

Report on 1st Consultation Workshop

Newport 8-9 October 2008

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1. Programme

Workshop Time table in detail		
Wednesday October 8th: Position audit – updating the picture		
9.00- 9.30	Session 1: Arrival activity	As participants register, they are asked to complete a series of tasks as they are drinking their coffee. Task 1: Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by placing stickers along the line in the appropriate place. Task 2: Find someone who has placed an arrow at the opposite end to yours on one of the statements and discusses for five minutes why that is so.
9.30 – 10.00	Session 2: Welcome and introduction <i>Rector of the University or the Dean of the Education Faculty</i>	Purpose of the seminar, organization and domestic arrangements Jenny Hughes
10.00 –11.00	Session 3: Feedback on Key Issues	There are 5 topics – titles will be published on posters. Topics are those covered by Key Issue reports. You are invited to sign up according to interest. Maximum allowed 6 in each group. Each group has 60 mins together to examine one or more of the key issues both in general terms and related to their own country. The key issue papers may assist. The group is asked to record comments straight onto a word document. These will be printed out as hard copies before next session.
10.30 –11.15 Coffee		
11.15 –12.15	Session 4: Rainbow groups	Divide into rainbow groups. Each person will have paper record of their groups discussions. Give feedback to each other. Paper output on additional points raised. Any points / issues not covered?

12.15 –13.00	Session 5: Identifying additional issues and examples of practice:	Country groups Each group to undertake two tasks: 1) are there any additional issues related to their own country 2) have they any particular examples of good practice in training of VET teachers or trainers?
1.00 – 2.00	Lunch	
2.00 – 3.00	Session 6: Expert Witness Session on the projects	3 witnesses: TT+ - Graham Attwell TT Net - Ken Mars Network for Trainers –Dora Thymiopoulou 5 minute 'statement' by each witness, then questions from the rest of the participants.
3.00 – 3.30	Session 7: Building on the projects	In buzz groups – one or more concrete points / ideas coming out of the research projects that could be built on and / or one suggestion they would give to the project team.
3.30-4.00 Tea		
4.00 – 5.00	Session 8: Influences, barriers, opportunities	Sentence completion using preprinted cards around influences, barriers and opportunities Cards are colour coded with piles of preprinted cards around 'barriers', 'influences', 'opportunities' etc Each person takes as many as they want to of each colour and fills them in. Buzz groups of 2-3 people take a pile of the completed cards and brainstorm responses. So for 'barriers' it may be suggesting ways of overcoming them. For 'opportunities' it may be ways of exploiting them etc. Cards are 'posted' back on the table when they have been dealt with so that other groups can address the same issue.
5.00 – 6.30 Cheese and Wine Reception Welcome by Andy Klum: European Commission representative in Wales		
6.30	Bus back to hotel	
7.30	Bus leaves hotel	
8.00 Dinner at the Priory in Caerleon hotel After dinner entertainment: Welsh folk group		

Thursday 9th October: Agenda for the future

8.15	Bus leaves hotel	
9.00 – 10.00	Session 1: Open Session:	Your chance to show and tell
10.00 - 10-30	Session 2: Establishing priorities	Groups to take the 'solutions' or responses to sentence completion and carry out activity to prioritise. Either mapping onto important / urgent grid or card sort under 'next steps', 'middle distance' and 'back burner'
10.30 –11.00	Coffee	
11.00 –12.00	Session 3: Stakeholder Action	Trainers, Researchers, Policy makers (Institutional representatives, universities) 3 Board Activity: 3 groups representing different stakeholders Activity: Taking priority lists, each group to address 3 key questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can they do to respond / move the agenda forward • What do they need other stakeholder groups to do 20 mins at each board. Groups rotate to next board. Facilitator stays with same board. When next group arrives, facilitator summarises the points on flipchart. Next group record <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what they want from the previous group • how they can respond to what first group wanted Third group: As for second group
12.00 –12.30	Session 4: Agenda for action	In country groups
12.30-1.00	Session 5: Summing up and evaluation	
1.00	Lunch and depart	

2. General Information

The UK workshop was held in Newport on 8-9 October 2008 involving participants from the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Malta and Romania. Romania thereby was selected as a carrier of a different, contrasting model to the other four countries which share many similarities between their education and training systems with the VET system in England, Scotland and Ireland being largely unregulated, practice based and driven by a liberal market-lead model as concerns skills and training. Within those systems VET institutions have a large degree of autonomy and sectoral approaches and arrangements in VET play a strong role. Similarly, decentralised and regional approaches can also be observed in the Netherlands, while Malta's education sector draws its main guidance from the British educational system. In all those countries we find an increased emphasis on CVET and lifelong learning so that the lines between initial and continuing learning, adult education and VET are not sharply differentiated.

The venue was the University of Wales at Newport which hosted the UK based seminar in the School of Education at its main site in Caerleon. The university has a particular expertise and long experience in providing initial and continuing training for vocational education of teachers and is a centre of excellence for research and the training of teachers involved in lifelong learning. Considering the participants' national background it was decided in agreement with the Steering Committee that the working language of this first workshop would be English without providing any interpretation services. The UK was chosen to be the first workshop since Pontydysgu developed the workshop methodology and tools and those needed to be piloted and optimised for the subsequent workshops. While Pontydysgu implemented the workshop in terms of its methodology and content and running the sessions, the overall workshop organisation was contracted out to the University of Wales which supported the workshop.

The University of Newport was responsible for inviting the participants, organising their hotel accommodation, meals and catering, local transfers and travel. All delegates were accommodated in the same hotel on the outskirts of Newport (Hilton Hotel). An executive coach was hired to transport the delegates to and from the Hotel and the University and to other venues. The workshop sessions were organised in one boardroom plus two spin out rooms at the University premise.

3. Workshop results against the project objectives

Objectives:

- *To explore the national strategies and national contexts relevant for VET teachers and trainers and the training of trainers;*
- *To determine the impact that these strategies have on the training and practice of VET teachers and trainers.*

The workshop examined the national strategies and contexts relevant for VET teachers and trainers and the training of trainers and the impact of those strategies of training and practice through a series of thematic working groups:

- Co-operation between VET teachers and trainers

- New technologies – what impact does / should it have on the practice and training of VET teachers and trainers?
- Emerging approaches and existing initiatives towards the recognition of trainers and VET teachers in terms of their professional status and expertise
- How can quality be assured and what role do VET teachers and trainers play?

Amongst others the following issues emerged. There still remains a considerable problem with the definitions of teachers and trainers. Whilst in most countries a 'VET teacher' is relatively easy to define, trainers are not a homogenous group and there is a wide variation both in the definition and practice of trainers. One important distinction in all countries is between those working in school driven contexts, those in market driven contexts and those working in company driven contexts. The increasing use of work based learning is adding another dimension and this area is becoming more dominant.

Definitions of teacher competences already exist in the countries represented at the workshop. However, there is less clarity and development for trainers. There was considerable discussion of the value and use of competency frameworks for teachers with some feeling they may provide a barrier to learning.

In terms of continuing professional development, participants wished to see the development of open access to qualifications, including accreditation through the accreditation of prior experience and learning and portfolio building. This also raises issues of transparency and the need for formalization. Participants wished to see the development of a range of assessment possibilities but stated that institutions are still thinking about formal qualifications. Whilst teachers and institutions are aware of the importance of informal learning, this was not yet being implemented for the training of teachers and trainers, but whilst this is being implemented for other people it is not for the teaching profession.

Participants agreed that formal qualifications were important for teachers and trainers and were supportive of a European Framework. Such a framework should include competences and knowledge but also, and importantly, values and attitudes. There was considerable discussion of the comparative status of teachers and trainers. In some countries such as the UK teachers have a higher status whilst in others, e.g. Denmark, trainers have higher status. It was noted that for competences in VET teachers rely largely on formal training and qualifications. For trainers in industry, a background as a skilled craftsman was more important with less concern over formal qualifications. Although the skills and competences for VET teachers and trainers, whether in schools or companies or even in the workplace, are much the same, the context of teaching and training is different and the pressures and influences are also different.

Although the adoption of Technology Enhanced Learning had, in general, been slow in the VET sector, compared to Higher Education and the general school sector, it was now having an increasing impact and this impact would grow in the future. The major impact was in the role of teachers and trainers from a role of knowledge providers to a role of facilitators of learning. This was a challenge to many teachers and trainers, who felt their traditional role and status to be challenged. However participants felt that it was not so much age of teachers or trainers that was important in adopting to such new roles and in using Technology Enhanced Learning, but an issue of motivation.

It was noted that in all countries participating, there was increasing use of social software, such as weblogs and wikis, and special networking applications, especially by young people. There was a concern that if teachers and trainers were unable to use and understand such applications, formal education provision might be seen as irrelevant by students. However, there was a major issue in how teachers and trainers viewed the benefits of using such technologies and in particular as to whether they were able to pedagogically apply such new technologies to teaching and training practice.

In all countries, initial training programmes for teachers were being reformed to provide enhanced training in the use of new technologies for teaching and learning and there was the provision of Continuing Professional Development programmes in Technology Enhanced Learning. However, these programmes and courses had tended to focus on the use of technology itself and not on the pedagogic application of the technology in teaching and training practice. A further, and important development was the emergence of a new generation of teachers and trainers, who had grown up using technology themselves. It was felt that in the future all teachers and trainers would have to be competent in the use of new technology for learning. This was a major priority for future frameworks and programmes for the training of teachers and trainers.

Moves towards harmonisation of quality frameworks in the different countries were noted, together with the requirement to meet CQAF criteria that each national country needs to put in place a Quality Assurance framework in order to encourage the trainers/teachers to develop their own QA policies and procedures. Also noted was the move towards recognition of teaching qualifications by a registration body, although this did not apply to trainers in most countries. It was felt important that institutions should establish internal QA systems which are well understood by all and provide feedback for improvement at all levels. Central to this should be the provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) at all levels. Whilst most participants felt that participation in CPD should be mandatory and built in to career progression there was an issue of how much autonomy a teacher/trainer has in choosing CPD, negotiated through an appraisal process.

The evaluation of training was central to any quality process including the evaluation of learning, reaction, behaviour, outcomes and return on investment. Quality standards could provide benchmarks for best practice and for the professional recognition of teachers and trainers. It was seen as important that trainers (including work based trainers) were part of a Framework for quality and for training of teachers and trainers in order to provide recognition, professionalise of the training function, provide careers paths and stimulate integration and flexibility within education and training systems.

Objective:

- *To discuss the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of reports initiated and supported by the European Commission and CEDEFOP and relevant European and national projects;*

Two witness sessions were organized to discuss the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of reports initiated and supported by the European Commission and CEDEFOP and relevant European and national projects. The first focused on initiatives which had been identified prior to the workshop by the project coordinators whilst the

second was organized as an open session for participants to report on national and international projects and initiatives in which they are participating.

Four projects were presented in the first session:

1. The Leonardo da Vinci programme sponsored Eurotrainer Network – presented by Teodoara Thymiopoulou
2. The Leonardo da Vinci programme sponsored TTPlus project presented by Graham Attwell
3. The Cedefop Defining VET Professions project presented by Ken Marsh and Stuart Bradley
4. The Irish National Skill Net project on trainers competences presented by Norah Bryne

Each presenter was allocated five minutes. This was followed by a witness session in which participants were invited to ask critical questions of the project. In a final group activity participants gave each project feedback on how their project might be improved.

The Network to Support Trainers in Europe supports research and practice in training throughout Europe through providing access to people and ideas about research and training practice, practical materials and tools to support the professional development of trainers and through a web based communication platform. The network has undertaken a survey of the work of trainers and their professional support and will be organizing a online conference in November 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.

The TTplus project is a two-year Leonardo da Vinci funded surveys and analysis project. The project has been researching the practice of training, examining existing policies and provision for the training of trainers and has developed a Framework for Continuing Professional Development of trainers based on principle and standards – expressed as commitments, together with exemplars of practice. The Framework is addressed to individuals and groups of trainers, to enterprises, to professional associations and social partners and to governmental bodies. It is intended to pilot the Framework in the next year.

The Ttnet Defining VET Professions project had the objectives to analyse the roles, responsibilities and competences of VET professions and to identify the main development trends and challenges. The final results include a set of commonly agreed professional profiles and an examination of the issues to be addressed to successfully support the continuous professional development of VET professions. The project has developed a grid for mapping core competences for VET teachers and trainers.

The Irish National Skills Net project is based on a network bringing together trainers and learning facilitators from all sectors, public and private, specialist and mainstream, to share learning and experiences in relation to best practice, recent innovations, quality standards and continuing professional development. The project has established national competency standards for trainers, for use by FÁS, HETAC, FETAC, organisations and trainers and training providers.

A number of issues arose in the discussion which followed. One issue was the visibility and dissemination of the different projects looking at the training of trainers. Whilst the projects produced reports and publications at the end of the project, it would be more useful if the community were able to access the work of those projects during their development phase.

Further discussion took place around the feasibility of defining competences for trainers and whether this was the most appropriate approach to the professional development of teachers and trainers. This led to a discussion about the European Qualification Framework. There was concern expressed that the 'levels' approach of the EQF will not work in practice as competence development does not take place according to a linear progress from one level to the next across all possible competence domains

It was also pointed out that a number of projects had attempted to define core competences for VET teachers and trainers. Was there any possibility to reconcile the core competences identified by the projects through the grid developed by the Defining VET Professions project?

Three projects were presented in the second session:

1. The e-social reputation project presented by Ken Marsh
2. The eTTCampus project presented by Joe Cutajar
3. The SIMPEL project presented by Timothy Hall

The e-social reputation project is looking at allowing researchers and practitioners to be rated on-line by both their social reputation and for their work. The project is developing and piloting interfaces and algorithms for this purpose. This led to a discussion on the future of accreditation and how far in the future formal qualifications would be valued as against community measurements of worth based on practice. Obviously this also raises a series of ethical issues over how the internet is used and of on-line identities.

The eTTCampus project aims at setting up, developing and consolidating a European Virtual Campus for teachers and trainers. On the virtual campus, teachers and trainers can directly compare experiences on the pedagogical use of ICT and learn through context-based work. There was a discussion on different tools and software for learning and to what extent we can replicate traditional forms and structure for learning in virtual forms. This, in turn raised questions as to the skills and competences required by teachers and trainers in the use of ICT for learning and to what extent such skills were pedagogical and how much technical.

The SIMPEL project focused on improving eLearning practices in SMEs. Much of the discussion was on informal learning as this was the main mode of learning in SMEs. Most training in SMEs is not by qualified trainers but by skilled workers who do not probably identify themselves as trainers. Traditional programmes of training for trainers have focused on full-time trainers and have hence made little impact on SMEs. There was discussion of how training provision could be developed for these 'part-time' trainers.

Further discussion focused on how learning takes place in SMEs and in particular on the use of the internet for informal learning through communities of practice. What role did trainers have with regard to fostering and encouraging the emergence of communities of practice?

Objectives:

- *To identify other factors that influence the work and training of VET teachers and trainers*
- *To identify any additional issues or challenges not covered by these reports*

In order to map factors that influence the work and training of VET teachers and trainers and to identify additional issues or challenges not covered by the reports presented in the witness sessions, participants were invited to formulate brief statements that indicated: barriers or obstacles to innovations and development in the area of VET teachers and trainers:

- opportunities for new measures and innovation;
- intervening factors that need to be taken into account.

The card exercise was undertaken through group work where participants completed sentences and statements that were written by other participants. The aim was to exemplify possible measures related to research, policies, ICT, pedagogy etc. and to prepare a cognitive map with reference to the importance and urgency of the proposed measures. The participants identified the following areas to be important and requiring urgent intervention:

The training and continuing learning of VET professionals

The studies, projects and initiatives presented at the workshop have shown that the training needs of VET professionals vary considerably, particularly between freelance, self-employed trainers and trainers in companies (in-house company-based trainers). Thus, their different training needs need to be identified in order to better target the training offers. The different training needs partly derive from the different training background of the target groups (in-company trainers are mostly skilled workers while most self-employed trainers have an academic degree, for example) and partly from their different tasks and groups of people they work with. In particular, trainers need practical ideas and materials that have been piloted and tested rather than theory. The transferability of skills and competences between contexts (such as sectors) thereby should be taken into account. Concrete measures that should be pursued include:

- Developing innovative practice in mentoring, tutoring and coaching and new approaches to the training trainers that can work across centres; Training in skills that are transferable across sectors.
- Developing co-operative arrangements between VET institutions and providers and the higher education / university sector. Areas of cooperation should include accreditation procedures that are jointly agreed by VET and HE providers and accreditation bodies.
- Identify barriers to enhancing the flexibility of the training of trainers. This could be done through developing case studies and good practice examples of flexibility in approach.
- Developing frameworks which allow for flexibility, creativity and customisation to different contexts and give room for innovation.
- There was the notion that training is not just related to skills and competences but also carry the dimension of values and attitudes. This dimension should have its place in all kinds of training frameworks. In addition, participants were aware that the roles and functions of VET professionals within and across countries may be very different and in order to realise targeted training those roles and functions need to be mapped.

In some contexts, **e-learning** is considered to have strong potentials to innovate the training and teaching methods of VET teacher and trainers and to foster their professional

development. Thus, issues emerging around the potentials of e-learning technologies were put forward as a topic of discussion. In the process of promoting the training of VET teachers and trainers and their professional development, the following ideas related to e-learning were put forward:

- Define the competences that trainers need in new technologies. This could be based on European standards of competence in new technologies.
- Develop a classified or tagged directory of e-learning materials that can be accessed and modified by VET teachers and trainers. Develop a database or repository of materials.
- Develop ways of integrating new technologies in all kinds of training for VET teacher and trainers to develop their e-literacy.
- Focus on how trainers can use new technologies creatively in the classroom.
- Design further training opportunities and programmes for VET trainers and teachers in new technologies.

One key point in the context of developing and enhancing the use of e-learning was that more research is needed on the take up of new technologies by teachers and trainers and the impact of digital natives. This is important in order to better target and design e-learning materials and assess their usefulness in practice.

Another area that was picked up in relation to the training and continuing learning of VET professionals concerned the issue of accreditation, particularly to foster mobility and the transferability between contexts. Particularly for the trainers, the issue of accreditation remains largely unresolved. Suggestions for improvement related to developing clear definitions of learning outcomes or content which can be recognised by a variety of awarding bodies in combination with developing a bank of learning assignments which can be used as the basis of recognition and accreditation in different countries and sectors. Some further research is needed into whether the reconciliation of national frameworks into a single European pathway is actually useful and realistic.

Improve the quality of training through quality monitoring

Former studies identified that some countries and institutions foster quality monitoring and assurance in order to improve trainers' work and the training of trainers. Connecting to this approach the workshop participants identified a series of interventions geared towards quality assurance including:

- Support the development of evaluation tools and quality assurance programmes for trainers and institutions. Trainers' skills to apply evaluation tools should be enhanced and courses for trainers on quality monitoring and assessment should be offered;
- Develop effective practice examples in training evaluation;
- Develop more practical guidance on evaluation for individual trainers and for institutions;
- Develop innovative models for quality assurance and evaluation that are less bureaucratic;
- A Licence to Practice approach could be a way forward to improve the overall quality of training practice.

A key issue in improving the quality of training is to identify and address the concerns of the end users of training, be it the individual students, staff members or trainees or the corporate clients and companies. Their needs and interests need to be assessed, clearly identified and targeted. In order to ensure an effective learning process the needs of all the different stakeholders in this process need to be identified and specified.

Improve cooperation between different stakeholder and research and practice

Better cooperation between research and practice and among VET professionals was identified as another priority area that needs to be better supported. However, while research has its place in assessing the situation, work and professional development of trainers, it should be more closely linked to training and teaching practice. Concretely, VET professionals and practitioners should be involved in all kinds of research projects and should also assume a leading role in the project design and implementation. Other recommendations concerned:

- Better dissemination of research to practitioners;
- Encourage trainers to share materials and the promotion of open content. This requires creating mechanisms for trainers to share resources, networks and on-line tools, for example;
- Developing case studies and good practice examples of stakeholder cooperation.

Networking can be an important tool to enhance cooperation. Also other studies identified that networking is gaining significance and supports trainers and teachers in their work. The growing significance of networks also has to do with the changing tasks and role of trainers and VET teachers. However, it was recognised that networking should be *targeted* to different interests and needs. For example networks could be supported around the following areas:

- Establish networks for professionals who train trainers;
- Set up networks for trainers who are interested in new technologies;
- Develop case studies of good practice of shareholder cooperation.

Other areas, but less urgent and less important

Other areas were also identified as requiring support, but they were considered to be less important and urgent. One of those areas relates to the social status of VET teachers and trainers. The social status is, among other factors, closely linked to the opportunities of VET teachers and trainers for professional development and career progression. It can be expected that if more attention and support is given to the training and professional development of VET teachers and trainers, their status will increase.

In order to better project the possible future role of VET teachers and trainers and better address their professional development needs, it was suggested to explore in more detail the progression routes and career pathways of VET teachers and trainers against their particular individual backgrounds.

Other measures linked to the training of VET professionals and their professional development that should be pursued included:

- Developing materials for the self evaluation and self assessment for trainers;

- Cost-benefit analysis and returns on investment of the training of VET teachers and trainers;
- Developing training programmes that focus on social inclusion and cater for a wide age range;
- Developing and share banks of ideas and materials for trainers of VET teachers and trainers;
- Developing materials on how teachers and trainers can use technology creatively in the classroom;
- Exploring web-based approaches to the training trainers;
- Developing practical guidance on evaluation for individual trainers and institutions;
- Developing tools for providing guidance and advice on how to use existing flexible training techniques.

It was pointed out that in improving the training of VET teachers and trainers, the role of the different stakeholders should be more carefully examined. Concrete measures into this direction could include:

- Examining the infrastructure options for training trainers to include the role of government, social partners, universities, trainers and communities of practice;
- Work on integrating different approaches, i.e. competences, qualifications and 'commitments' as the basis for developing a new, integrative framework that takes the best ideas from the various approaches and solutions suggested.

Objective:

- *To consider what directions and strategies might be appropriate in the area of VET teachers and trainers in the future, both at a national and European level.*

In order to consider what directions and strategies might be appropriate in the area of VET teachers and trainers in the future, both at a national and European level, an exercise was undertaken geared towards clarifying the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the process of realising improvements and innovations in the area of VET teachers and trainers. Those stakeholders were specified to be i) the research community; ii) policy makers; and iii) training practitioners. The outcomes of this work was as follows.

The research community should ensure that the research results are being well disseminated and that the results actually reach the practitioners. Researchers should consider the relevance of their research from the perspective of the practitioners. In addition, the research community should challenge the policy makers to actually use the research results and put them into practice. Collaboration between the research community and the practitioners should be realised at national as well as transnational level and be based on clear objectives, commitment and transparency. In order to produce valuable research results, the research community relies on adequate resources.

The research community has a better understanding of education and training issues, particularly in a contextualised and comparative perspective. Researchers have the broader perspective and the analytical skills to assess training and learning needs and to identify good practice models and new approaches and innovations in training. They can point to the pitfalls and show how to avoid them.

VET professionals should be involved in the research process as they can give clarity and guidance and help setting priorities. They are committed towards transparency in information sharing and granting mutual respect and integrity. VET teachers' and trainers' assets lie in their in-depth subject-specific knowledge, training skills and techniques, pedagogy and professionalism. They function as role models, convey values and give guidance. VET teachers and trainers must be clear about their needs based on some form of consensus. They are challenged to develop some clear objectives and strategies with realistic timeframes and continuity. They must also be realistic about what should and can be achieved and have to accommodate decisions even if they do not like them. Thus, they should develop a strategy to deal with the results of research and training assessments and should act upon it even if they do not like what is required of them.

Policy makers are called upon to provide resources and endorse research findings. They should provide opportunities for development; foster the recognition of VET teachers and trainers and their competences; support frameworks for cooperation; use the resources they have; and give clear guidance and objectives in terms of future directions for VET professionals. They should more strongly promote the exchange of information through professional institutes and learning communities. The European Commission in particular should issue clear guidelines to national governments about time frames and engender a consultation and negotiation processes following a strategy of empowerment. More resources (financial resources and human resources) should be allocated to the area of VET teachers and trainers and national strategies should be supported.