

TTnet thematic workshop

Results of the TTnet project on:

“Professionalisation of VET teachers for the future - PROFF”

(May 2002 – May 2003)

Session 3: Approaches to teacher training - transnational trends

**An example of innovative practice: the Reform Competence Project –
Reformkompetenceudviklingsprojektet, Denmark**

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Background

In 2000 the Danish VET System was reformed both in structure and in pedagogy. The overall purpose of the changes were intended to create an adequate VET system in terms of flexibility providing the individual student with specific and general competences – professionally, socially and personally. The structure of the whole system was simplified, and the programmes were planned to become more flexible.

Although the Reform was built on experimentation- and development work in the VET schools and to some extent formalising some results of these efforts, the intentions of the Reform provoked a great deal of resistance. To some extent the consequences of the Reform were regarded as new, complicated, deprofessionalizing and impossible to implement within the existing physical and professional conditions of the schools.

Since then teachers and management of the VET schools have put much effort trying into development, description, and implementation of the structure and pedagogy of the Reform, and resources have been allocated into new accommodations, workshops, and technologies necessary to cope with the Reform that has now become "law".

The Reform contained the following new elements¹:

- ◆ Fewer and broader admission channels into VET Courses
- ◆ Modular curriculum
- ◆ Optional "double qualification" as well as "partial qualification" in structure
- ◆ Interdisciplinary learning
- ◆ Tutor support to students offered individual pathways to learning
- ◆ Personal education plan for students
- ◆ Students have "log-books" and individual study portfolios
- ◆ Teacher team organisation in schools
- ◆ Development and innovation of school learning environments
- ◆ Worked-based learning

In order to help and speed up the implementation processes at the VET schools the Danish Ministry of Education and the Danish Institute for Educational Training of Vocational Teachers (DEL) in 2001/2002 designed the Reformcompetence Project. The project is planned to run until December 2004, and it is intended to involve all VET schools in the country – starting with the technical VET schools. From August 2003 the project will be extended the commercial VET-Schools as well.

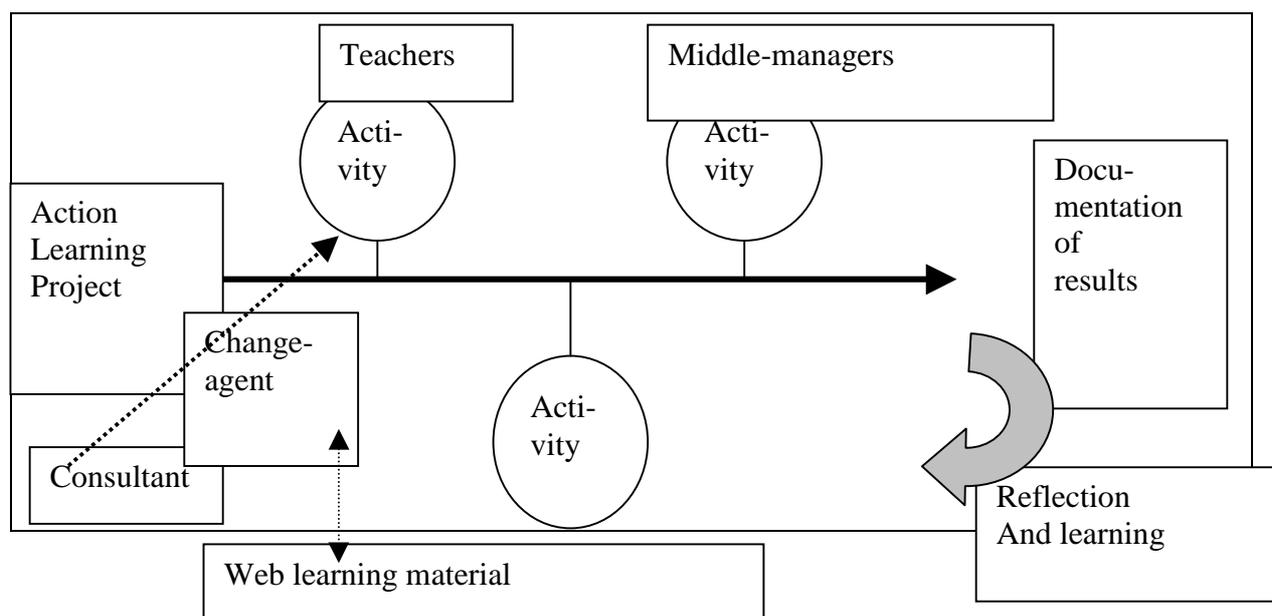
Aim

The aim of the project is to develop the competences necessary to implement the structural and pedagogical intentions of the Reform – involving teachers, middle managers and organisation. It is important that the effort involves all the actors involved in 'the acting' part of the organisation, and also that it considers competence as an organisational phenomenon together with the individual dimension of competence development. Competence is in this project to be seen as *a capacity and a will to make use of the professional and organisational qualifications*, and competence includes technology, organisation, culture – and human resources.

¹ National Education Authority. Danish Ministry of Education (1999) *New Structure of the Danish Vocational Education and Training System*. Copenhagen: The Danish Ministry of Education.
<http://pub.uvm.dk/2000/newstructure/>

Project Design

Generally the project can be illustrated as follows:



The main actors are a local change-agent (who may be a middle manager or an internal consultant), a group of teachers and their middle manager, and a consultant from DEL who supports the change-agent in pushing an Action Learning project forward. The consultant and the local change-agent have access to a website with consultant-/management tools and best practice descriptions developed for the Reformcompetence Project by the DEL-consultants². All projects are agreed by the management of the school and will be documented by the DEL-consultants.

All local projects are to be designed as Action-Learning projects. It is important that the projects are rooted in the daily practice of the teachers and middle management and that the projects focus on the improvement and development of that particular practice – and implementing the intentions of the VET reform.

So the method of the DEL-consultants can be described as indirect. They do not provide teacher training courses, but they coach and give ‘sparring’ to the managers or internal consultants who are actually working with the substance in the reform – to those who are responsible for the actual implementation of the principles and the intentions of the reform.

Themes of the Local Projects

During the first year of the project many projects focused on teamwork. New teams were needed in order to match the demands for interdisciplinary learning and work-based learning in workshops. However this match proved to be a difficult task both as regards the actual composition of the teams and the teambuilding processes.

² <http://www.delod.dk/kompudvikling>

Another major task was to develop and describe learning activities in ways that allow the individual student to pick exactly those themes, projects, and activities that he needs and wants. Today the descriptions are adjusted to a national webbased tool (the 'Student Plan') that makes it possible for each student to make up his personal account of competences achieved. At the same time this tool is to be used by the tutors when guiding the students and evaluating their learning results.

Today the basic subjects form a major challenge. They are no longer to be integrated with the professional subjects, and they are not to be organised as classes but as activities offered to the students who choose them individual.

Further themes are:

- ◆ The tutors' activities
- ◆ The professional guidance in open workshops
- ◆ Ability grouping
- ◆ The role as internal consultant / change-agent / middle manager
- ◆ Team co-ordination and team leadership
- ◆ How to deal with 'real competence' – qualifications achieved outside formalised education.

Results

First of all the project includes almost every technical VET school in the country.

Secondly it is clear that the indirect method works. Organising the consultants' work as coach and sparring-partner to an internal change-agent has been a success. These agents may be alone in their practice, and the partnership with an external consultant may often speed up the change process and helps focusing the efforts and analysing the processes – thus creating learning.

Thirdly the focus on the actual practice of the participants serves its purpose. Compared to more traditional teacher training activities where we separate the effort from the daily practice it is easier to keep motivation and ownership when you focus on things that you are actually doing in your everyday work.

However: *Change takes time – and it always takes a lot more time than everybody expects.* Middle managers or internal consultants sometimes lack the formal competence or authority needed to change the practice of teachers and teams. Sometimes they are overworked and find it difficult to find a way through the chaos around them.

Action Learning programs provide an excellent method when it comes to improving competence as we define the concept in this project. The 'learning' part of the projects may be difficult to establish – in any case when it comes to the systematic reflection-on-action and evaluation intended in this project.

The Future

As always the consultants in this project find that they do not have sufficient financial resources at their disposal to implement the VET Reform fully ☺, and of course the effort of this project cannot in itself secure that the implementation processes are fulfilled with success.

Sometimes we work with a single team, and sometimes we work with a whole school or a large part of a co-operation. At present we try to enlarge the scale of operation in order to share experiences and successes within the schools – and to make organisational learning possible. Further it is important to focus on pedagogy, didactics and to relate organisation more clearly to the core pedagogical and didactic content of the reform – also as regards the commercial VET programs. Last it is important for us to elaborate the documentation of the outcome of the project.

Odense, May 12th