedures, and strategies to promote effective local, state, or national security operations for the protection of people, data, property, and institutions.
- **English Language** — Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.



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Required skills

- **Equipment Maintenance** — Performing routine maintenance on equipment and determining when and what kind of maintenance is needed.
- **Repairing** — Repairing machines or systems using the needed tools.
- **Troubleshooting** — Determining causes of operating errors and deciding what to do about it.
- **Critical Thinking** — Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
- **Equipment Selection** — Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.



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Required attitude

- **Flexible** — Ready to do the job whenever it is necessary
- **Proactive** — Trying to understand what work should be done later
- **Customer friendly (or oriented)** — Good listener, asks searching questions
- **Curious** — Wants to learn, takes action to do so
- **Receptive for feedback** — Is open minded to the opinion and perception of others



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Competencies. To what extent?

Building blocks for the competence profile

		Absent	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Knowledge	Mechanical					
Knowledge	Building and construction					
Knowledge	Customer and personal service					
Knowledge	Public safety and security					
knowledge	English language					
Skills	Equipment maintenance					
Skills	Repairing					
Skills	Trouble shooting					
Skills	Critical thinking					
Skills	Equipment selection					
Attitude	Flexible					
Attitude	Proactive					
Attitude	Customer friendly					
Attitude	Curious					
Attitude	Receptive for feedback					



The new entrants' minimum competence profile

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		Absent	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Knowledge	Mechanical			X		
Knowledge	Building and construction			X		
Knowledge	Customer and personal service		X			
Knowledge	Public safety and security				X	
knowledge	English language			X		
Skills	Equipment maintenance		X			
Skills	Repairing		X			
Skills	Trouble shooting		X			
Skills	Critical thinking		X			
Skills	Equipment selection			X		
Attitude	Flexible			X		
Attitude	Proactive		X			
Attitude	Customer friendly			X		
Attitude	Curious				X	
Attitude	Receptive for feedback				X	



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Step 2. Diagnosing

- Discuss general experiences in the round table
- Set-up a competence profile which is generally observed for new entrants in reality
- Identify the main lacking competencies
- List the competencies that are crucial for getting started



Generally observed new entrants' competence profile

		Absent	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Knowledge	Mechanical		X	X		
Knowledge	Building and construction		X	X		
Knowledge	Customer and personal service	X	X			
Knowledge	Public safety and security			X	X	
knowledge	English language			X		
Skills	Equipment maintenance	X	X			
Skills	Repairing		X			
Skills	Trouble shooting		X			
Skills	Critical thinking	X	X			
Skills	Equipment selection			X		
Attitude	Flexible			X		
Attitude	Proactive		X			
Attitude	Customer friendly		X	X		
Attitude	Curious			X	X	
Attitude	Receptive for feedback				X	



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How to measure the individuals competence profile ?

- Knowledge

- how does the curriculum of the VET school look like?
- asking questions to the applicant
- structural interview with the applicant

- Skills

- have the candidate do some practical exercises
- give the applicant specific tasks
- have the applicant follow the STAR method:



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Basics of the STAR method

Situation : Describe the situation

Task : Explain the objective of the task

Action : What did you do to achieve the objective? Why?

Result : What were the outcomes of your actions?



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And what about **attitude**?

- Let us face the truth. We cannot measure everything. But.....
- A mature expert who knows people can be an excellent judge of character!
- So: make sure you involve mature experts in the selection process and share his impressions and observations
- All together this can lead to a personalised competence profile:



Competence profile of an individual applicant

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		Absent	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert
Knowledge	Mechanical		X	X		
Knowledge	Building and construction		X	X		
Knowledge	Customer and personal service		X	X		
Knowledge	Public safety and security		X		X	
knowledge	English language		X	X		
Skills	Equipment maintenance	X	X			
Skills	Repairing		X			
Skills	Trouble shooting	X	X			
Skills	Critical thinking		X	X		
Skills	Equipment selection		X	X		
Attitude	Flexible			X		
Attitude	Proactive		X	X		
Attitude	Customer friendly			X		
Attitude	Curious			X	X	
Attitude	Receptive for feedback			X	X	



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Step 3. Developing

- Who?
- How?
- What?
- Investments, resources and restrictions
- Risks and opportunities





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Who?

- Can individual companies who share the same problems and challenges cooperate to work out solutions?
- Can the employers' organisation start up and support this process?
- What should –at the end- be the role of the public educational system (schools) and the government?

TEAM MEMBERS

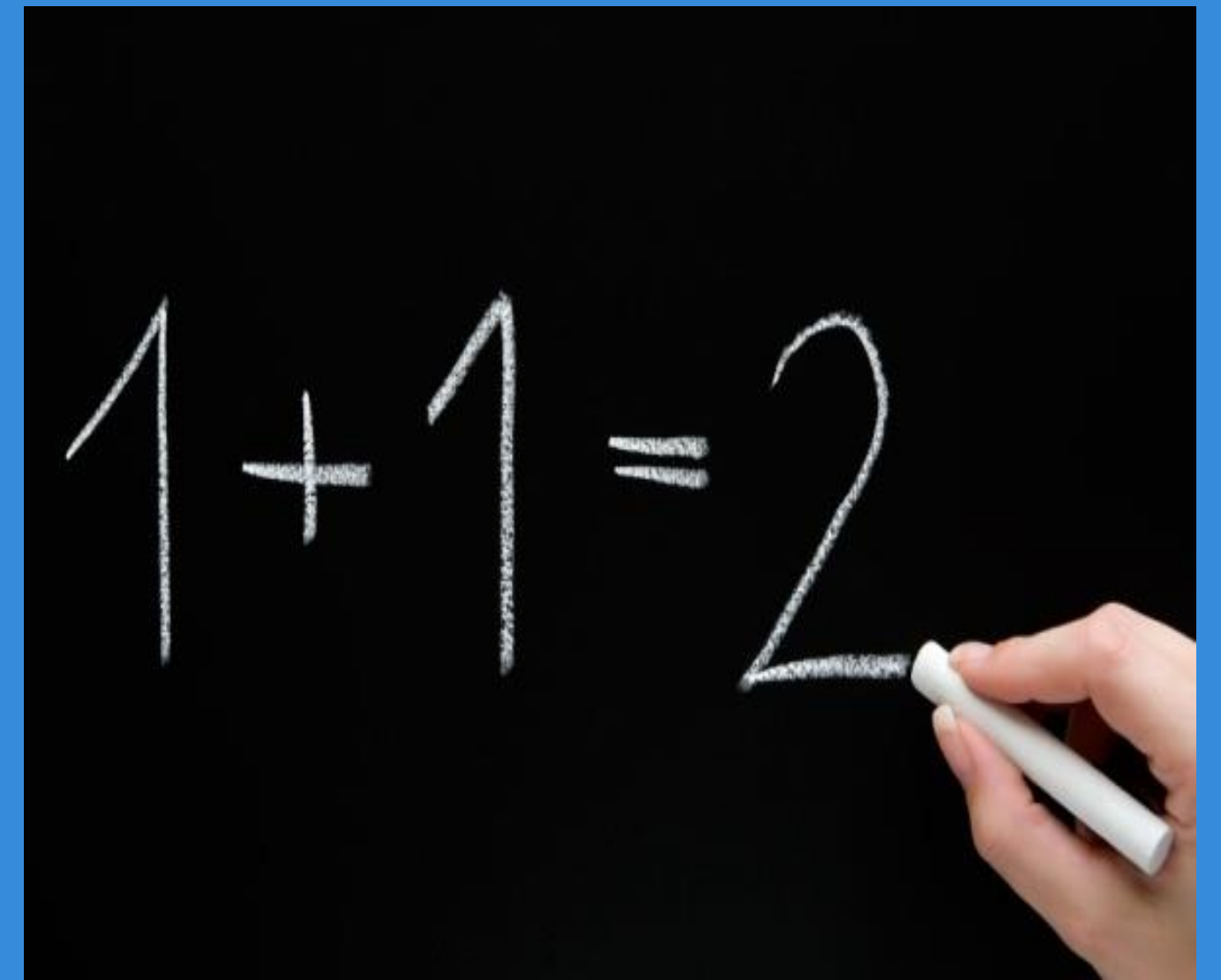


Role & Responsibilities



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How?



- Keep it as simple as possible
- Define the most important lacks of knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Identify a group of relevant experts employed by the companies that work together
- Question: what can you do to make them work together and act like 'teachers' ?

What?

You remember those fields of competences?

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Attitude





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Investments, resources and restrictions

Let us discuss what is possible:

- Time, people, equipment
- Assessments, interview structure, practical exercises
- A training programme to teach and train the most important competences



Risks and opportunities

- Trust versus mistrust
- Equal investments or not? Large companies versus SME's
- Who will benefit at the end?
- What can we do to make everybody win?
- How to get started? !!!!





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Step 4. Continuous improvement

And what if you are successful?

- Companies are no schools after all
- You can only solve a small part of the problem
- Upscaling will be difficult

So.....



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Discussion / exercise

- How to involve schools and government in each stage of this process?
- How to make three parties dance the tango?





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COOPERATING
WITH NATIONAL
AND INTERNATIONAL
ORGANISATIONS

TRANSFERRING
KNOWLEDGE
AND SHARING
EXPERIENCES

FINANCIAL
CONTRIBUTIONS
TO PROGRAMME
ACTIVITIES

