



# MODERN TRENDS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN FRANCE

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## Abstract

*Relevance* of the article is explicated via the need to study, identify and analyze the modern trends in ensuring the quality of vocational education and training in France in order to take them into account when creating the evaluative tools for assessing the quality of vocational education in Ukraine, which can be based on evaluators, methods and criteria for assessing the quality of vocational education and training in France.

*The goal* was to identify and characterize the main modern trends in ensuring the quality of vocational education and training in France, as well as to clarify the possibilities of their consideration in the Ukrainian practice of ensuring the quality of vocational education in Ukraine.

*The methods* included the study of scientific sources, legislative, regulatory and legal documents, empirical data on ensuring the quality of vocational education and training in France – to identify the state of the research problem; theoretical analysis and synthesis, generalization of views on the research problem – to determine the main trends in ensuring the quality of vocational education and training in France, as well as to form the conclusions.

*The results* were based on the analysis of modern legislative, regulatory and legal documents, scientific and information sources, the main modern trends, features, criteria and methods of ensuring the quality of vocational education and training in France.

*Conclusions.* The main current trends in quality assurance of vocational education and training in France are explicated: the educational reforms in France implemented in recent years have contributed to strengthening the quality assurance framework for vocational education and training, as well as the overall national qualifications system; the flagship of the quality assurance system for training providers is the “Qualiopi” certification, created by the French Ministry of Labor; the methodology used by “France Competences” for certification processes is itself a quality assurance mechanism; stricter control over training providers registered on the CPF marketplace platform has reduced their number from over 25,500 in 2019 to less than 15,000 by the end of 2023; as a result of increased registration requirements, the withdrawal of obsolete qualifications and the restructuring of higher education qualifications, the number of active qualifications in the RNCP has decreased from 10,000 in the previous system to around 5,000 in the current one; following the 2018 reform of the management and financing of continuing education and vocational training in France, a new body Skills operators (OPCO) was created; the French Ministry of Labour carries out a national forecasting of skills needs for the future development of vocational qualifications, which significantly contributes to improving the quality assurance of vocational education and training in France.

**Keywords:** *trends, quality, vocational education, training, France.*

**Introduction.** As is known, vocational education in France is aimed at providing applied training to young people who have completed

college. To achieve this goal, France has three main pathways for vocational education: the first pathway is preparation for a certificate of professional

apptitude (CAP, certificat d'apptitude professionnelle), the second is a certificate of vocational education (BEP, brevet d'études professionnelles), and the third is a four-year preparation for a professional baccalaureate and a technician's certificate (BT, brevet de technicien). Interestingly, professional diplomas are regularly updated after consultations with representatives of professional fields, and the work of the advisory professional commission culminates in a document that corresponds to the diploma. We should recall that the certificate of professional aptitude is a leading specialized professional diploma (CAP) that prepares individuals for specific tasks and is aimed at rapid professional integration. To obtain it, students undergo professional training periods of 12 to 16 weeks. In France, there are about 250 specializations that grant a certificate of professional aptitude in the industrial, commercial, or service sectors. The certificate of vocational education and the certificate of professional aptitude can be obtained in two years. The certificate of vocational education provides a broader qualification and allows for further study, for example, to obtain a professional or technological baccalaureate. It certifies training that provides the qualification of a skilled worker or employee. The training program includes 50% technological and professional training and 50% general education subjects, as well as on-the-job training (from 4 to 8 weeks). The professional baccalaureate is a level IV graduation diploma, which had five specializations when it was created in 1985, and currently includes over 60 specializations and offers various opportunities for professional integration. The professional nature of the training is demonstrated through company-based training (an average of 16 weeks), which is distributed over the first and final years of study. Graduates with CAP and BEP diplomas are eligible to obtain a BT. At the same time, older individuals in France can receive vocational education at apprentice training centers (CFA) through specially designed training schemes (Popel, 2022).

It is also worth noting that the French National Professional Qualifications Framework (NPQF) is based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which makes qualifications more understandable across different countries and systems (EQF). In 2018, an eight-level NPQF was

introduced with three level descriptors: complexity of knowledge; level of expertise; and degree of responsibility and autonomy. The level descriptors reflect national specifics, which is a positive aspect of foreign experience that can be used to improve vocational education in Ukraine. For example, the term "expertise" in France is used instead of the term "skills," emphasizing the importance of "assessing competencies and the desire to give an operational dimension" to qualification levels. Furthermore, the contextualization of qualifications is a crucial element (Cedefop, 2023).

The French National Professional Qualifications Framework includes general qualifications from full secondary, vocational, and higher education, as well as qualifications obtained outside of formal education and training. In 2002, the National Register of Professional Qualifications (Repertoire national des certifications professionnelles, RNCP) was created, which covers professionally-oriented qualifications, including higher education qualifications. The RNCP was linked to the EQF in 2010. In 2021, the NPQF was linked to the EQF and self-certified against the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), which, in turn, somewhat indicates the latter's autopoietic educational trends (France), which, along with the contextualization of qualifications, can be considered positive aspects of foreign experience that can be used to improve vocational education in Ukraine.

**Sources.** Current trends, features, main criteria, and methods of quality assurance in vocational education in the countries of the European Union, and France in particular, are the subject of research by various social actors and organizations, including: the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Labour, and other state institutions of France, as well as Ukrainian scholars. Specifically, the monograph "Quality Assessment Systems for Vocational Education and Training in European Union Countries" (Radkevych, ed., 2018) provides an overview of the features of the development of the quality assurance system for vocational education and training (VET) in France, and also conducts a comparative analysis between

some instruments of VET quality assurance systems in France and Ukraine (for example, between French professional licenses and Ukrainian ordinary licenses), highlights some principles of the regular national procedure for evaluating the activities of vocational education institutions, educational programs, and their certification, etc. Moreover, the work states that external quality assessment of VET in France covers all activities of vocational education institutions: administration, management, educational programs, teaching methods, social activities, and research. Of considerable interest is the fact that at the regional level, local councils involved in organizing practical training and vocational preparation for young people and adults have adopted "Quality Charters," which are signed by professional institutions representing specific sectors of the economy, or by training organizations that have concluded agreements with the region to provide workplaces for students of vocational education institutions. At the same time, there is some need to continue further research-based crystallization of the current trends in quality assurance of vocational education in France. Thus, N. Popel (2022) analyzed vocational education and training in France as components of the lifelong learning system, which contributes to the formation of the foundations of human resource optionality and the potential of the modern economy, and also ensures the strengthening of the position of social actors in professional activities. At the same time, the modern trends of vocational education in France are characterized superficially in her work, so this aspect in our work required further information and source research, refinement, and clarification. V. Joseph (2024) in his work quite clearly outlined the prospects for implementing European priorities in the field of vocational education and training in France: ensuring flexibility, innovation, attractiveness, inclusiveness, and quality of national vocational education and training. At the same time, the unresolved part of the general problem to which this work is dedicated is precisely the modern trends in quality assurance of vocational education in France.

**Objective:** to identify and characterize the current trends in quality assurance of vocational education in France, and to clarify the possibilities of taking them into account in the domestic practice

of quality assurance of vocational (vocational-technical) education.

**Methods:** study of scientific sources, legislative, legal and regulatory documents, empirical data on quality assurance of vocational education in France – to identify the state of the research problem; theoretical analysis and synthesis, generalization of views on the researched problem – to determine the main trends in quality assurance of vocational education in France, and to formulate conclusions.

**Results and Discussion.** As the 2018 reform emphasized transparency and efficiency through new obligations for all training providers using mutual funds to inform and monitor their training activities, a number of new trends can be observed in the quality assurance of vocational education and training in France. As is known, the flagship of the quality assurance system for training providers is the "Qualiopi" certification, created by the French Ministry of Labour. The certification has a dual role: to guarantee the quality of the training offer and its transparency for both companies (which contribute to training activities for their employees) and beneficiaries. The Qualiopi quality label is awarded for 3 years by certification bodies accredited or authorized by the French Accreditation Committee (Comité français d'accréditation, Cofrac), according to a national reference system covering seven criteria: the training offer is publicly available and accessible to all audiences; the training offer is adapted to the target group of beneficiaries; learners are supported at every stage of the learning process; an attractive and supportive learning environment; teacher training; links with the local economy; and continuous improvement of services) and 32 indicators, ensuring the same quality standards for all providers. Competencies, according to the legislation, can also be recognized by labeling bodies (instances de labellisation). Training institutions or individuals submit a request to a labeling body, sign a contract with this body, and undergo two audits during the labeling period for monitoring and renewal. All training organizations, including apprentice training centers, must have a quality certificate if the training they offer is financed by public and mutual funds. Regarding initial vocational education (IVET), providers applying for or renewing the "Lycée des métiers"

(vocational lyceum) label must define and establish an organizational structure that meets the quality criteria according to the "Qualéduc" tool, which is used for self-assessment and continuous improvement of public IVET institutions.

"France Compétences" is the governance and monitoring body for the implementation of vocational education and is financially responsible for the quality of vocational training and education. It evaluates the actions carried out by skills operators, the dynamics of costs, and can also alert the state to possible malfunctions and monitors the implementation of quality measures. The methodology used for certification processes is in itself a quality assurance mechanism. For example, ministries develop standards for professional diplomas in consultation with professionals/experts, define examination regulations, award diplomas, offer various types of training in their institutions, hire, train, and pay teachers, monitor the quality of training and report on results and resources used. The need for a training organization to be accredited or recognized by the body issuing the certificate is considered an important element of quality. The state label Qualiopi is awarded either by a certification body accredited by the French Accreditation Committee (Cofrac) or by 8 bodies accredited (for the period 2023-2025) by "France Compétences" (Cedefop, 2024).

In the context of implementing the French National Innovation Plan, it is worth noting that changes have occurred regarding the personal training account (CPF), which is used to finance certification training, skills assessment, or support for VAE: the regulation of training has been strengthened with the introduction of a law to combat abusive commercial advertising and fraud, adopted in December 2022. As of 2022, the state body Caisse des Dépôts, which manages the CPF scheme, has introduced a series of regulatory measures to better control the training offer registered on the CPF marketplace platform. Stricter control over registered training providers has reduced their number from over 25,500 in 2019 to less than 15,000 by the end of 2023. Among the most important regulatory measures taken to clean up the catalogue of training programs eligible for CPF is the requirement, introduced in 2022, for training organizations to obtain accreditation from the

certifier responsible for awarding the professional qualification. In addition, training providers are required to obtain quality certification through the Qualiopi quality certificate. Also, France Compétences, which is responsible for the Specific Directory (Répertoire spécifique), has carried out a significant update of this directory, resulting in the non-renewal of a large portion of the certificates previously listed in it. In December 2023, a decree for the application of this law was published, aimed, in particular, at defining the maximum level of subcontracting for training courses sold on the CPF platform by training service providers. Regarding the Qualiopi quality label for the certification of training service providers, a decree adopted in May 2023 contains a series of measures aimed at strengthening the quality assurance of the certification system. In particular, it defines the procedure that auditors must follow when auditing training organizations applying for the label – initial audit, follow-up audit, and surveillance audit – as well as the harmonization of audit practices between certification bodies (Joseph, 2024).

We should add that the quality assurance tool in vocational education and training, "Qualéduc," was developed in accordance with the principles and methodology proposed by "EQAVET" (European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training) with the aim of establishing and strengthening quality assurance mechanisms in initial education and training. It exists in school management, is an integral part of education reforms, and is also used for the quality labeling of vocational-technical educational institutions (vocational-technical schools, professional technical colleges), campuses for trades and qualifications (these campuses bring together secondary and higher vocational education (VET), research centers, and companies to strengthen the link between education and business, and to make VET one of the leading training pathways, i.e., it is a French initiative representing a new model for organizing vocational education and training of skilled personnel), campuses of excellence, and the EDUFORM quality label for providers offering professional training programs for adults. The fact that the Qualéduc guide, published in 2020, includes 31 thematic areas touching upon the reform of the vocational education pathway in upper secondary

school, teaching methods, pedagogy, and the school environment seems to be a positive trend (Cedefop, 2022).

Let us recall that within the EQAVET framework, for the purpose of ensuring the quality of vocational education and training (VET), a methodology was proposed based on: 1) the quality cycle (PDCA Cycle), which consists of four phases (setting goals and strategic planning; rules and regulations for implementation, continuous monitoring and measurement of results, according to predetermined goals; analysis of factors contributing to quality and change management considering the achieved results; control - begins a new cycle of continuous improvement, and therefore new strategic planning and goal setting, adapted to new developments); 2) quality criteria and indicative descriptors for each phase of the cycle; 3) common indicators for assessing goals, methods, procedures, and learning outcomes.

Furthermore, we note that in the expanded version of the "CEDEFOP" Centre's definition, the concept of "quality assurance" refers to "activities that include planning, implementation, evaluation, reporting, and quality improvement, which are carried out to ensure that all education and training (program content, curricula, assessment outcomes, and validation of learning outcomes, etc.) meet the quality requirements expected by stakeholders." Moreover, the European reference framework for quality assurance in vocational education and training is designed to promote the improvement of VET in the EU by providing authorities with common tools for quality management. To illustrate the nature of quality assurance, it uses the concept of a "quality cycle," which contains four distinct stages of the quality assurance process: planning (setting clear and realistic goals), implementation (defining the necessary structure to achieve the goals), evaluation (developing mechanisms for collecting and evaluating information to determine if goals are being met), and review (assessing results and making necessary adjustments or changes). Thus, one can notice that it has much in common with "Kolb's Learning Cycle," known from learning theory. These stages conditionally "wedge" into one another, meaning the results of one determine the actions of another. At the same time, they are also separate stages in a timeframe, and this determines

the specifics of data collection (Quality Assessment Systems, 2018).

It is also worth adding that the "EDUFORM" label is a quality assessment process available to public and private institutions of continuing vocational education and training (CVET) that offer vocational education and training, apprenticeship programs, and VAE (validation of acquired experience) to obtain a professional qualification, awarded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Validation of acquired experience (VAE) is a procedure that allows for the recognition and certification of knowledge and skills acquired through work, volunteering, or other professional activities. It enables individuals to obtain part or all of a professional qualification, such as a diploma or certificate, without undergoing traditional training. The "EDUFORM" label is issued by the ministry for 3 years after a national labeling audit and a positive recommendation from the national labeling committee. It provides visibility of the training offer to beneficiaries and the automatic award of the "Qualiopi" certificate, issued by the French Ministry of Labour.

The School Evaluation Council (Conseil d'évaluation de l'école), established in 2020, acts as an independent state body to ensure coherence between national and international assessments in education. It develops the methodological framework for the self-evaluation and external evaluation of schools (including vocational schools) and produces a summary report on the various exercises for evaluating student achievement, education systems, and institutions. In the higher education sector, programs comply with the Bologna Process and the ECTS credit system. The development and updating of curricula and qualifications provided by various institutions (universities and other public or private higher education institutions and technological institutes) has an internal quality assurance mechanism. Quality assurance has been strengthened by enshrining in law the role of various committees that must be consulted during the development, updating, or removal of higher education qualifications legally registered in the National Register of Professional Qualifications (RNCP, Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles), a state register that contains

information on professional qualifications and diplomas recognized in France. Qualifications listed in the RNCP have state status and are recognized throughout the country and in Europe.

As the reform of the continuing education and vocational training system in France was aimed at increasing the transparency and efficiency of the system, it introduced new obligations for all training service providers that use mutual funds to inform and monitor their training activities. Now, all providers of vocational education services (including vocational training centers and individuals) who offer training leading to the acquisition of new competencies must undergo quality certification if they conduct training activities financed by public or pooled funds. Such forms of training are established by law: training activities, skills audits, VAE processes, and vocational training.

Since 2019, the inclusion of certificates in the national register of professional qualifications (*repertoire national des certifications professionnelles*, RNCP) and the specific register of accreditations and certificates for qualifications (*répertoire spécifique des certifications et des habilitations*, RS) has been carried out by France compétences (the French Competencies agency) and its certification commission. All RNCP certificates are linked to a qualification level (levels 3-8 of the European Qualifications Framework) and are structured by units/blocks of competencies. In 2023, for example, over 4,500 certificates were listed in the RNCP and were considered "active," meaning they comply with the registration process and are evaluated (Cedefop, 2024). At the same time, as a result of increased registration requirements, the removal of outdated qualifications, and the restructuring of higher education qualifications, the number of active qualifications in the RNCP has decreased from 10,000 in the previous system to approximately 5,000 (Cedefop, 2022).

France compétences oversees the quality assurance of vocational education and training through the national qualifications system and the implementation of quality mechanisms for the inclusion of qualifications in the RNCP and RS. It has absorbed the functions and responsibilities of the national reference point for quality assurance, which has been responsible for the operation of the RNCP

since 2014. Today, regardless of the training path or process used to obtain a professional qualification or certificate, its inclusion in the RNCP and the specific register is a sign of nationwide recognition of the labor market relevance and quality of a particular qualification. The registration process, which takes place after receiving the consent of interministerial advisory committees, ensures consistency between qualifications issued by different ministries in the same professional sector.

In addition, qualifications issued by other public or private bodies can be registered on demand after review by the certification committee established within the French Commission for Professional Certification (*Commission de la certification professionnelle*), where representatives of ministries, regional education councils, and social partners work together. Nine criteria are applied for registration on demand: 1) a sufficient number of jobs in the target profession; 2) an analysis of the impact in terms of providing access or re-entry to the labor market and in relation to other qualifications in similar or related professions; 3) the quality of the qualification, assessment, and professional standards; 4) ensuring a monitoring procedure for all assessment tests; 5) consideration of all legal and regulatory constraints; 6) availability of the qualification through VAE; 7) consistency between the units/blocks of competencies of the given qualification and the assessment methods used; 8) where possible, consistency of (partial or full) equivalence with similar qualifications offered at the same level, and with their respective blocks of competencies; 9) for sectoral qualifications (CQPs), the participation of joint committees on employment and vocational training in the development or approval of qualification standards. The maximum registration period is 5 years (three years for rapidly changing or evolving qualifications), to ensure the training offer meets the needs of the economy. At the same time, certification bodies must provide, at least every 2 years, statistical data on the professional integration of holders of RNCP qualifications and inform France compétences of any training, assessment, or awarding tasks/duties they delegate to other organizations (Cedefop, 2022).

In the context of our article's theme, the quintessence would be to note that in France, the

Ministry of Labour conducts skills needs forecasting at the national level, primarily through the Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics Coordination (Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques, Dares), as well as France Stratégie, an autonomous institution under the Prime Minister. The Ministry of Labour partially funds research at the sectoral and regional levels through prospective study contracts. In 2021, France Stratégie and Dares jointly conducted a forecast of skills needs and the dynamics of jobs, training, and qualifications required in the labor market by 2030. Through its participation in the jobs and skills network (réseau emplois compétences, REC), managed by France Stratégie, the state, social partners, regions, and professional sector observatories work together on job needs and skills forecasting. France compétences contributes to the identification and analysis of skills needs in these sectors by publishing and promoting the work of the observatories on occupations and qualifications, which are managed by professional sectors (observatoires prospectifs des métiers, et des qualifications, OPMQ); each year, it establishes a list of new or rapidly evolving occupations (métiers émergents ou en forte évolution).

Following the 2018 reform on the governance and financing of continuing education and vocational training, a new body was created in France – the Skills Development Operators (Opérateur de Compétences, OPCO), managed by social partners. State representatives (from the Ministry of Labour) are members of their boards and sign agreements with them regarding objectives and resources (Cedefop, 2023). The Skills Development Operators support the forecasting of labor market needs by helping companies and professional sectors to build forward-looking management of jobs and skills, and assisting professional sectors in developing qualifications. They provide support to companies in planning apprentice training and help small and medium-sized enterprises to identify their skills and training needs. Regional observatories of employment and training provide regional systems for analyzing and researching the relationship between employment, training, and qualification requirements. Using data provided by national and regional stakeholders in vocational education and training, they conduct research and provide

expertise to forecast economic changes and future skills. They focus on training needs, employment trends; the links between employment and training; sectoral approaches, professional mobility, and economic development (Cedefop, 2022).

**Conclusions.** Thus, the educational reforms in France, introduced in recent years, have contributed to strengthening the framework for quality assurance in vocational education, as well as the overall national qualification system. The flagship of the quality assurance system for training service providers is the "Qualiopi" certification, created by the French Ministry of Labour. The methodology used by "France Compétences" for certification processes is in itself a quality assurance mechanism. In 2023, over 4,500 certificates were listed in the RNCP and were considered "active," meaning they comply with the registration process and are evaluated. On the other hand, as a result of increased registration requirements, the removal of outdated qualifications, and the restructuring of higher education qualifications, the number of active qualifications in the RNCP has decreased from 10,000 in the previous system to approximately 5,000 in the current one. Stricter control over training service providers registered on the CPF marketplace platform has reduced their number from over 25,500 in 2019 to less than 15,000 by the end of 2023. Following the 2018 reform on the governance and financing of continuing education and vocational training, a new body was created in France – the Skills Development Operators (Opérateur de Compétences, OPCO). The Qualéduc guide, published in 2020, includes 31 thematic areas touching upon the reform of the vocational education pathway in upper secondary school, teaching methods, pedagogy, and the school environment. The fact that the French Ministry of Labour conducts skills needs forecasting at the national level for the future formation of vocational education qualifications, primarily through the Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics Coordination, as well as France Stratégie, an autonomous institution under the Prime Minister, which significantly contributes to improving the quality assurance of vocational education and training in France, also appears to be a positive trend. Thus, the level descriptors that reflect the national specifics of France and the forecasting of

skills needs are the system-elements of positive foreign experience in quality assurance of vocational education and training in France, which can

optionally serve as promising directions for further scientific research and practice for the improvement of vocational education in Ukraine.

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## СУЧАСНІ ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ ЯКОСТІ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ОСВІТИ У ФРАНЦІЇ

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### Реферат:

*Актуальність* статті зумовлюється необхідністю виявлення й аналізу сучасних тенденцій забезпечення якості професійної освіти у Франції для їх урахування при створенні евалюативних інструментів оцінювання якості професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти в Україні.

*Мета:* виявити і схарактеризувати сучасні тенденції забезпечення якості професійної освіти у Франції, а також з'ясувати можливості їх врахування у вітчизняній практиці забезпечення якості професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти.

*Методи:* вивчення наукових джерел, законодавчих, нормативно-правових документів, емпіричних даних щодо забезпечення якості професійної освіти у Франції – для виявлення стану проблеми дослідження; теоретичний аналіз і синтез, узагальнення поглядів щодо досліджуваної проблеми – для визначення основних тенденцій забезпечення якості професійної освіти у Франції, формулювання висновків.

*Результати:* проаналізовано сучасні нормативно-правові документи, наукові та інформаційні джерела з проблем забезпечення якості професійної освіти у Франції, виявлено й охарактеризовано відповідні тенденції.

*Висновки:* освітні реформи у Франції, запроваджені в останні роки, сприяли зміцненню рамки забезпечення якості професійної освіти, а також загальної національної системи кваліфікації; флагманом системи забезпечення якості для постачальників навчальних послуг є сертифікація «Qualiopi», створена Міністерством праці Франції; методологія, що використовується «France Competences» для процесів сертифікації, сама по собі є механізмом забезпечення якості; суворіший контроль за зареєстрованими на маркетплейс-платформі CPF постачальниками навчальних послуг скоротив їхню кількість з понад 25 500 у 2019 році до менш ніж 15 000 до кінця 2023 року; в результаті підвищених вимог до реєстрації, вилучення застарілих кваліфікацій та реструктуризації кваліфікацій вищої освіти кількість активних кваліфікацій у RNCP зменшилася

з 10 000 у попередній системі до приблизно 5 000 у нинішній; після реформи 2018 року щодо управління та фінансування безперервного навчання та професійного навчання у Франції був створений новий орган – оператори з розвитку навичок (ОРСО); французьким Міністерством праці на національному рівні для майбутнього формування кваліфікацій професійно-технічної освіти здійснюється прогнозування потреб у навичках, що значно сприяє покращенню забезпечення якості професійної освіти та підготовки у Франції.

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**Ключові слова:** *тенденції, якість, професійна освіта, підготовка, Франція.*

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