

”Professionalisation of VET Teachers for the Future”

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1. Definitions

”VET teachers”:

Teachers in vocational education and training in Denmark generally have a fairly short-term formal TT education as compared with their colleagues in most other European countries. The education of teachers is based on three elements: vocational formation, educational insight and day-to-day teaching practice. The philosophy behind the education of teachers is that, following the formal exam, teachers will ensure that their education is kept up to date through ongoing, lifelong further training and education.

It should be stressed that there is no specific course of education leading to qualification as a vocational teacher in the general education system (i.e. unlike the case for teaching in elementary or academic secondary education). Applicants who meet specified requirements are awarded a teaching appointment in a VET college and then have to undergo the Pedagogikum training (the college is obliged to organize this), which is itself an alternance training consisting of a combination of courses at DEL and teaching practice (including project and development work) at the VET college under the guidance of a supervisor (who has also been trained at DEL specifically for this duty).

The Training Programme in Teaching (Pedagogikum) is a common basic educational training programme that all teachers at vocational schools are required to pass. The programme gives teachers a common platform for their work in the form of a common language and a shared set of concepts concerning issues relating both to general education and vocational education and training.

The Pedagogikum has been given statute form in a ministerial order and is described in a set of programme regulations. The programme is run throughout Denmark by the Danish Institute for Educational Training of Vocational Teachers (DEL) and constitutes an important link between the development of individual teachers and the competence development of VET colleges.

The Pedagogikum is an alternating programme, which means that the programme is continuously adapted on the basis of input from students and their independent work. In this way the programme develops concurrently with schools' requirements concerning the skills and qualifications of teachers. The alternation between periods at the institution of education and periods of work practice at schools also means that the teacher training programme provides inspiration for development at schools because of the questions, problem complexes and projects the participating teachers bring into their day-to-day work at the schools.

The career of a VET teacher

The career of a VET teacher is usually one of going on teaching and planning of teaching. There is an option within the structure to qualify for and become an education guidance and counselling specialist. This guidance and counselling is in Denmark carried out by around 600 counsellors, who are at the same teachers. Almost all of the guidance and counselling staff have undertaken the further education programme for teachers, offered by DEL and organised as a sandwich course combining theoretical components and practical components. There are no formal requirements or programmes to qualify for leadership posts at VET colleges offered in Denmark; a number of VET teachers, however, do in fact acquire leadership posts at various levels in VET colleges without formal training.

What competencies should a VET teacher have?

The issue of teacher competencies and qualifications has been treated thoroughly in qualification analyses and in follow-up reports prepared by ministerial working groups.

Many of the innovative measures taken in relation to teacher qualifications in Danish vocational training and education are rooted in the strong tradition in Denmark for school-based research and development work (FoU). A number of development projects carried out in recent years focus on the development of the role of teachers in the practical context.

“Report on teacher skills and qualifications”, prepared by the Danish Ministry of Education, identifies five overall types of teachers based on their primary teaching areas:

- Technical vocational training
- Commercial vocational training
- Vocational upper secondary education programmes (HHX and HTX)
- Short-term higher education
- Adult training and education, further training, courses funded by external sources, etc

Various qualification levels which call for continued or increased efforts are identified as well:

- Vocational skills and qualifications
- Educational skills and qualifications
- Job experience/trade knowledge
- Organisational skills and qualifications
- General vocational skills and qualifications

In addition, it is stressed that personal skills are included in most of the categories. Apart from the five qualification levels, various interdisciplinary requirements are taken into consideration, ie skills and qualifications which apply to all teachers irrespective of their formal education or the school at which they teach. The following general interdisciplinary skills and qualification requirements are mentioned:

- ICT skills and qualifications - all teachers must have basic ICT competence.
- Qualification of teachers in teams of teachers – each individual teacher’s vocational skills and qualifications should be seen as an integral part of the overall qualification of the entire school or department.
- Understanding of the educational context of which the subject forms part - teachers are required to have general knowledge about the training or education programme in which they teach.

What do vocational teachers and heads of vocational training centres think about present and future competency requirements? A study called ”Vocational teachers - profile and development requirements” (carried out by DEL) shows that vocational teachers have a wide and varied job profile. Many of them teach in different training and education programmes, and they have many tasks in addition to actual teaching, eg class teacher functions, administrative tasks, consultant functions, educational research and development work, international assignments and work involving new technology. This shows that teachers must be able to perform multiple functions which are not normally associated with being a teacher. The study documents that teachers and managers believe there is a need for:

- Increased knowledge about commerce and industry and job experience.
- Upgrading of theoretical knowledge and a better understanding of the trade.
- Improved ICT skills.
- Upgrading of educational skills.
- Upgrading of skills relating to new teacher requirements: ability to work in teams, ability to carry out teaching based on learning processes, ability to carry out educational coaching, etc.
- Development of organisational and personal skills.

Following a reform of commercial VET programmes in 1996 and the more comprehensive VET Reform 2000, a number of other important requirements concerning continuous upgrading of teacher competencies can be added to the list:

- Teachers as planners (personal education plan, education and training book).
- Teachers as tutors/coaches (ability to support students' individual choice of education and insight into the learning landscape).
- Teachers as team-working developers and facilitators.

There is a clear trend in current developments relating to the qualification of teachers at vocational schools (and adult vocational training centres). A common starting point is that teachers are not required to cover all aspects of all subjects but are seen in the overall context of the school's combined competencies. Generally an overall, all-encompassing view is taken as regards the school's development plans and overall organisational development.

2. Challenges in VET teacher training

The main challenges can be described under the heading: *”The new role of VET teachers”*. Teachers are to an increasing extent required to carry out educational planning and to plan and organise

teaching based on specific learning processes. The tasks of teachers are shifting from development to planning because of the modularisation of the learning content and the individualisation of students' education and training programmes (as seen in initiatives such as 'Build your own vocational training programme', open workshops, etc).

Individualisation on the student side implies collectivisation on the teacher side. Teachers must form teams and carry out the planning of programmes in consultation with their colleagues. Increased focus on the role of teachers as consultants also calls for upgrading of planning skills. The functional shift from teachers being *transmitters* passing on knowledge and know-how to a role as *intermediaries* in relation to individual learning processes, in which the teacher functions as a tutor or coach in programmes based on learning processes, has far-reaching implications for the qualification of teachers in vocational schools. However, the educational system and educational theory have only just begun to adapt to the focus on lifelong learning, which will cause a significant shift in the balance between the system and the individual. It will take more than the establishment of an alternative competence system for adults to develop an open education and training structure, in which learning takes place in a continuous, multi-year process of education, training and ongoing upgrading of skills.

Consequently, considerable demands are being made in relation to the development of the new role of teachers. Both students and teachers must learn how to learn, and though there seems to be general agreement that students must assume responsibility for their own learning, the requirements made of teachers are still relatively vague. It is the teacher's job to provide optimum conditions for students to learn, even though the actual learning is the responsibility of the students. The learning process must focus on the interplay between the role of teachers and the role of students. This is both an obvious and a great challenge for teachers who have been used to having the sole responsibility, or at least the overall responsibility, for the teaching process. In this connection, supervision by colleagues has proved very useful in vocational education in Denmark.

Current efforts focus on developing the role of teachers in this direction in the field of vocational education. Inspiration must be sought in other countries, for example in development projects carried out under the Leonardo da Vinci programme or other transnational programmes. There appears to be a conflict between the general perception in the Danish educational system of Denmark being an innovative pioneer in the field of training and education and the actual situation in classrooms and workshops where teaching methods may be well-founded and certainly at the same level as in other countries, though they are also relatively conventional.

3. System for developing professionalisation of the VET teaching career

At present, teachers have several opportunities to enrol in further education and training programmes. Conventional courses are to an increasing extent being replaced by demand-driven, school-based activities. In addition, school participation in research and development projects (FoU projects) is growing rapidly. Participation in school-based development work is considered very important and a good way not only to develop education, training and schools, but also to develop teacher resources and skills. Educational development, organisational development and teacher competence to an increasing extent go hand in hand.

However, continuous enhancement of teacher professionalism cannot be based on educational developmental work alone. Educational skills in the field of vocational training can only be strengthened if teachers are offered further education and training in long-term, qualifying programmes. In order to collate and consider experience gained at schools and to put them in a developmental perspective, it is crucial to give teachers opportunities to upgrade their skills and qualifications. It is therefore important to focus on further training and education of suitable teachers in the future, so that these teachers will be able to carry out major planning and development tasks at individual schools or for the benefit of the educational system as a whole. The Diploma Programme in Vocational Teaching is a major step in this direction.

4. How does the increasing internationalisation affect the work of VET teachers?

Most teachers at vocational colleges probably do not have a background enabling them to develop teaching programmes which organically integrates international perspectives in daily teaching. This is the main bottleneck in efforts to accelerate internationalisation in teaching.

The conclusion given in an ACIU project called "Best ways in internationalisation of vocational training" is that globalisation and internationalisation call for the following:

- An international understanding which makes it possible for individuals to be able to navigate in the world that surrounds them.
- An intercultural understanding, including intercultural communicative competence, which makes it possible to function in different cultures.
- A transnational vocational understanding (or actual transnational vocational skills), which enables individuals to function in different production systems and different corporate cultures - whether at an international workplace in Denmark and in a job in another country.
- Key competencies, particularly general cultural competencies.

The need for teachers with both specific and broad expertise in the field of internationalisation has been acknowledged, but it is still very vague. Very few schools have formulated a strategy which outlines how students should acquire international competencies, the result being that the objective of upgrading the international competencies of staff, including teachers, also remains unclear. We need an internationalisation strategy which clearly specifies the staff and teacher competencies this will require.

Nevertheless, a good base for further developments is in place. Several schools have had experimental international classes, organised study trips abroad, relocated teaching programmes to other countries, and similar initiatives for many years, but the international aspect is still at the embryo stage at many schools and in many training and education programmes. A systematic effort is needed.

Development must be furthered in the ordinary training and education activities of vocational colleges and the competencies of staff at vocational schools must be improved if internationalisation is to be lifted out of its present territories. Teachers are of course a key factor when it comes to bringing international aspects into play in training and education. However, not all teachers need the same competencies.

Because of their specific vocational skills, some teachers will find it easy to include international perspectives in their teaching, for example teachers who teach languages, international trade or

subjects which are in fact based on internationalisation. The new competencies needed by these teachers basically concern their ability to interact with other teachers of other subject in interdisciplinary training and education programmes. Consequently, upgrading of educational and didactic competencies is most relevant for these teachers. In the case of teachers whose subjects are not naturally related to international issues both new vocational competencies and educational/didactic competencies must be developed. It must be borne in mind that the upgrading of competencies must concern *both* vocational *and* didactic skills. Teachers must acquire knowledge about the implications of internationalisation in several areas, although the main focus should of course be on ensuring that the new competencies will subsequently be reflected in the organisation and implementation of training and education programmes.

It is thus clear that Denmark must obtain information about the methods used in other EU member states to ensure the internationalisation of teachers and teaching. The CEDEFOP TTnet constitutes a good platform.