

CONCLUSIONS

TEACHERS AND TRAINERS ARE CHANGING ROLES... BUT WE ARE NOT GIVING THEM THE ATTENTION THEY REQUIRE

The key contribution of VET teachers and trainers to the policy goal of enhancing the overall quality of education and training systems is widely acknowledged within Europe. The training and professional development of teachers and trainers is an area that clearly requires increased political attention and strategic action. The success of VET reforms demands that teachers and trainers possess updated specialist knowledge of their subject, as well as renewed pedagogical skills, and are supported throughout their careers to upgrade their competences. Are we actually propelling teachers and trainers at the heart of VET reforms?

Teaching and training roles are experiencing several paradigmatic changes, such as the shift from merely transmitting knowledge to facilitating learning and the move from a curriculum-based training and learning inputs to learning outcomes that define what learners are expected to know and be able to do at the end of the learning process. Teachers and trainers will need to possess a renewed set of knowledge and competences to cope with an enlarged range of challenges and demands. Still, in many countries, the initial and in-service training provided does not always reflect their specific learning needs, expanding roles and changing working environments. A lot more needs to be done to increase the esteem and attractiveness of teaching and training professions, achieve comprehensive policies to the training of VET staff and broaden access to professional development opportunities.

The *Conference on Teachers and Trainers at the heart of innovation and VET reforms* (Thessaloniki, 23 and 24 February 2009) was jointly organised by the European Commission and Cedefop, with the view to exchange expertise and stimulate action to enhance the status and support the professional development of VET teachers and trainers. The conference acknowledged that teachers and trainers are actively engaged in innovation and experimentation and that they could provide an important source of expertise for policymaking. Through plenary sessions, parallel panels and workshops, participants explored the following issues: how to provide VET teachers and trainers with the competences required in their changing working environments? How to support them in their role of change and innovation agents? How to encourage VET teachers to maintain the currency of their technical knowledge and skills? How to support the professional development of trainers in companies? How to deal with shortages of teachers and trainers? The conference brought together 120 participants from 31 countries, representing policy makers, social partners, practitioners,

researchers and European and international organisations. Despite strong differences across the European Union on qualification requirements, initial training and professional development opportunities, participants identified common challenges related to policy and practice to enhance the status of teachers and trainers and promote their professional development, as well as major areas in which comparative research is needed to support policy making.

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING THE BEST TALENTS

Attracting and retaining talented teachers and trainers necessitates appealing working conditions and career development opportunities. Experienced teachers will increasingly need to be persuaded to remain in the profession instead of retiring early and may therefore require additional professional development and support. Retaining and recruiting teachers and school principals may become problematic in countries where VET teaching is not highly estimated and career opportunities in the private sector are much more attractive. The prospect of retirement of older teachers in the short-to-medium term needs to be managed carefully.

- **More appealing working conditions, transparent salary and career systems** can contribute to the parity of esteem between vocational and general education, and improve the attractiveness of vocational education and training professions.
- At the time when several countries are in the process of upgrading minimum standards, increased qualification requirements could become a barrier into the teaching profession for qualified technicians and craftsmen. **New entry routes into the teaching profession should be opened for professionals from occupation and trades**, while improving the retention of current staff. **Policies related to recruitment, qualification routes and training need to be flexible in order to attract individuals from different professional backgrounds**, while safeguarding high competence standards with regard to pedagogy and the subject matter.
- **A number of countries see the validation of non-formal and informal learning as an alternative way of recruiting new entrants to vocational teaching and training, and as a key incentive for VET teachers and trainers to engage in further professional development.** Validation processes should be rooted in sound quality management, reliable and transparent procedures to engender confidence and trust amongst the widest possible range of stakeholders. The validation of skills and competences acquired through daily practice, as an alternative and reliable path to professional qualification, could be of particular interest to those countries that may expect teachers' shortages. This is an area in which much is to be gained from exchanging practices and information at European level.

STRENGTHENING EVIDENCE BASED POLICY MAKING

There is a need for increased evidence, research and analysis in the development of policies which are linked to the initial and continuing training of VET teachers and trainers. Current surveys on VET and lifelong learning provide fragmentary evidence on the composition of the teaching and training workforce across the EU⁽¹⁾. In view of the estimated decline of learners in initial education and training, it is even more important to ensure policy decisions are based on a wider range of quantitative and qualitative data ⁽²⁾.

- There is a scarcity of quantitative and qualitative data, in-depth research and analysis in certain countries, as well as a lack of comparative research at European level, which can usefully support policy making. The lack of data is particularly acute as regards to those who undertake training functions in enterprises. **To shape, implement and monitor policies and strategies related to the recruitment, qualification and professional development of VET teachers and trainers, there is a need for better evidence.**
- **The VET sector should be able to plan for the future, on the basis of reliable projections of teachers' and trainers' skill gaps and training needs.** Major research projects need to be launched at national and EU level to map VET teachers' and trainers' competences and qualifications, monitor training needs and shortages of qualified teachers, and identify training needs due to the obsolescence of their knowledge and skills.

KEEPING TEACHERS' VOCATIONAL SKILLS UP TO DATE

As many teachers may not have worked in their trade and occupation for some time, their vocational knowledge and skills may be out of date. A key challenge facing VET is how to ensure that vocational competences of VET teachers and trainers are kept up-to-date with developments and innovation in enterprises, changes in technologies and working practices, so they can bring learning close to the world of work.

- **Continuing training programmes in which teachers are placed in companies**, as well as twinning and networking initiatives between VET schools and the world of work, have been successfully experienced in a number of countries. Practical training periods in companies are a way for teachers to update their skills and knowledge in their subject areas, to get acquainted with the needs of companies, recent developments in working practices and technological innovation. Cooperation with VET teachers contributes to the enhancement of in-company trainers pedagogical skills.

⁽¹⁾ Cedefop, Continuity, consolidation and change. Towards a European era of vocational education and training, Reference series, 2009: 121. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=528

⁽²⁾ Cedefop, Continuity, consolidation and change. Towards a European era of vocational education and training, Reference series, 2009: 103. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=528

BROADENING ACCESS TO CONTINUING TRAINING AND AVOIDING THE MATTHEW EFFECT

While some Member States are increasing their qualification requirements for VET teachers – and in some cases also for trainers who work in specific contexts, such as publicly funded programmes – there is still limited access to professional development opportunities. Initial education cannot provide teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for a life-time. Initial, induction and in-service training for VET teachers are not well-integrated. In-service training is often left to the initiative of individual teachers and trainers and is not always adapted to their needs, while incentives and opportunities to carry on updating their skills throughout their professional lives are rather limited.

- Bringing about real change in vocational teaching and training, requires more than formally introducing new qualification requirements, changes in curricula, and methodologies. Broadening access to continuing professional development presupposes **increasing financial investment** in the training of teachers, trainers and principals in VET schools, as well as **establishing policy and institutional frameworks that support continuing training**. The Matthew effect should be avoided, i.e. that mainly teachers, trainers and principals who already have updated competences take advantage of professional development opportunities. In this context, the age structure of teachers poses a particular challenge in some countries.
- As stated in the Communication “New skills for new jobs” (2008), upgrading skills is not a luxury for the highly qualified: it is essential for all. Trainers in enterprises and training consultants are at the front line of current initiatives aiming to upgrade the skills of the workforce and promote lifelong learning. In some Member States, there is remarkably little attention yet paid to the professionalisation of trainers of adults in enterprises. **Paradoxically, the current economic downturn might offer an opportunity to enhance the position and status of in-company trainers and adult trainers**. Supporting their professional development will be of crucial importance to meet the changing demands of learners and the labour market.
- **Continuing training should be organised on the job in a way that does not constitute an additional burden** or an unbearable demand for teachers and trainers.
- In many European Member States there is **little systematic coordination between different elements of teacher education**, leading to a lack of coherence and continuity between initial education and subsequent induction, in-service training and professional development. Holistic strategies for teacher training should involve a better coordination between initial, induction and continuing training, as well as stronger cooperation between key stakeholders, such as ministries, regional and local authorities, the social partners, professional organisations and training providers.

- The complexity of working environments for VET teachers, trainers and school principals requires innovative and cost-effective strategies to training. **Alternative arrangements for initial and in-service training can thus be based on informal and non-formal pathways, such as project-based and on-the-job learning, mentoring, and peer learning.** Communities of practice, led by public authorities, sector organisations and practitioners themselves, have been successfully created to offer support, assess training needs and shape training provision, and encourage knowledge sharing.

SOCIAL COMPETENCES, A MUST FOR TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

Effective teaching and training requires updated vocational and pedagogical skills, as well as transversal skills, such as the ability to work in a team and to cooperate with a variety of teaching and training professionals (e.g. guidance counsellors, new training professions emerging in enterprises...), public institutions and the world of work.

- In the challenging and changing environment in which teachers and trainers evolve, it might not be realistic to demand that they possess all competences required by an increasingly expanding and demanding set of roles. It might be advisable to **move towards an increased specialisation of teaching and training functions at different levels of responsibility.**
- The need to adopt a collegial style of working **requires teachers and trainers to acquire communication, social and management skills which were not previously included in initial and continuing training.**

THE WAY FORWARD

The conference on Teachers and Trainers at the heart of innovation and VET reforms showcased promising practices and policies linked to the recruitment, training and professional development of VET teachers, school principals and trainers in enterprises. Through research and its Training of Trainers Network (TTnet), Cedefop is monitoring trends and developments related to the professional development of VET teachers and trainers. The Conference debates will enrich research and analysis led by Cedefop, which will focus in 2009-2010 on the changing roles and competences of VET teachers and trainers, induction of beginner teachers through mentoring and professionalisation of in-company trainers. Knowledge sharing across Member states and sectors brings an added value to teaching and training communities, it is therefore critical to take full advantage of European mechanisms and funding schemes, such as the Lifelong Learning Programme and the study visits coordinated by Cedefop, to address strategic issues for both practitioners and policy makers. The issues raised at the Conference will encourage Member States in their reform processes and support the European Commission's policy initiatives. The conference paved the way for new networking opportunities between representatives

of public authorities, researchers, training providers, European and international organisations. They will need to pool their efforts to drive teachers and trainers at the heart of VET reforms and policy agendas, and give them all the attention they deserve.

VET teachers & trainers, forgotten change agents?

