

Current Issues in Training and Simulation

Dinner speech to the Europe Chapter of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society

*Johan Riemersma
TNO-HFRI Soesterberg
The Netherlands*

The Industrial Research and Development Advisory Committee of the European Commission (IRDAC) has recently (Anonymous, 1994) issued a Report on Quality and Relevance, with sub-titles: *the challenge to European education*, and: *unlocking Europe's human potential*.

A main theme in the report is the cooperation between industry and education that is needed to meet the challenge of providing a strong capacity for innovation and quality in order for Europe to survive in the international competition.

As main threats are identified: firstly, the underestimation of both the need to change and the speed of adaptation required, and secondly, the low awareness of the educational system of its central responsibility for equipping young people with the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes to address this challenge of providing a strong capacity for innovation and quality.

To tackle these threats seven main areas for action were identified, four of which I will describe briefly.

1 Developing total competence in people

Total competence is the mix of knowledge, skills, personal abilities and attributes of a person. Total competence is stressed, because traditionally the educational system tends to focus and put highest value on the acquisition of formal knowledge only. Responsibility for skill acquisition was primarily delegated to the work environment, while attitudes and values were seen as resulting mainly from family life and society at large. IRDAC stresses the need for cooperation and communication skills as main attributes. IRDAC also stresses the need for more proper matching of course programme objectives with changing employment requirements. This implies firstly that companies should be more explicit about the broad competence needs of their work-force and secondly that (vocational) education policy should resist the temptation of narrow specialisations.

2 Preparing people and society for a lifetime of learning

IRDAC stresses the need for developing learning abilities instead of just acquiring certain certifications (qualifications). Formal education should be