

Cooperation instead of a training package

Why international trainer qualification programs only produce lasting results when combined with organizational development, clear roles and a quality assuring body.

Carsten Deters



A good training concept is not enough for international projects. Enduring outcomes are only achieved when qualification, organizational development and quality assurance are carefully interwoven. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly assigned, regional realities effectively integrated and the exchange of ideas encouraged, while an external quality assuring body makes standards verifiable and comparable.

Why “good training” alone is seldom enough

When companies seek to qualify their trainers on an international scale their requirements are often similar. Typically, they want consistent quality, fast scale-up and clearly defined standards. This is understandable, and yet I often notice that many of these projects follow a similar pattern: the training courses go well, assessments are positive, but not much changes in everyday practice.

The reason for this is rarely the concept. It is almost always how it is embedded within the organization. In international organizations trainer qualification programs are not isolated learning formats. They are an intervention in a system. They have an impact on role models, accountability frameworks, time reality, commitment to quality and the question of how learning can be promoted in the everyday workings of the organization. This is what determines whether qualification programs produce lasting or short-term results.

That is the reason why I typically do more than “just” deliver a program. I make a point of taking on an additional role in that I participate as part of the cooperation while also offering systematic advice. In other words, I do more than simply organize the qualification program. I help the company or the training organization design responsibilities, structures and decision-making frameworks to ensure that quality is sustained across countries, languages and locations and transfer is not left to chance [both in international and in purely national organizations].

Cooperation as a system, not as a declaration of intent

In my experience, international trainer qualification programs need a form of cooperation that purposefully brings together three players:

1) The company, in my projects these are mostly manufacturing and technology companies.

The company provides the goals, settings, processes, roles and strategic accountability. Above all, it is responsible for ensuring that transfer is possible. In other words, for setting time frames and priorities, providing access to materials and tools, establishing feedback routines, securing backing from management, and defining the expectations of the role of the trainers.

2) The education services provider

This is where pedagogical and methodological expertise, conceptual skills, learning architecture, and the ability to design learning processes in a way that ensures their compatibility across cultures and locations come into play. At the same time, the goal is to formulate standards in a way that provides guidance – without steamrolling regional realities.

3) A quality assuring body

A quality assuring body promotes comparability, transparency, and trust. In both international and national contexts, this is crucial because otherwise different locations inevitably develop different standards – something that often goes unnoticed until things start to go wrong.

It is important that these three players form a single system rather than having separate responsibilities. It immediately becomes apparent if one of the players is less involved. Typical signs of this are inconsistent implementation across regions, heavy reliance on individuals, unclear roles in the transfer process, or the expectation that “training will solve everything” while the organization fails to create the necessary conditions.

What I do first, before we talk about the design of the training program

Before I begin to discuss methodology, media or the final agenda, I concentrate on three fundamentals. This part of the process is often underestimated, although it is what ultimately determines the success of the project.



Cooperation as a system,
not as a declaration of intent

1) Defining success precisely

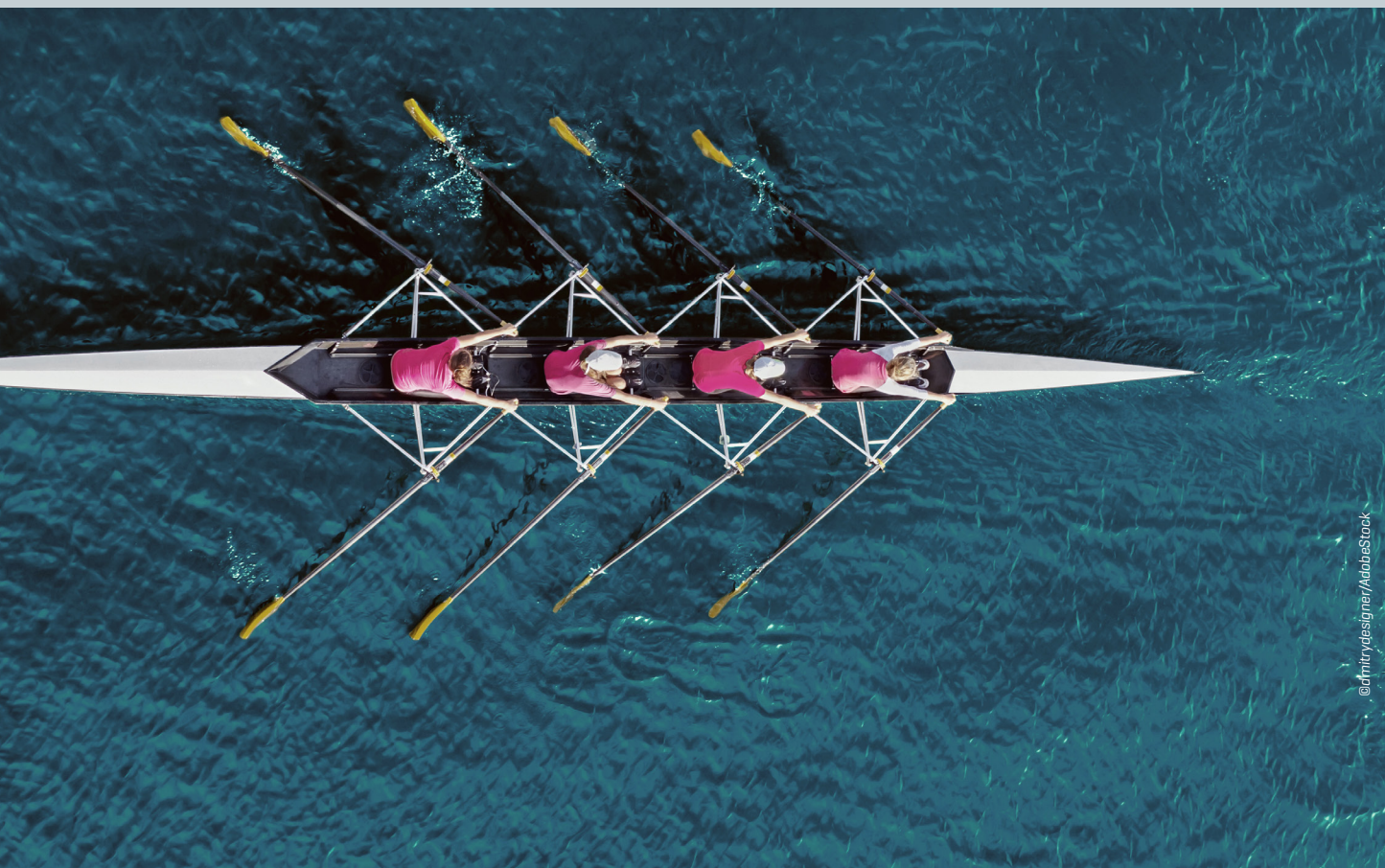
“Better training courses” is not a goal. It is a want. That is why I clarify exactly how success should be measured.

For example, will a training standard be understood in the same way across all locations? Is there an established preparation and follow-up strategy? Do the learning objectives accurately reflect the reality of people’s working lives. Are training efforts coordinated internally or developed in parallel?

This clarification process provides focus and prevents organizations from attempting to make everything “somehow better” all at once.

2) Clarifying transfer responsibility rather than delegating it to the role of the trainers.

Trainers can organize a lot but they cannot manage everything. If the transfer process is understood to be purely their responsibility, they will become frustrated and the organization will remain unchanged. That is why I clarify the following questions: Who meets which requirements? Who makes time available for preparation? Who ensures that the necessary freedoms, practice opportunities and feedback procedures exist? Who decides in the event of conflicting goals?



©dmitrydesigner/AdobeStock

That is organizational development at its best: tangible accountability rather than abstract concepts.

3) Making conflicting priorities visible and resolvable

Tensions are an intrinsic part of any international program:

- Central standards vs. regional autonomy
- Operational demands vs. learning time
- Professional expertise vs. pedagogical professionalism
- Speed vs. quality

I explicitly address these tensions, not to cause conflicts but to pave the way for decisions. What is non-negotiable? Where is adaptation explicitly requested? Which guiding principles are needed so that regional teams are empowered to take responsibility for their actions?

This groundwork can sometimes appear to slow down the process. The truth is that it saves time during implementation, because any misunderstandings have been clarified beforehand.

Standards that provide guidance and regional realities that are taken seriously

Regional realities are far from being disturbing influences in international projects. In fact, they are the key to success. Local trainers know how learning works in their part of the world, which examples are most effective, which terminology is compatible, which formats are acceptable and when well-intended concepts have little to do with the realities of working life.

"Regional realities are far from being disturbing influences in international projects."

In addition to drawing on this local expertise, it is my task to integrate it structurally. This can be done successfully when standards are designed to provide guidance and not impose constraints. This involves:



Carsten Deters
Owner and managing director

Carsten Deters & Partner –
Quality in Training

www.quality-in-training.com



- Establishing clear quality criteria - What must be the same everywhere [e.g. learning objective frameworks, pedagogical principles, documentation standards, training materials]?
- Defining scope for creativity - What can be adapted for a particular region [e.g. examples, case studies, the order in which modules are taught, different facilitation styles for different cultures]?
- Clarifying roles - Who translates standards into regional practice? Who decides in the event of variances? Who collects takeaways and drives the further development of standards?

This ensures that standards are not rigid. Instead, they provide a resilient framework that is sufficiently reliable to assure quality and flexible enough to work in different regions.

The exchange of ideas is not an add-on: communities do not arise by chance

The formation [or perhaps not] of a functioning internal trainer network is a key factor that is often not initially defined as an official objective. Nevertheless, it is crucial to the success or failure of a qualification project.

In practice, I have often noticed that when an exchange of ideas is not deliberately encouraged, know-how remains in the regions, quality standards diverge, work is duplicated and it takes longer to onboard new colleagues. In contrast, not leaving the exchange of ideas to chance is enormously effective.

That is why the formats I design for the exchange of ideas form an integral part of both the learning architecture and organizational development. These feature:

- Regularly occurring formats with clear frameworks [not "when there's time"]
- A structured approach to topics: standards, transfer obstacles, best practices, quality issues
- Accountability - Who drives which topics? Who facilitates? Who keeps the records?
- Room for reflection - What works? What is restrictive? What needs adjusting?

Communities cannot be imposed. A community arises when structures, shared attitudes and leadership come together. An exchange of ideas is not something that is just “nice to have”, it is a stabilizing factor for scalability.

Quality you can actually see: why an external body makes all the difference

Quality can quickly become a matter of interpretation, especially in an international context. How does “professional training” in country A compare with country B? What is considered a good standard, what is just convention? Which skills and capabilities need to be verifiable?

For this purpose I decided to join forces with an external quality assurance provider and entered into a cooperation with TÜV Rheinland and its PersCert TÜV certification of persons program. I am not interested in certificates as a form of advertising. What really matter to me are three purely practical aspects.

- ➔ Comparability: competencies and examination architecture are transparent – across all locations.
- ➔ Reliability: rather than just making claims about it, quality is assessed according to clearly defined criteria.
- ➔ Acknowledgement: an externally certified qualification indicates that the role is demanding and taken seriously.

Cooperation with an external body provides clarity where internally things can quickly become political. Which minimum standards apply? What documentary proof is required? What should the documentation look like? It makes discussions less heated – and increases acceptance because the framework is not perceived as an internal power game.

What a sustainable cooperation ultimately achieves

I genuinely believe that if national and international trainer qualification programs are to produce enduring outcomes, they need to be more than just qualification formats. They need to be implementation projects. Cooperation is not the framework – it is the work itself.

I recognise a cooperation as being sustainable when the following three elements are explicitly addressed:

1) Roles and responsibilities are clearly-defined, especially for the transfer process. Trainers are not left alone and the organization ensures that the necessary conditions are created.

2) Standards are deliberately aligned with regional realities. Common principles provide guidance; regional adaptations are permitted within a structured framework.

3) An exchange of ideas is encouraged and quality visibly assured. Networking formats are part of the solution and a quality assuring body ensures comparability and reliability.

It is crucial that cooperation does not end with bringing the partners together but is structured in the implementation.

The program will be more than successful when these elements are in place. It paves the way for a resilient training organization that readily adopts standards, strengthens local responsibilities and embraces a culture of learning.

Trainer qualification as a strategic leadership task

Qualifying training staff is a strategic decision. It calls for clarity about how the organization, qualifications and quality interact and requires cooperation between business units, locations and external partners. A decisive factor is whether the company views qualification as a short-term intervention or as an integral part of sustainable competency development. There is a need for visible accountability covering priorities, resources and clear expectations so that training is not only effective in the classroom but also in the everyday workings of the organization.

Where accountability is clearly established, trainer qualification will serve as a powerful lever for sustainable performance.