

3rd international workshop on

## Curriculum Innovation and Reform

### CHANGING ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES

26 – 27 April 2012, Thessaloniki, Greece

Discussion of Ivan Svetlik, University of Ljubljana on the

## Changing and linking curriculum, standards and assessment in VET in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: the case of Georgia, Eduarda Castel-Branco

First I would like to thank Eduarda for her very interesting presentation. Out of a very informative case I have chosen four points that might be of interest for a wider audience of VET experts.

1. Georgian authorities show strong commitment and intensive activities in the field of VET reform. The reform started relatively late. Its advantage is that it can take into account some experiences from other reforms. One of those certainly is a strong accent on the quality assurance, which twenty years ago was not so much accentuated. However, as a relatively new reform it demonstrates some side steps and problems similar to those made in reforms in other countries which started earlier. It shows that it is easier to change the form than the content. For instance there is a question how to train providers of VET to propose adequate training programmes since the preparation of these programmes has been decentralised. Another question is how to achieve similar standards by students attending programmes that lead to the same qualification in different schools due to decentralised programming. One can say that the success of the reform highly depends on the changing mind sets and behaviour of teachers and other parties involved. It is a long term process. In Slovenia for instance the reforms started in the middle of 1990ies and have continued in several segments of the education system until now. In the VET area also they have not been fully implemented yet. Therefore one could think about how to enable a permanent adjustment of the educational system to the changing environment and new concepts rather than to make a reform every ten to fifteen years.
2. Second point relates to the information that Georgian VET system had become a dead-end choice, which prevented a smooth progression to further education. This is a frequent characteristic of VET systems, but it is not always clear whether it has been introduced purposefully or just by accident. Many experts and policy makers

from the field of VET would not agree to such a solution while employers would frequently demand vocationally qualified labour and would criticise the system which enables open progression up the educational scale. In this case employers face a lack of vocationally qualified labour and attract it from abroad. Such a situation could be observed in Slovenia and many other countries. Therefore the question is to what extent VET system is opened for further education and which considerations contributed to the existing solution in Georgia.

3. It is stated in the report that a typical curriculum outline in Georgia is subject-based. Maybe it is wise not to have ambitions to go beyond this point at the beginning of the reform. In Slovenia for instance we wanted at the beginning to make a shift from content based to goal based curriculum. This shift enables stronger accent on the learning outcomes and competences and gives teachers and schools higher professional autonomy. However, in the second wave of the VET reform at the beginning of 2000s our ambitions rose. We wanted to better address the issue that workers in their work environments face challenges and problems that are complex and usually not subject-structured. That is why teaching process should include cases of similar structure and complexity. We re-organized the subject-structured study programmes in which there are other programme units included apart from some traditional subjects, e-g-, professional modules, where theoretical and practical knowledge are interlinked, training at the employers' premises, activities of special students' interests and open part of a curriculum, which is determined locally in cooperation between schools and employers. Programme structured this way requires different implementation:
  - For each programme unit minimal standards to be achieved are determined.
  - Students are informed about these standards.
  - For each programme unit a plan of progress monitoring and assessment is prepared.
  - Each year an implementation plan is prepared at the school level in cooperation between all involved teachers; it shapes the programme units including projects that students and teachers work on.
  - Units are often taught by more than one teacher, teachers must coordinate their activities.
  - Units taught by more than one teacher are assessed in teams; assessment can be based on the student's portfolio.
4. As the report from Georgia presents the assessment remains internal. This opens a persisting dilemma on a balance between internal and external assessment. While in some countries the assessment is completely the responsibility of schools in others it is not. Employers who take part in the education and training process cannot be considered as external assessors. In Slovenia we have introduced the possibility that VET students get their key competences assessed externally at the end of their education if they want to continue their studies. External examination is practiced

also in the System of National Vocational Qualifications where recognition of informally acquired knowledge and skills is in question. Assessment is made in various ways, such as presenting certificates and portfolios, demonstration of one's skills at the work place, presenting projects, examination etc.