

BACKGROUND NOTE

Conference, 23-24 February 2009

“Teachers and trainers at the heart of innovation and VET reforms”

Policy context

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. In recent years, the question of teachers’ and trainers’ professional development has gained momentum at policy level. In 2002, the Copenhagen Declaration included the competence development of teachers and trainers within the main priorities to be pursued through enhanced cooperation to support quality vocational education and training ⁽¹⁾. Four years later, the Helsinki Communiqué stressed that “highly qualified teachers and trainers who undertake continuous professional development” are a means to “improve the attractiveness and quality of VET ⁽²⁾. Enhancing the attractiveness and the status of teaching and training is seen as a priority in the newly adopted Bordeaux Communiqué ⁽³⁾. Furthermore, member states have agreed that “provision for initial education, induction and further professional development” should be “coordinated, coherent and adequately resourced” ⁽⁴⁾. Recently, the European Parliament has underscored that “the provision of more and better quality teacher education combined with policies aimed at recruiting the best candidates into the teaching profession should be the key priorities for all education ministries”⁽⁵⁾. Raising the status of teachers and trainers, upgrading their competences and qualifications, and keeping initial and continuous training up-to-date are major issues of concern. The success of current VET reforms require 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 knowledge and skills ⁽⁶⁾.

VET teachers and trainers are changing roles, from the most traditional one of instruction to the more complex one of facilitating learning for learners who may differ significantly in terms of learning needs and styles. The demand for extended

⁽¹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/council13832_en.pdf

⁽²⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/helsinki_en.pdf

⁽³⁾ The Bordeaux Communiqué on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training, http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/news1087_en.htm

⁽⁴⁾ Conclusions of the Council on improving the quality of teacher education (2007) <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14413.en07.pdf>

⁽⁵⁾ European Parliament resolution of 23 September 2008 on improving the quality of teacher education”

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0422+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

⁽⁶⁾ Common European principles for teacher competences and qualifications, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/testingconf_en.html

repertoires of organising learning processes might require teachers and trainers to possess a new set of knowledge, skills and competences⁷. 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?

Policy makers and training providers need to consider how initial and in-service training can equip VET staff with the knowledge and skills needed to cope with (i) the changing needs of businesses, technological innovation and new working practices; (ii) modern concepts of teaching and training that underpin VET reform, such as learner-centred approaches and the shift to learning outcomes; (iii) their changing roles, such as facilitating learning and providing guidance; (iv) decentralisation processes and greater autonomy of VET providers, requiring team work, networking with external partners, and new management tasks; (v) rising demands on quality management; (vi) the increased use of ICT as an education tool; and (vii) the policy objective to provide education and training to new target groups within lifelong strategies⁽⁸⁾.

Competence standards, new qualification requirements and certification processes are redesigning the teaching and training profession. These important developments could lead in the future to more consistent training systems for practitioners, in which initial, induction and in-service training are better integrated.

Objectives of the Conference

Policy makers involved in the design and steering of national reforms, VET practitioners, as well as training providers, can benefit from innovative experiences initiated in other countries. State-of-the-art research and good examples of policies and practices will provide the ground for exploring the following issues:

- the impact of education and training reforms on VET teaching and training, in particular, the changing roles and competences of teachers and trainers;
- new competences and qualification requirements linked to education and training reforms and innovation at the work place;
- policies and strategies intended to equip teachers and trainers for their new roles and to cope with pedagogical and vocational skill mismatches;
- as well as policy schemes aiming at raising the status and attractiveness of teaching and training professions.

Participants will examine trends and challenges related to both policy and practice, identify concrete actions the various stakeholders could pursue, and formulate proposals for policymaking to enhance the status of teachers and trainers, and support their professional development. The conference will bring together policy makers at both European and national level, representatives of European and international institutions, training practitioners, the social partners, representatives of training institutes and researchers.

⁷ Sören Nielsen, Teachers in vocational education and training reform, ETF, Yearbook, 2007.

⁽⁸⁾ Cedefop, Pia CORT, Auli KÄRKÖNEN, Kristiina VOLMARI, Professionalisation of VET teachers for the future, Panorama Series, 2004.

Outline of plenary sessions, workshops, and panels

23rd of February

Plenary Session: teachers and trainers at the heart of education and training reforms – European perspectives

Education and training reforms and labour market developments demand that teachers and trainers possess a new set of knowledge, skills and competences. Despite strong differences across the EU on qualification requirements, initial training and professional development opportunities, common concerns underpin the reform of initial and in-service training of VET staff, such as the need to update their pedagogical and vocational competences. Our keynote speakers will review policy trends and progress achieved at international, European and national level.

Plenary Session: impact of reforms and changing environments on VET teaching and training

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 ⁽⁹⁾. Supporting the professional development of teachers and trainers will be of crucial importance to meet the changing demands of learners and the labour market.

Panels 1, 2 and 3: changing context, emerging roles and competences: how to equip VET teachers, trainers, and VET leaders for their changing roles? (Three parallel sessions)

Upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of VET teachers, trainers, heads of school and training managers will be of crucial importance for implementing modern learning concepts and practices that are currently at the root of VET reforms. 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 ⁽¹⁰⁾⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹²⁾⁽¹³⁾.

⁽⁹⁾Sören Nielsen, Teachers in vocational education and training reform, ETF yearbook, 2007.

⁽¹⁰⁾Modernising Education and Training, a vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe, Joint interim report on progress under the “Education and Training 2010 Work programme”, (2006/C 79/01)

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/c_079/c_07920060401en00010019.pdf

⁽¹¹⁾ Common European principles for teacher competences and qualifications, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/testingconf_en.html

⁽¹²⁾ Conclusions of the Council on improving the quality of teacher education (2007) <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14413.en07.pdf>

⁽¹³⁾ Cedefop, Pia CORT, Auli KÄRKÖNEN, Kristiina VOLMARI, Professionalisation of VET teachers for the future, Panorama Series, 2004.

Objectives of the three parallel panels (teachers, trainer, heads of school and training managers)

Speakers will consider to what extent education and training reforms together with societal changes require new teacher, trainer and management roles, new pedagogies and new approaches to the training of teachers, trainers and heads of schools.

How are the roles of VET staff changing? What are the implications for their initial and continuing training? What should teachers, trainers and school leaders be able to know and do?

How should VET staff be trained and supported for their new roles? How is the current training provision (initial, induction and continuous) reflecting present challenges (i.e. the shift of learning paradigm and changing teaching and training environments)?

How can the changing nature of teaching and training be monitored so that appropriate adjustments are made to the initial and continuing training provision?

What can we learn from successful initiatives to train and support VET staff?

Snapshots: Promising approaches to the training and continuing professional development of VET teachers and trainers

Although the continuing professional development of VET teachers and trainers should be considered as a lifelong enterprise⁽¹⁴⁾, in a few cases only it is compulsory and does not usually lead to salary increases or career development prospects. VET reforms also require innovative and cost-effective approaches to the training of teachers and trainers⁽¹⁵⁾⁽¹⁶⁾. Alternative pathways for initial and in-service training include on-the-job learning, networking, peer learning and the use of virtual environments that offer support and training. In a number of countries, the in-service training of VET teachers is arranged within school-based development projects, to ensure that newly gained skills and knowledge are passed into the institutions and bring changes in schools. Peer learning arrangements and communities of practice support the implementation of the pedagogical and technical aspects of VET reforms, and encourage knowledge sharing on key issues closely connected to the status and qualifications of VET practitioners, as well as on innovative practices in teaching and training. National pilot initiatives and EU funded projects are bringing about a considerable wealth of experience from which important lessons can be drawn. Participants will discuss examples of innovative practice related to the competence development of VET staff, from three perspectives: the contributions of European

⁽¹⁴⁾ Cedefop, Pia COURT, Auli KÄRKÖNEN, Kristiina VOLMARI, Professionalisation of VET teachers for the future, Panorama Series, 2004: 26

⁽¹⁵⁾ Common European principles for teacher competences and qualifications, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/testingconf_en.html

⁽¹⁶⁾ Conclusions of the Council on improving the quality of teacher education (2007) <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14413.en07.pdf>

cooperation and internationalisation, practitioners' communities of practice and, school-based learning communities.

24th of February

Workshop 1: Dealing with vocational skill mismatches and keeping vocational teachers abreast of technological innovation

The VET sector should be able to plan for the future, on the basis of reliable projections of teachers and trainers' skill mismatches and training needs. Major research projects have been launched at national level to map VET teachers' competences and qualifications, monitor changing training needs and shortages of qualified teachers.

As many teachers may not have worked in their trade and occupation for some time, their vocational qualification may be out of date. How can we ensure that teachers' vocational skills keep up to date with changes in technologies and working practices so they can bring learning close to the world of work? A number of continuing training programmes have adopted a dualistic approach, in which teachers work in companies, within so-called on-the-job learning or returning-to-industry schemes to update their professional competences. Twinning initiatives between VET schools and companies, and industrial placements have also been tested to upgrade the skills and competences of VET teachers, and keep them abreast of technological and work organisation changes.

Objectives of the workshop

The workshop will consider how best to assess technological trends and innovations at the work place and their implications for training; identify vocational skills mismatches of teachers; and bring VET institutions closer to the needs of businesses. Participants will also reflect on how teachers can keep their vocational knowledge and skills up to date, and formulate recommendations.

How are technological innovations and changes in work organisation identified? How is their impact and implications on VET teaching and training, and on the training of VET teachers, assessed? How can teachers' vocational skills mismatches be identified?

What are the barriers to teachers maintaining the currency of their technical knowledge and skills? How could these barriers be lifted?

What can be done to keep the vocational knowledge and skills of VET teachers involved in daily teaching up-to-date to better cope with the needs of enterprises?

Workshop 2: New demands for in-company trainers: from a training role to an occupation?

In terms of competences and qualifications, in most countries, in-company trainers are not required to have a particular training qualification but need to be skilled workers with a certain period of work experience. In-company training is not always provided on a full time basis by people who have specialised and officially recognised qualifications. In very many cases, training is not a clearly identifiable and separate occupation, but rather a role, combined with many others. Individual trainers have been left very much on their own to cope with changes in their working environments. Most trainers lack pedagogical and management competences and apply instruction methods which are based on their own experience ⁽¹⁷⁾. The fact that in-company trainers are not recognised as an occupational group – whether they are skilled workers who assume training functions or full-time trainers – affects their professional development.

In the political debate on skills shortages, the quality of continuous training and the role of trainers and how to enhance their competences to meet changing labour market demands are becoming major issues of concern. Although legislation does not normally stipulate specific qualification conditions for trainers working outside the dual system, professional requirements for in-company trainers have been recently adopted, or are under consideration, in a number of countries, to enhance their status and basic qualifications. Regulation usually takes the shape of professional standards, but several countries are now requiring in-company trainers to acquire professional certification and be registered at a professional body, which entails a commitment to continuing professional development. Furthermore, the validation and recognition of trainers' knowledge, skills and competences gained on the job can provide a reliable and alternative route towards professional recognition and make possible flexible forms of professional development ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Objectives of the workshop

The workshop will explore main trends and challenges related to the recognition, certification and accreditation of in-company trainers. Participants will identify areas which require special attention and action, and formulate recommendations to better support in-company trainers in their work.

What specific areas of competence should be covered by competence frameworks or professional standards? How should these be defined and updated?

What kinds of qualification pathways can be created for trainers who do not meet newly established standards?

If accreditation is essential to the professional development of in-company trainers and the quality of training provided, how should it be done? How best to assess the knowledge and skills of trainers in accreditation processes?

⁽¹⁷⁾ Eurotrainer, making lifelong learning possible: a study on the situation and qualification of trainers in Europe, ITB – DG EAC, 2008.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Cedefop, Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers in the EU Member States, Panorama series, 147, 2007.

What are the benefits and risks of current moves towards a more regulated “training profession”?

Workshop 3: Raising the attractiveness of VET professions (retaining and attracting talented staff)

The prospect of retirement of older teachers in the short-to-medium term needs to be managed carefully. A number of member states are striving to create new entry routes into the teaching profession for professionals from occupations 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 matter¹⁹.

In a recent resolution, the European Parliament has stressed that “attracting top-performing recruits to the teaching profession requires corresponding levels of social recognition, status and remuneration”⁽²⁰⁾. More appealing working conditions, as well as more transparent salary and career systems, could contribute to the parity of esteem between vocational and general education, and improve the attractiveness of VET professions.

Strategies to improve the status of teachers and trainers imply additional efforts to upgrade their competences and qualifications. Several countries have recently introduced, or are in the process of introducing or upgrading minimum standards. Current reforms imply that many VET professionals may no longer meet new qualification requirements, and will need to receive further training and have their competences validated and accredited. Alternative routes to professional qualification for VET teachers, through the validation of informal and non-formal learning, are of particular interest to those countries that may expect teacher shortages⁽²¹⁾.

Objectives of the workshop

The workshop will consider strategies to retain teaching and training staff, and attract new recruits. Participants will formulate recommendations on how to raise the attractiveness of VET professions.

Attracting talented professionals

How can teaching and training as a career be made more attractive? How can talented professionals from occupations and trades be encouraged to take up vocational teaching positions?

How to deal with shortages of teachers and trainers? What are the challenges and solutions across Europe?

¹⁹ Unevoc, Philipp Grollmann and Felix Rauner (ed), International perspectives on teachers and lecturers in technical and vocational education, Springer, 2007.

⁽²⁰⁾ European Parliament resolution of 23 September 2008 on improving the quality of teacher education” <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0422+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

²¹ Cedefop, Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers in the EU Member States, Panorama series, 147, 2007.

Retaining experienced teachers and trainers

In the context of increased competence requirements, how to retain good practitioners who do not meet newly adopted professional specifications? What kinds of qualification pathways can be created for (newly recruited or already in service) teachers who do not meet newly established requirements (qualifications, standards...)?

Roundtable: European cooperation, a driver of innovation in VET teaching and training

EU funded projects are bringing about a considerable wealth of experience from which important lessons can be drawn in key areas related to the initial and continuing training of VET practitioners, and their teaching and training practices. The panel will discuss the outcomes of Leonardo da Vinci projects, and consider their potential for transfer.