



Thematic working group on professional development of VET trainers

PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY 'Portrait of in-company trainers: competence requirements, certification and validation'

19 - 20 September 2012, Alkmaar (Netherlands)

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

The peer learning activity (PLA) 'Portrait of in-company trainers: competence requirements, certification and validation' took place on 19-20 September 2012. The PLA was hosted by the Horizon College Alkmaar, Alkmaar, the Netherlands.

The PLA was held within the framework of the Thematic working group on professional development of VET trainers. The group is working towards collecting good practice and developing guiding principles on the changing roles, competences and professional development of trainers in VET, as indicated in the Bruges Communiqué (Council of the European Union; European Commission, 2010).

13 participants from 13 countries (Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Finland, Germany, Estonia, Malta, the Netherlands (host), Poland, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland), representatives of DG EAC, Cedefop and EQAVET network took part (two-day discussion and exchange). The list of participants is included in Annex 1.

The objectives of the PLA were to take stock of the situation with in-company trainers and requirements to their competences in the participating countries and throughout Europe both in initial and continuing VET and discuss how the cooperation between companies and VET schools contributes to the development of trainers' competences.

The summary report presents the learning outcomes of the PLA gained from the participants' inputs and discussions and summarises key issues raised. Some results can already be used for informing policy-making at the EU and Member State (MS) level to develop or improve competence requirements for in-company trainers. The report will also be used a starting point for preparing the next PLA on the opportunities for professional development of trainers to acquire necessary competences.

For the PLA, Cedefop prepared a country overview on the situation with trainers in initial (IVET) and continuing VET (CVET) in the Member States (see Annex 5) based on the <u>VET in Europe country reports</u> (Cedefop, 2010) and the participants' inputs. The summary of the participants' presentations is available in Annex 7.



1. Background information

The European Union (EU) will only resume growth from higher productivity and innovation, but it will not happen without highly skilled workers who can contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship (European Commission, 2012). Training at the workplace plays an important role and is increasingly recognised as an efficient way to equip people with job-specific and transversal skills. Traineeships are more and more viewed by policy-makers as effective mechanisms of school-to-work transition, especially, those that are part of vocational curricula(European Commission; Hadjivassiliou et al., 2012).

The quality and competences of trainers in continuing vocational training (CVET) and adult learning as a condition for ensuring high quality workplace training have been among the strategic objectives of the European cooperation in VET (Council of the European Union; European Commission, 2010). Enterprises in Europe believe that the EU can potentially play an important role in promoting competence development in enterprises and in ensuring better quality trainers (European Commission; Danish Technological Institute, 2012).

The Bruges Communiqué (Council of the European Union; European Commission, 2010) invited the Member States to improve the initial and continuing training for VET trainers so that they have opportunities to acquire the right set of competences and be prepared to take up broader and more complex training-related tasks they face today. In its Communication 'Rethinking education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes' (European Commission, 2012), the European Commission pointed to the need to improve training opportunities for working adults, including incentives to adult training by companies, and to establish a competence framework or professional profile for trainers in initial and continuing VET.

The PLA examined what competences are required from the persons who fulfil training function in companies in the participating countries and how VET institutions and companies cooperate to ensure high quality learning outcomes of learners.

2. Findings from research

The TWG uses the research conducted before 2011 as a baseline. The main findings and results of previous research have been summarised are presented in the background paper (see Annex 3). In addition two 2012 studies from 2012 have been regarded as relevant to the main working topics.

A <u>comprehensive overview of traineeship arrangements in the Member States</u> (European Commission; Hadjivassiliou et al., 2012) showed that, in many examples, the targeted supervision of a trainee is one of quality assurance requirements of traineeship arrangements; a common model being alternating school-based instruction with workbased practical learning in genuine work settings. However, the question of how such persons are trained and/or what is required from them remains open.

In the UK, the 2011 Common Best Practice Code of High quality internships foresees a **supervisor** with specified time in their schedules to work with the trainee. The supervisor is expected to set performance and learning objectives, review the performance and provide feedback.

In VET traineeship arrangement in **Sweden**, a suitably trained person should direct, supervise and support trainees.



The <u>survey of large European enterprises</u> (European Commission; Danish Technological Institute, 2012) conducted for the VET-Business forum indicated that the employers tend to rely on improving the competences of the existing staff rather than recruiting new staff as a general strategy to ensure the right mix of skills in the companies and view competence development as an on-going process.

The survey also pointed to the rise of the workplace learning, which has implications for the work and competences of in-company trainers who are going to have a significant role in developing and keeping the skills of the workforce up-to-date:

- (1) The enterprises generally use a combination of formal and informal approaches to competence development: formal approaches (training sessions, workshops, courses, etc.) are primarily used to add to the employee's professional toolbox and for bringing in an external perspective. Informal approaches are primarily used to demonstrate how the tools can be applied in the specific working context.
- (2) The share of formal training is gradually getting smaller in the total competence development while the relative popularity of informal training such as shadowing and mentoring increases. The latter is more targeted towards the company's goals, is cheaper, and increases the social capital and appreciation of the business.
- (3) Companies take on as much of their competence development internally as they possibly can. External training provision is primarily used when companies seek to promote highly specialised professional skills, whereas broader professional skills are most often provided internally.
- (4) When it comes to provision of general skills (for example, language training, computer software training, personal and behavioural training), such training is also increasingly being handled internally through established internal training departments, not only through outsourcing.

The finding that has direct relevance to the work of the TWG is that, overall, the enterprises had the perception of training and trainers being out of date; and that there should be emphasis on developing a systematic support to quality training and trainers where the EU can play a significant role.

3. Main findings from the PLA

3.1. The Dutch experience

The PLA took place in the Netherlands, which is known for its well-developed VET system and strong involvement of the labour market in shaping VET. Other characteristics of the system that affect VET professionals are:

- The Dutch VET system is completely permeable but the pathways are of different length.
- It should be noted that qualifications in the Netherlands serve as powerful communication instruments among students, schools, companies, Centres of expertise, sector organisations and the government. All qualifications have similar structure and are written in the way to be understood both by educators and employers. They contain:
 - a brief description;
 - o core tasks and related work processes;



- o essential competences needed to perform the job (1);
- o performance indicators (=learning outcomes).

Qualifications also include learning and citizenship competences describing what a worker should do in the social context and in lifelong learning.

VET programmes are implemented as school-based and dual (professional guidance).
 Half of the school-based option is apprenticeship. In a dual option, the learner is in a
 labour agreement with the workplace, spending 4 days a week in a company and 1
 day in a school. The system is characterised by strong links with companies.

Some of the main responsibilities of a VET trainer in such a system are to coach trainees and to shape their learning process. The availability of such a trainer is one of the criteria for work placement companies' accreditation (2).

The practical trainer plays an organisational, facilitating and training role in the participant's learning process. On the basis of this role, the practical trainer is prepared to make time, space and resources available for supporting and assessing the participant. He has an excellent understanding of his own occupational area. His working and thinking capabilities are at least equivalent to those required for the vocational training that the participant is following.

The qualification of a **practical trainer** in trade was shared with the group (see Annex 4 ⁽³⁾), which the group found very relevant and useful for further work.

Practical trainers are expected to have relevant work experience in the field, didactical competence, interactive capacity and awareness of the organisation of training and the system of VET. The Centres of Expertise provide modular training to potential trainers from companies in their sector. The modules mirror the required competences. At the intake, the competences of a candidate are assessed.

To sum up, the Dutch experience is a good example of cooperation in VET between:

- the sectors, for example, in defining common criteria for accrediting work placement companies;
- schools and companies, including cooperation of teachers and in-company trainers.

(1) It is worth mentioning that the list of competences was acquired as a commercial HR product.

⁽²⁾ Companies that provide work placements for students are accredited by the Centres of Expertise on the basis of a common set of quality criteria agreed among the sectors. The system of accreditation is rather informal and self-regulatory. The Centres maintain a public website with all accredited companies where schools and students can check the availability of work placements. The Centres also support companies providing information and instructional materials, exchange of good practice and training of in-company trainers.

⁽³⁾ The work of Centres of expertise and the qualification of a practical trainer in trade were presented by **Mr Peter Cras**, General Director of the Centre of Expertise for the Professions in Trade and Commerce (Kenniscentrum Handel, KC Handel).



3.2. VET trainers in companies

There is no unified approach across the countries to defining a trainer in VET.

• Initial VET:

In many countries, there is no distinction between teachers and trainers working in IVET. One of the main distinctions observed is the place of employment for teachers and trainers. As a general trend, teachers usually work in VET schools while trainers operate in the workbased environment (Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, and Sweden).

In most countries, in school-based VET there are teachers of general subjects, teachers of vocational subjects (both theory and practice) and teachers of practical training/trainers. In countries with developed apprenticeship systems, there are also trainers in the workplace (Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland).

Broadly speaking, the following professionals provide training in the workplace environments in initial VET:

- trainer of apprentices or of learners in alternance schemes, apprenticeship masters (apprenticeship-type) (Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland);
- teachers and/or trainers conducting practical classes in VET schools (for example, in school laboratories or workshops) (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Spain, Poland, Portugal);
- o skilled workers who oversee practical training of students in the workplace, workplace tutors, mentors, supervisors (Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland).

continuing VET

The situation in CVET and adult learning (whenever, such distinction is made) is more complex, but nevertheless, in most countries one encounters VET teachers/trainers in school-based contexts (if CVET is provided through VET schools, for example, in Poland), full-time in-company trainers, skilled workers performing such training-related functions as induction of new employees to the company and/or training other employees and also external trainers who usually work as freelancers or for training providers.

In **Spain**, the IVET and CVET systems are joined by the national catalogue of professional standards (including more than 600 standards) that are used to issue qualifications as IVET diplomas, as certificates of accredited CVET and through the formal process of validation and recognition of the work experience. Teachers and trainers working for CVET represent wide variety of professionals: those who teach technical content at the theoretical level and those who teach the technical/practical content of vocational training in close-to-real employment situations.



3.3. Qualifications and qualification requirements to VET trainers

Depending on the vocational training system in the country, especially as regards the presence and organisation of the work-based learning elements, qualification requirements are more likely to be explicitly stipulated when workplace learning is part of a vocational training programme. Generally, companies that provide work placements have to ensure the availability of competent support for VET trainees and apprentices. The required levels of qualification and competence differ.

In most cases though, a trainer in company is expected to have a qualification in the vocation he/she trains for and have some proof of pedagogical/didactic competence. In apprenticeship schemes, it is most typical that a trainer is a master craftsman (foreman) who has taken a course in pedagogy from the Chamber, for example.

In **Germany**, according to the legislation, a responsible trainer should have necessary vocational qualification and educational qualification according to the Ordinance (regulation) on trainer aptitude (AEVO), which is acquired through an examination. A company is eligible to provide workplace training if at least one person holds an AEVO qualification.

In the **Netherlands**, the accreditation of learning companies requires that the company as a whole has the necessary set of competences, including pedagogical.

In **Poland**, practical training instructors are required to have relevant competence and qualification in the field (a minimum of the title of 'master craftsman') and a pedagogical qualification.

In countries where practical training is more school-based (for example, in school workshops, farms, laboratories), practical training instructors are covered by the teacher-related legislation and requirements. They have to have the same qualifications as subject teachers (Belgium, Czech Republic, Poland), though sometimes lower levels of qualifications are accepted. In some countries, even VET teachers are not required to have pedagogical qualification on entry to the profession; pedagogical qualification is acquired as in-service option (Denmark, UK).

In **Belgium**, trainers in IVET are usually called teachers and have teachers' diplomas in general subjects and 'pedagogical skill certificate' (CAP).

In **the Czech Republic,** teachers of practical training and of vocational training can have a completed tertiary professional education or a four-year secondary education instead of higher teaching education. It is possible for them to acquire pedagogical qualification later in their career.

In **Poland**, if a practical instructor has pedagogical qualifications but has no title of a 'master', vocational secondary school diploma and relevant professional experience can suffice.

In some countries, there is no distinction between requirements in IVET and CVET if it is delivered in vocational training institutions (Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Malta, Poland, Portugal). The same teachers provide both and, consequently, have to comply with the requirements to the teaching staff.



As regards VET provided in non-school environments, there are either no requirements (Austria, Estonia, Czech Republic, France, Poland) or the requirements are set at the institutional level, for training providers (France, Poland, Romania). Legal requirements to the competences of trainers in such settings are more likely to exist when publicly-funded training is concerned (Cyprus, Greece, Romania).

Lately, some countries (Czech Republic, Cyprus, Germany) worked to develop qualifications and/or standards for in-company trainers to enhance their status and competences and provide for career development.

In **Germany**, there are 2 new qualifications for trainers (apart from the AEVO), which are not mandatory but provide a possibility to upgrade their qualifications: a certified vocational pedagogue for initial and continuing training (*Geprüfter Aus- und Weiterbildungspädagoge, AWP*) and a certified vocational pedagogue (*Geprüfter Berufspädagogin, BP*), an advanced training qualification, including professional skills in education and in management.

In **Cyprus**, a qualification 'trainer of vocational training' was developed at Level 3 of the national system of vocational qualifications (SVQ, has 5 levels). From January 2013, it will be mandatory for trainers providing VET in state-funded schemes.

3.4. Competence requirements and an emerging competence profile of a VET trainer

Most typical tasks of trainers in VET are selecting appropriate training methods for developing practical skills in a real work situation, planning and implementing training, assessing and providing feedback for trainees. Generally, trainers are also expected to ensure a link between the world of work and the world of education, though very often this link is the responsibility of the school and its teachers.

The analysis of the competence requirements reveals some common areas of competence and makes it possible to speak about an emerging competence profile of a trainer in VET (more specifically, in a workplace environment). It seems that it is important that trainers in companies have at least four groups of competences (a draft set of competences is presented in Annex 6):

(1) competences related to their **specific technical domain**, sector:

A close look at the examples discussed shows that the main concern is about developing trainers' pedagogic and transversal skills and not about their specific technical knowledge and skills, which are often taken as a given. However, if trainers are skilled workers in enterprise with training responsibility, they need to follow the latest developments in the industry and keep their skills up-to-date too. Knowing the developments in the industry and sector is important for in-company trainer capacity to help the companies to identify emerging needs and address future challenges. This is also relevant for teachers/trainers of practical subjects in schools.



(2) competences related to serving the company's business strategy and enhancing its competitiveness through training:

Of all training professionals, company-specific awareness is unique to in-company trainers and is unlikely to be required of trainers working in formal education and training institutions. Trainers should know very well their company's core business, structure, activities, working methods, processes and strategies as well as its skill needs and gaps. It is a competence that requires further exploration as it can only be acquired in the company and not from the outside.

(3) **pedagogical/didactical competences**, training-related competences:

Pedagogical competence includes skills related to the practical implementation of training: time planning, distribution of content, creating a positive and inclusive learning environment, observing and understanding group dynamics, group management, selecting methods appropriate to specific learners' abilities and needs, including special education needs.

The on-going shift towards learning outcomes in training requires trainers to be aware of this approach and be able to apply it in their work. Trainers should focus on knowledge, skills and competence to be acquired by trainees, rather than on completing a stage or spending time in training (European Commission, 2012).

The **Malta** College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) provides pedagogical training to teachers in a vocational institution with a strong emphasis on the development of practical teaching and assessment skills and techniques together with the development of requisite knowledge of theories and principles of the main disciplines of education and economy and the role these play in a vocational learning environment.

With the support of the ESF, **Estonia** has developed the workplace trainer's curriculum that should enable to take into consideration the specific characteristics of adult learners; know and follow the nature of training process; implement supportive feedback methods; pursue ethical principles in one's work.

Assessing learners' progress and learning outcomes is another important part of the trainer work. Trainers should be aware of summative and formative assessment methods, be able to choose most appropriate assessment methods to the training delivered and learning objectives as well as provide feedback to learners on their progress and develop further steps to improvement. Trainers can also be expected to evaluate the effectiveness of training programmes.

In **Cyprus**, the following competences are included in the newly developed trainer qualification:

- training needs assessment of various sectors of economy, of organisations and of individuals;
- the design of training programmes and courses, setting learning objectives, selection of training methods and techniques;
- the implementation of training programmes and course delivery;
- training programme and course assessment, communicating results and feedback, identifying areas for improvement.



(4) **transversal competences** to facilitate the learning process:

This group of competences is very broad and diverse and is not specific to the training role of trainers but comes across various activities and tasks and can facilitate fulfilling such tasks more effectively. To face heterogeneous groups of learners, trainers need to have social and interpersonal competences, conflict management, multicultural awareness, critical thinking skills, and communication skills. Social competences were identified as the single most important competence a trainer should have (European Commission; Institute of technology and education, 2008). Trainers should also be able to use the ICT to support learning effectively. Autonomy, responsibility and ability to work in teams, cooperate with other professionals and engage in networking and communities of practice are also among expected competences and skills.

As agents of lifelong learning for their learners, trainers in CVET should themselves become lifelong learners. The following competences come across many examples: self-reflection and the ability to identify one's own strengths and weaknesses; the ability to assess one's own teaching and responsibility for continuing professional development and further learning.

In **Switzerland,** the 2011 Qualifications framework for in-company trainers sets four goals further conceptualised into competences:

- interacting with young people;
- planning training in company;
- preparing and participating in recruitment;
- counselling, support, working with other workplaces.

In **Belgium (Wallonia)**, managing one's own professional development is one of the five core competences of trainers in Forem (a public VET provider).

3.5. Learning opportunities for trainers to acquire competences

In most countries, the development of competence profiles and standards is accompanied by training provision. Competence standards/profiles help trainers better understand their role, compare their competences against a benchmark and identify learning and training needs to meet the standard. They can also help the employers to support continuing professional development of the training staff. Therefore, it is important that there are training programmes that ensure the opportunities to acquire the missing competences or to update the existing ones to the required level.

In **Germany**, to get necessary competences and prepare for the AEVO exam, trainers can attend seminars (typically 115 hours of all-day, weekend and evening courses).

In **Switzerland**, training of teachers, trainers, instructors, examiners, VET experts is provided by the cantons or accredited institutions: 40 hours are mandatory and 100 hours' training is voluntary. Training curricula is revised every five years.

On the other hand, training of trainers outside state-funded (national) provision is shaped by employers, sectoral organisations or professional associations of trainers, including informal or workplace learning. This kind of training does not lead to state-recognised qualification, but to sectoral qualification or to no qualification. But it serves to ensure



professional development, updating specific skills and competences relevant on the labour market or key competences of trainers.

In **France**, many training providers offer short trainings targeted at trainers. For example, the Centre Inffo offers five two-day training courses for trainers to update their specific skills and competences: 'Animer une formation' (Delivering training events), 'Construire une action de formation' (Designing training courses), 'La formation ouverte et à distance: approches conceptuelles, initiations techniques et exemples méthodologiques' (E-learning, conceptual approach, technical introductions and methodological examples), 'Conduire un tutorat de formation à distance' (Conducting a distance tutorship) and 'Utiliser les méthodes ludiques en formation' (Using ludic methods in training). These short trainings do not lead to any qualification.

In **the Czech Republic**, there are educational programmes (courses) focused on trainer's skills outside the formal education system with diverse curricula; the certificates from these courses have non-formal force. The programmes might include among others social and psychological basics of adult learning, planning and organisation of learning activities, methods of teaching and assessment, communication skills.

As competences tend to be described in broad areas or groups, training is often provided in modules and units of various length and amount, thus, ensuring flexibility. Modular approach can be supported through competence standards and profiles that are based on learning outcomes.

It is considered effective to relate competence requirements to specific tasks that trainers perform. Using gradual approaches to the acquisition of competences by trainers as they gain their experience is regarded as an interesting and feasible way.

In Wallonia (Belgium), Le Forem, Bruxelles Formation and Ifapme (public providers of VET) train their newcomer trainers based on the competence profile that includes 5 core competences, while further training is elaborated for additional competences (advanced initial training in the 2nd year of training activities) and for specific competences of a trainer and a professional (continuing training). Additional competences include the ability to inform, provide guidance, identify skill needs, work with heterogeneous groups of learners, and apply new teaching and training methods. Specific competences depend on demand and changing situation; for example, communication skills, management, certain professional skills can be enhanced.

The opportunities for professional development of VET trainers will be the focus of the next PLA that will be hosted by the Forem.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

(1) As a result of the PLA, a rich amount of information has unfolded. An overall broad conclusion was that a lot of work has been done in many countries, which should serve as good foundation for developing guiding principles and approaches to the requirements and development of the trainer competences. By further elaborating a competence profile and examining support mechanisms for professional development of trainer competences, the group can contribute to increasing the quality of training



provided to the workforce and, hence, improving their skills and employability and in the long run the productivity of companies and economic growth.

- (2) The PLA pointed to comprehensive, though often varied, competence profiles that are expected of VET trainers. To expect that all categories of trainers should possess the same sets and levels of competences might present too much of a challenging or even be unrealistic. Practice shows that this concern is addressed (Germany, Belgium). However, it might be worth looking at alternative ways to ensure the availability of all competences, for example, through team work.
- (3) Any learner in any training needs, as an ultimate goal, to acquire knowledge, skills and competences that allow him/her get a recognised qualification to get and progress in a job, be able to move freely in the labour market, including globally, and be prepared to take responsibility for lifelong learning (for example, in the Netherlands all qualifications contain competences that should prepare workers/specialists/professionals for lifelong learning). Focusing on this can help better reflect on and develop relevant requirements to and ways of organising training and requirements to the trainer competences as well as will make the need to increase the cooperation between VET and companies more obvious. Trainers in VET should themselves become lifelong learners and, hence, positive role models to their learners.
- (4) As no unified approach to the requirements to persons who supervise trainees in companies has been observed, it is important to examine the countries in the developmental and contextual perspective and disseminate examples of the existing practice, especially, qualification standards and competence profiles of (in-company) trainers. This would be especially relevant to the countries that are in the process of rethinking their VET systems. For example, Sweden, Estonia and others that are expanding apprenticeship in VET can learn from the countries like Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium on how to ensure high quality placements for apprentices and what competences are needed for the trainers in work placement companies.
- (5) The broad and heterogeneous field of continuing VET, especially, that taking place in companies, needs further exploration both by the Thematic working group and research in terms of drawing a clearer portrait of in-company trainers, their competences and continuing professional development. This is even more important as the share of workplace and work-based learning is going to increase in the coming years as apprenticeship is gaining more policy attention as an effective way of preparing the young to the labour market and as the companies rely more and more on internal training for ensuring the right mix of skills of their employees.
- (6) Possibilities for closer cooperation between public and private sector should be further explored.
 - (a) The Communication on Rethinking education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes (European Commission, 2012) foresees support to Sector Skills Alliances, uniting training institutions, enterprises and professional organisations, to design curricula and training programmes that will address innovation skills gaps and matching labour market needs. The cooperation with and involvement of business in developing competence frameworks and supporting training programmes for trainers is indispensable



as they are the main users of the learning outcomes either of school graduates or apprentices or of employees trained at the workplace.

- (b) The expertise of the formal education and training sector can support companies in the development of pedagogical and transversal competences of their trainers. Successful cooperation of VET institutions and enterprises deserves more attention not only in terms of providing work placements for students but also in terms of providing opportunities for closer collaboration between VET teachers and in-company trainers. Such mechanisms can be explored in the next PLA as one of the ways of non-formal competence development and upgrade of teachers and trainers.
- (c) The cooperation between the world of VET and the world of work is also important to examine from the financial perspective, namely, the involvement of the labour market in (partial) financing of VET, which brings about better involvement of employers in shaping its content and implementation.
- (7) Several countries (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia) that are at renewing and developing their VET systems, especially, towards apprenticeship and increased workplace learning use extensively the funding from the EU programmes (ESF, Lifelong learning programme). Although the outcomes are impressive and definitely useful for their VET systems, the challenge is to ensure the sustainability of results and their mainstreaming into education and training systems.



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■ CEDEFOD EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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