

TTnet Workshop and seminar in Helsinki 11.10.2006 in conjunction with Cedefop PLA

The TTnet workshop and seminar was organised in conjunction with Cedefop's peer learning activity "Enhanced dialogue between teachers and the world of work". It was organised by TTnet Finland together with Cedefop. The participants were, in addition to the PLA participants, TTnet members from Europe involved in the "Defining VET Professions" project as well as a considerable number of participants representing Finnish teacher education institutions or stakeholders.

The workshop was devoted to presenting the outcomes of the TTnet pilot project on "Defining VET professions". The project was carried out in 2005-2006. The opening words were delivered by Dr Renata Svedlin, Director of Education in Swedish at the Finnish National Board of Education. Dr Svedlin stressed the importance of VET teachers and trainers and the concern for their competence development. She also reflected on the pros and cons of competence frameworks and standards concluding that such tools can serve to improve the quality in VET if enough room is left for local and institutional autonomy and innovation. Dr. Svedlin also stressed the importance of the internationalisation of VET, which was the second theme of the day.

Theme 1: Defining VET Professions pilot project

Mara Brugia from Cedefop presented the overall framework of the project and the results by Rasmus Frimodt (IVET teachers), Kristiina Volmari (IVET principals), Herold Gross (trainers and Arduino Salatin (CVET trainers and training managers).

The outcomes of the pilot phase point to the fact that in the countries studied, there are convergences of functions and competences (especially in terms of wider competences) in the real job profiles, as if the trends are common in the "professional family".

Moreover, the study showed that the challenges and demands set on the various VET professions are surprisingly similar across the countries studied. An example of this are the functions of teachers and trainers. The trainers are increasingly in charge of responsibilities that earlier belonged to the teachers only. Such responsibilities are for example training needs analysis, guiding and counseling and quality assurance. Similarly the functions and responsibilities of principals and training managers converge.

VET professionals need to acquire new skills and knowledge: not only soft skills (such as communication, team working, networking, self-development), but also new cultural and pedagogical skills (in line with the learner-centred approach, web based and/or on-the-job learning techniques), and customer (market) oriented skills.

Theme 1 was rounded up by a presentation on the measures taken in Belgium to retain ageing teachers and trainers in working life. Some of the measures that could help retention could be that a variety of functions is introduced enabling horizontal mobility. This would mean for example that a teacher could function as a coach, assessor or mentor. In addition the need for continuing training is evident.

THEME 2: Internationalisation of VET teachers and trainers

The second theme was introduced by Peter Baur from the European Commission who talked about VET teacher issues within the EU Commission. Currently there are two guidelines for education and training: expand and improve investment in human capital, and adapt education and training

systems to new competence requirements. The following actions have been or will be taken in regard to VET teachers and trainers: European Principles for teacher qualifications and competences (Testing Conference June 2005); Establishment of a focus group on VET teachers and trainers (sub-group of teachers and trainers cluster); 2 Peer Learning Activities; Call for tender for 2 studies (contracts in preparation) the expected results of which are to get a better/good understanding of qualification and recruitment of trainers; the work of trainers and their working environments; of policies and practices related to training of trainers and their implications and effectiveness; of possible professional development pathways; and finally there will be a study on teachers and trainers and their professional and geographical mobility.

After Mr Baur's intervention good examples of internationalisation practices in vocational education and training as well as teacher education were presented.

Eeva Manni from the Tampere Polytechnic - University of Applied Sciences, Teacher Education Centre talked about Long-standing cooperation and partnerships with two institutions Budapest Polytechnic and Czech University of Agriculture Prague. The lessons learned from these partnerships are that it is easier to begin new activities with people you know, they are a reliable source for finding partners, It is people who cooperate – not organisations or projects, Partnerships are like friendship – the cooperation does not last on its own if you don't keep it up actively.

Riitta Larna, Helia School of Vocational Teacher Education introduced the English Teacher Education Programme in Helia. The entry qualifications as well as the curriculum are the same as for the Finnish programme. The success of the programme has been due to 1. contact days every month, 2. using the pedagogical expertise of the group, 3. Between contact days learning in peer groups on a web-based platform (BlackBoard). The programme will be continued in the future.

Irja Härmälä from the Savonlinna ammatti- ja aikuisopisto talked about Internationalisation as an integral part of a school's everyday life and the strategy of internationalisation in Savonlinna Vocational College. International activities must support the development of staff and teaching and enhance the students' abilities to live and work in the more and more international work environment. International activities and internationality are not the same, activities cover only a part, internationality is a global attitude, a responsibility for social development.

Kaarina Heikkilä from the Helia University of Applied Sciences explained how Double degrees in business administration work. It is a question of a bilateral agreement between two universities/polytechnics in two countries and students get two diplomas, not like in a joint degree. Understanding the own and the partner's curriculum is essential, identical course contents cannot be required, but similar learning outcomes and same amounts of credits. The structure has been the following: 1,5 years in the home institution – 90 credits, One year studies abroad – 60 credits, Work Placement - 30 credits, Advanced compulsory courses and thesis – 15 + 15 credits.

Leena Kaikkonen from the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Vocational Teacher Education College introduced the steps of increasing personnel's international skills and experiences. They include language courses, international visits, short teacher exchanges, exhibitions etc., development of project skills, teacher exchange, occasional expert tasks, presenting in international conferences, long-term expert tasks, project coordination, management long-term (1year->) project work abroad. The prerequisites for International Project Work (at the Institutional level include seeking for project possibilities (e.g. Tenders), increasing awareness of sources for funding, the competence of preparing project bids (technical competence), financial and administrative support for project work (especially in large projects), strong networking and

building synergy, the documentation needed in the projects (Company profile, project references, financial documents etc).

The TTnet workshop and seminar was rounded up by two presentations on the “technical” aspects of cooperation, namely recognition of studies and degrees and the funding available within the EU commission’s new Lifelong Learning Programme.

Carita Blomqvist from FNBE explained how the general system for the recognition of higher-education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years’ duration is applied. The Recognition and International Comparability of Qualifications implies international co-operation beyond mobility, e.g. curriculum development. The challenges have to do with lack of flexibility, unwillingness to recognise and the “comparative approach”.

Mika Saarinen from CIMO introduced possibilities for Financial support available at EU level for international mobility within The Lifelong Learning Programme 2007 – 2013. In terms of VET, The LLP forms an even better tool for development of IVET and CVET in European cooperation, the Leonardo da Vinci programme will have a more focused target group; mobility for VET students, people in the labour market, teachers and experts and guidance counsellors. There will be a focus on Transfer of innovation projects TIP and Development of innovation DIP.