

Workshops on VET Teachers and Trainers: Key Actors to Make Lifelong Learning a Reality in Europe

Study-specific background paper 3

“TTplus – A Framework for the Continuing Professional Development of Trainers”

Background

The TTplus project started in 2006 as a *Leonardo da Vinci* Reference Material project with partners from Austria, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania with duration of 24 months. It was completed in October 2008.

The concept of Lifelong Learning has led to ever wider contexts and processes of learning including the increasing focus placed on non-formal learning, work based learning and e-learning. This leads to a diffusion of the training process, with increased numbers of people taking some role in training and increasing roles and responsibilities for the professional trainers. The overall aim of the project is to examine the issues involved in the training and professionalisation of trainers in the EU through:

- a) Examining the context in which training takes place in enterprises through 18 case studies;
- b) Examining present policies and provision for the training of trainers and consider their effectiveness;
- c) Developing a framework for the continuing professional development of trainers;
- d) Examining different measures and mechanism for implementing such as professional development framework for trainers.

The expected outcomes of the project are:

- A series of portraits of training roles and professional development pathways of trainers;
- Recommendations for policies and measures for implementing the Framework for the Continuing Professional Development of trainers;
- Created linkages between the Framework for the Continuing Professional Development of Trainers and the European Qualification Framework.

The project applied that method of ‘use cases’ to illustrate the context in which training takes place. The main focus thereby was placed on the role that trainers/tutors/mentors play in enterprises. ‘Use cases’ is a methodology developed in the ICT industry. It allows for a graphic representation of the different roles individuals play in their work practice and of the different possible interactions which take place.

A series of case studies the project produced is now available such as a series of ‘instances of change’ based on the applied methodology. In addition, two framework documents are available. In addition there are supportive documents for the development of a framework for the professional development of trainers, namely, the ***TTplus principle document*** and the ***TTplus consultation document***.

Case studies

In the first phase of the project 19 case studies were carried out in training companies in Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and the UK with the aim to identify recent developments and new possibilities for training and professional development of trainers in companies. The companies belonged to the sectors of technology/industry, public services, IT, insurance, shipping and training/consultancy. The training sector was over-represented in the research (n=10). The public, health and insurance sector were the least represented

(n=1.) Furthermore, the big companies were more represented (n=8) compared to small (n=5), medium (n=4) and micro sized companies and organisations (n=2). Finally, the management training, IT and commercial area were the most represented within the research; respectively n=9, n=7 and n=6.

Topic 1: Training practices existing in the companies

Training practices were classified according to three types: workplace learning, internal courses and external courses. **Workplace learning** is the most common training method for those companies that are not themselves training providers. It is used for the induction of new staff members and in some cases also the continuous development of experienced staff members. Trainees are integrated into the process of work and given real working or support tasks as their assignments. **Internal courses** are sometimes offered for prospective and permanent staff members. Courses focus on specialised topics such as financial accounting and are provided by part-time in-company trainers. **External courses** were also used by three of the companies that were not themselves training providers. Difficulties encountered during the implementation of these training practices related mostly to the competences and motivation of the trainers, the question of dealing with the trainees, and the organisation of the training.

Topic 2: Profile of trainers in terms of qualifications and competences.

The qualifications of trainers were classified as 'formal certificate in didactics', 'education on didactics' and 'education on professional skills'. Whereas education on didactics was considered important by eight companies, as was education on professional skills, only two companies required a formal certificate. It can therefore be concluded that the experience of a trainer is more important than a formal certification. The competences of trainers were grouped under four headings, namely subject specific, didactical, organisational and interpersonal competence, each of these being considered important by the interviewees.

Topic 3: Professional development of trainers

Three types of professional development were identified, namely collaborative activities, individual development and work experiences, of which the first category was the most prevalent. Within the collaboration type, informal peer tutoring was put forward most often. Among the individual category, self-study was most prevalent.

Topic 4: Seven major trends

- focus on training
- broader learning paths
- application/transfer of theory into practice
- mentoring
- e-learning
- self-directed learning
- shorter, faster and more fixed trainings.

Instances of change

The material of the case studies was analysed in order to identify and describe moments of change, innovation and good practice of training. The innovative point was that these instances of change were described in a narrative way from three different perspectives, namely, from the **perspective of the trainee**, from the **perspective of the trainer**, and from the perspective of the **person who organises the training** within the company.

An example of such instances identified in the case studies is the narrative "Training as an integral part of team-based staff development" from the German case study. This example can be considered as an instance of good practice of training. The three perspectives on this practice read as follows:

Training manager: “In our company the basic training functions (tutoring, mentoring and supervision) have been linked to the normal work process of skilled workers (*Geselle*) and the trainees are rotating team members at different worksites. This means that training manager is essentially coordinator of constantly changing working and learning assignments and allocation of trainees. At the same time training manager must monitor the development of competences of trainees and of skilled workers. In addition to the normal processes of getting feedback (regular meetings, evaluation reports) training manager has to keep an eye whether there is a need to make use of external training provisions.”

Trainer: “I see myself primarily as a skilled worker who has training responsibilities (*Geselle*). For us it is natural that whenever it is possible we get a trainee allocated to us. This means one more team member for the working task but at the same time a responsibility to make sure that the trainee learns as much as possible from the worksite. The training manager keeps an eye on the work tasks that our company is getting and tries to make sure that trainees are not kept in similar jobs all the time. Therefore, it is in our interest to arrange the working and learning tasks of the trainees in such a way that we get trainees with us to different worksites.”

Trainee: “As trainees we rotate between the departments of the company. We spend at each department 5 months and during that time we are allocated to different skilled workers according to the work tasks that are available. This means that we may have different experiences of our trainers but we are encouraged to give an honest feedback with the anonymised evaluation reports. In the best cases we are encouraged to take initiative when we can convince that trainers that we can do the job. Also, in the best cases we are also invited to external training provisions that are provided for the skilled workers.”

Framework for professional development

The tasks and activities related to training have spread to extend to an increasing numbers of workers, especially skilled workers, who may not immediately identify themselves as trainers. Discussions with representatives of national agencies suggest this is an issue of increasing concern in those existing programmes for the training of trainers and for professional development that are targeted at full time trainers. If the aim of an architecture or framework for the continuing professional development for trainers in Europe is to raise the profile and quality of training, the findings of the project suggest that this should address all those concerned with training and learning.

The following underpinning principles were suggested for the development of an open framework for the professional development of trainers:

- a) The framework is based on the recognition of the importance of training for the development of individual competences and lifelong learning for individual employees and organisational development within enterprises and other organisations.
- b) The framework recognises the different ways in which people learn and develop competences. This may include participation in formal full or part time training, externally or in the workplace, but includes also learning on the job and self-study. The framework recognises that trainers may have a role in supporting all these different forms of learning.
- c) *Frameworks for learning versus frameworks for qualifications:* In the past there has been an increasing focus on qualification frameworks such as the EQF. Such frameworks are designed to promote access to training between different pathways, to facilitate mobility and to acknowledge competences in an ex-post manner. Yet, qualifications frameworks might fail to provide access for learning and neglect the crucial importance of work experience for such provision. A framework that promotes learning needs to recognise not only

the role of the individual in achieving qualifications, but also the role of organisations in facilitating learning and putting certain principles of learning into practice.

Sources: reports and documents available at www.ttplus.org