

Trans-national Initiatives For Enhancing The Training Of Trainers And TVET Teachers In Europe And What Can Be Learnt From Them

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Abstract

The contribution provided for the conference presents initiatives which have been launched within last year in order to improve training of trainers and TVET teachers all over Europe by establishing Europe-wide standards and networks relating national debates to European issues. For the purpose of better understanding, the background will be shortly described against which all European activities in the area of education and training nowadays should be considered; the Lisbon Agenda from 2000 and all processes related to or derived from it, as the Bologna process in the field of tertiary education, the Copenhagen process in the area of VET, and, in particular, the set-up of the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) which is now available as a Europe-wide usable reference grid to describe national and sectoral qualification systems in terms of learning outcomes, intended to enhance transparency of certificates all over Europe for various purposes, as mobility of students, employees and competition with regard to efficiency of learning, etc. It will then be highlighted which initiatives at European level have been undertaken in order to support specifically the improvement of trainers' and TVET teachers competences with the help of the EQF. After a short overview of some studies and papers initiated by the European Commission and CEDEFOP, the European Centre of Vocational Training Development, the presentation will focus on the European Training of Trainers Network (TTNet) and the initiative to establish a European Competence Framework for VET Professions. Taking in account that the overall aim of the framework should be to support the quality of vocational teaching and training in Europe, which includes finally the delivering of benchmarks for best practice, it will be shown that it is problematic to start with (national) occupational profiling (resp. curricula) and corresponding activities of trainers and VET teachers, and to assign them to EQF levels; Profiles often have to be considered as bundles of obligations which are not necessarily directly oriented to the general objective of delivering best training, but reflect more on the specific (institutional, market) conditions under which training is carried out. These circumstances (as dealing with administrative or financial matters) are nearly always connected to specific national settings resp. traditions, not necessarily to be considered as a model for improving the system of training the trainers elsewhere. Before setting up a competence framework in the field of training trainers and TVET teachers, we regard it therefore as crucial to determine clearly the actual domain of trainers' or TVET teachers who work independently from specific national environments, and then to relate national profiles to it. Taken as starting point the work process and training requirements derived from it (incl. the needs arising from the change of work processes) some general recommendations will be made how trans-national standards can be used successfully as an instrument to enhance training of trainers or TVET teachers and TVET in general.

Keywords: Training of Trainers, TVET Teachers, Europe, Europe-wide Standards, network.

Introduction: Subject and Objective of this Contribution

This contribution starts with regard on initiatives which have been launched within last year in order to provide for more *transparency* in the field of training trainers and TVET teachers all over Europe by establishing Europe-wide standards and networks relating national debates to European issues. The underlying assumption has been that the mere assignment to common standards also provides for *improvement*: Heterogeneous approaches should become comparable showing up differences in quality, thereby facilitating changes. But this is not so self-evident as it might appear at first glance. It works only if the common standard can be considered as a *tertium comparationis explicitly oriented to the objective to be reached by all the activities assigned to the standard*, not encompassing tacit implications which might in a large number of cases be considered as “normal”, but do not necessarily indicate conditions for success. The objective of this presentation is to investigate how far the above mentioned initiatives fulfil these criteria, and to derive from the findings some recommendations for the design and use of trans-national standards in the field of training trainers and VET teachers.

For the purpose of better understanding, the *background* will be shortly described against which all European activities in the area of education and training nowadays should be considered: the *Lisbon Agenda from 2000* and all processes related to or derived from it, as the *Bologna process* in the field of tertiary education, the *Copenhagen process* in the area of VET, and, in particular, the set-up of the *European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)* which is now available as a Europe-wide usable reference grid to describe national and sectoral qualification systems in terms of *learning outcomes*, intended to enhance transparency of certificates all over Europe for various purposes, as mobility of students, employees, competition with regard to efficiency of learning.

Background: The Lisbon Agenda and its Supporting Initiatives

In March 2000, the European Council launched the Lisbon strategy, intending to make Europe “the world’s most competitive knowledge-based economic area”. This supported or initiated some initiatives related to education and training as the Bologna process dealing with higher education and the Copenhagen process related to vocational training which after some years led to a very important initiative which, after a long time of discussion between various stakeholders at European and national has been officially finished in April 2008; The European Qualification Framework (EQF) which shall make national educational systems compatible since this “translation tool” only takes in account the *learning outcomes* and does not deal with - from country to country very differing - ways to achieve them. As learning outcomes are described in terms of *abilities*, the EQF shall not only become an instrument for promoting mobility in the area of education and training, but also a tool which helps to support mobility on the European labour market, and it shall, last but not least, deliver incentives for enhancing systems and offers training and education which – with the help of the EQF – shall be made comparable in terms of efficiency.

Since the EQF plays an important role also for the training/studies of trainers and VET teachers, a detailed description of its structure is delivered on the next pages.

Table 1: ANNEX II Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any System of qualifications.

	Knowledge	Skills	Competence
	In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual	In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)	In the context of EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy
Level 1 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 1 are	basic general knowledge	basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
Level 2 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 2 are	basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	work or study under supervision with some autonomy
Level 3 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 3 are	knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems
Level 4 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 4 are	factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities

<p>Level 5 (*) The learning outcomes relevant to Level 5 are</p>	<p>comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge</p>	<p>a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems</p>	<p>exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change review and develop performance of self and others</p>
<p>Level 6 (") The learning outcomes relevant to Level 6 are</p>	<p>advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles</p>	<p>advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study</p>	<p>manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</p>
<p>Level 7 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 7 are</p>	<p>highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research</p> <p>critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields</p>	<p>specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields</p>	<p>take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</p>
<p>Level 8 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 8 are</p>	<p>knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields</p>	<p>the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice</p>	<p>demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research</p>

Source: Recommendations European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning,, Annex 2

EQF related European Initiatives for the Improvement of Trainers and VET Teachers Competences

Initiatives for enhancing the training of trainers and VET teachers have been launched by the European Commission, DG Education, and by CEDEFOP, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training in Thessalonica that works on behalf of the European Commission and DG Education.

But these studies do not deal with assignment of profiles to the EQF. First efforts to set up a EQF related *European competence framework for VET professions* have been made within projects of TTNNet, a CEDEFOP-led network for innovation in the field of qualifying training and teaching VET personnel. For the purpose of the assignment to the EQF, *European professional profiles* have been suggested, based on profiles available in various member countries of the European Union. The profiles were:

- IVET Teacher
- IVET Principal
- IVET Trainer
- CVET Training Consultant
- CVET Trainer
- CVET Training Designer
- CVET e-Trainer

This procedure is remarkable: application of the EQF requires a description of educational systems in terms of *learning outcomes* which is available only for a small number of national educational systems in Europe (mainly in the Anglo-Saxon world). That is why national frameworks (defining the learning outcomes) are currently being set up in various countries; it is expected that they will deliver the necessary condition for smoothly applying the EQF as a grid to assess learning outcomes achieved everywhere in Europe.

As a parallel activity, set-up of EQF-related sectoral competence frameworks takes place; sectoral frameworks are being discussed in the framework of various EU-supported projects. Especially in sectors where enterprises already work at a European (often also international) level (as in the ICT sector or the automotive sector), it is possible to establish structures which refer to already existing descriptions of work which are trans-national due to the character of enterprises.

But this is not the case for the area of training the trainers resp. VET teachers. Profiles used for the assignment to a competence framework are not based on de-facto standards of a sector, but have been identified in another way. They were determined in the framework of various discussions of experts representing national TTNets, and then equipped with empirical information gained from a series of studies including interviews which used the pre-selected profiles as starting points, delivering a lot of results which seem to legitimate the selection since there are in many cases similar structures in various countries, but also showing that the underlying structure of sub-domains in the field is not so self-evident as it might appear at first glance:

Another trend affecting the VET professions is that there seems to be a general, strong move towards seeing VET as an important building stone in the lifelong learning process: several countries are restructuring the

institutional system, for example the majority of the newer member states primarily in Eastern Europe, making transfers from one part to other parts easier and building more education in modules that can be taken individually. In addition, there is a growing awareness of the need to overcome the traditional separation between IVET and CVET. It is of great importance to coordinate and merge the systems into one system of lifelong learning. Consequently, the distinction between teachers and trainers will become even more blurred than is seen today, and a need for a more transparent and homogeneous training system for teachers and trainers will arise.

As a matter of fact, the difference between *initial* and *continuous training* has been made since decades in many countries not only in Europe, therefore often being considered as a quasi-natural distinction which applies everywhere and forever, and the same is true for the difference between trainers and VET teachers. There is a strong tradition of separating teaching activities taking place in the framework of vocational schools or comparable institutions, and training carried out within enterprises which will, of course, not be substantially questioned as long as this division does not only reflect practical needs (which certainly played an important role when VET was originally organised this way), but also shows the requirements which arise from political responsibilities (which some players do not want to give up) or economic interest in keeping traditional structures.

The above mentioned selection of profiles does is essentially based on these structures: The difference initial training or continuous training delivers the features for dividing VET professions into sub-groups, and of course, trainers and teachers are not described in the framework of a common profile. This has been considered as sensible by most of TTNNet experts who took part in the initial discussions. It could therefore be claimed that the suggested selection of profiles is appropriate since it mirrors the status quo of European VET professions in terms of structures which have proved their relevance over a long period of time, thus practically showing their value for the distinction of professions.

But doubts on this perspective of consideration are not only cast by the above quoted remarks which appear even in the same study where those profiles are used as framework of investigation. It is just the description of these profiles itself, provided for the assignment to the planned competence framework, which demonstrates that these structures cannot be used for proper descriptions of ongoing and promising changes in the field.

For the purpose of clarity, typical tasks to be carried out within a profile are described under the categories administration, training, development, quality assurance, and networking with each category subdivided into knowledge, skills, and competences (in the sense of the EQF). It is thereby assumed that administration, training, development, quality assurance, and networking are relevant for every profile listed above. After a look on the EQF assignments made with regard to some profiles, and further after having checked the results of studies related to the situation of people understood as working as principals, trainers, training consultants and etc. this seems not to be sure. This can be illustrated by two examples presented below:

- IVET Principal, Training
- IVET Trainer; Administration

Table 2: IVET Principal, Training

II. Training		Competences: autonomy and responsibility
Activities (based on interviews and background info) A principal:	Knowledge A principal should know:	Skills A principal should be able to:
Pedagogical leadership		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is responsible for implementing and developing curriculum - is responsible for developing new study programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - learning theories - future learning needs - learning processes - labour market needs - future trends and priorities (national & global) - organisational theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adopt learning theories in planning future - analyse theories to recognize weaknesses and strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - builds teams and institutional culture/atmosphere - promotes the ideology of learning organisation - is responsible for teacher/staff competences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organisational theories - future trends and priorities (national & EU) - management theories 	<p>Principals are very or relatively autonomous regarding pedagogical leadership and developing the institutional expertise. They could also be said to be totally autonomous in developing and maintaining the institutional culture. In curriculum development the autonomy and responsibility varies most, depending on how much freedom of movement there is within the national (core) curricula. In any context they will need to respond to social, scientific and ethical issues that are encountered in work or study. They also need to interact and manage changes within a complex environment (EQF level 7).</p>

II. Training			
Activities (based on interviews and background info) A principal:	Knowledge A principal should know:	Skills A principal should be able to:	Competences: autonomy and responsibility
Pedagogical leadership			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - carries out strategic planning and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - future trends and priorities (national & global) -management theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be an assertive leader - see the consequences of actions for the future 	
Source: Annex G, p.4			
Table 3: IVET Trainer, Administration			
ADMINISTRATION (Based on interviews and background information)			
Activities	Knowledge	Skills	Competences: autonomy and responsibility
IVET trainers should be able to:	IVET trainers should have knowledge of:	IVET trainers should be able to:	
General administration and bureaucracy			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - elaborate work schedules and take part in the drafting of contracts and agreements - co-ordinate and co-operate with VET schools in terms of recruitment and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agreements, legislation and regulations - administrative duties and routines - principles and tools of project management - agreements, legislation and regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be systematic and organised - identify opportunities in the work process/context for learning - interact and communicate - team-work and negotiate - network - write and report 	<p>EQF level 4</p> <p>IVET trainers should be able to: effectively and autonomously carry out administrative and bureaucratic tasks while exercising self-management. The IVET trainer is responsible for the monitoring, evaluation and possible improvement of the training.</p>

Organisation

- participate in tests/exams
- execute the continuous evaluation of the performance of the apprentice
- occupational field
- quality assurance processes
- evaluation techniques

EQF level 5

IVET trainers should be able to: effectively and autonomously manage and supervise the assessment of the training of the apprentices with the objective of continuing to develop the performance

- identify opportunities in the work process
- interact and communicate
- prepare and develop evaluation tools - effectively participate in quality assurance of the training

Source: Annex G, p. 8f

The term “pedagogical leadership” is used as a header of a principal’s activities in the field of training. This cannot hide, however, that there is only a very global reference to training, mainly to be found under “knowledge”. There is little substantial relationship between training and the activities of a principal with the exception that, of course, a principal has to consider “labour market needs” and “future trends and priorities” within his activities. But this is not much more than a reminder that every entrepreneurial activity has to take in account the area where it takes place.

This view is supported by the results of interviews and background information used for the description of activities (refer to table above). It was found that “alarmingly low proportion of working [is] devoted to the pedagogical leadership” and “pedagogical leadership understood narrowly, concerning mainly curriculum development and study programmes”. Therefore it can be assumed that also a manager from outside, supported by an experienced training designer could do this job in order to be successful in an economical sense.

At this point, it is not intended to open a discussion about advantages or legitimacy of recruiting “people from outside” for some managerial positions; the above mentioned case shall only illustrate that there is a very weak connection between *training* which is apparently the core sub-domain of the area we are talking about, and the activities a principal is dealing with.

The other way round, the relationship of an IVET trainer to the sub-domain *administration* is also problematic; It is noticeable that *skills* described in the table above have mostly a very generic character (be systematic and organised, interact and communicate, teamwork and negotiate, network) which means that the tasks for which these skills are required can be carried out, in principle, by everybody who has according “knowledge” and “competence” at his disposal. To gain this seems not to be too challenging; this also suggested by the fact that for *Finances* and *HRM* only competence at EQF level 3 is required which is low in comparison with the levels suggested for the sub-area *training* (4 and 5) (Annex G, p.9).

“General administration and bureaucracy” and “organisation” seem to be more demanding; They require EQF levels 4 and 5, but this has to do with the *content* of these activities which normally are not put under these headers; control, monitoring, evaluation with the purpose of a “possible improvement of the training” as well as supervising and managing “the assessment of the training of the apprentices with the objective of continuing to develop the performance” should not be considered as bureaucratic activities, but as work which has a close relation to the core tasks of a trainer.

Taking this in account, one can reduce the administrative tasks provided for a trainer nearly to 100% to finance and HRM, and it can even be questioned if contacts to HRM have necessarily to be considered as bureaucratic but this depends upon the subject of “co-ordinating with the HR department regarding education and CPD”.

Consequently, there is not much real relationship of a trainer’s profile to administration. It remains only finance as a pure administrative sub-area of trainers’ work, and this has nothing to do with the core activities of a trainer, but it seems reasonable within an institutional context which is built on apprenticeship uniting learning and (paid) work.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It turns out that the categories administration, training, development, quality assurance, and networking are far away from being useable as classification tools relevant for all profiles of VET professions. They reflect an institutional context which is not necessarily derivable from the current objectives of training and teaching in the area of VET, and it should have become clear that even in the framework of a widely accepted traditional institutional model profiles can be separated to a large extent from each other, thus showing that the underlying institutional structure of VET is not self-evident.

Although this structure is based on empirical observations which mirror reality, it should not be used for classifying sub-domains of profiles. As no basic difference is made between elements which are directly related to the actual purpose of VET professions on the one hand and organisational elements on the other hand (which always show a tendency to develop a life on its own, orientated to economical or political interests), a wrong best-practice model could arise which measures profiles against the above mentioned categories in terms of richness; The profile with the most features related to all “relevant” categories could appear as the most advanced one. This could mean that the currently dominating institutional model of VET would be “optimised”, thereby consolidating a structure which possibly encompasses a lot of traditional elements which hinder an enhancement of teaching and training in the VET sector.

It is therefore suggested to go back to the roots and to envision the *objective* of vocational training so people shall be enabled to do their work properly, and for this purpose they shall taught and trained how to do this. This should serve as a rule for designing the work process of VET trainers or teachers, and this delivers also the starting point for further reflections. The work process of people to be trained or instructed has to be analysed, and from this analysis people’s abilities should be derived which can be described in terms of the EQF descriptors.

To deliver a detailed suggestion of further procedure goes beyond the scope of this paper. At this point, only some important issues shall be mentioned:

- The work process of people to be trained should not only deliver the starting point for designing a competence framework. It should be the point of reference for all classification in sub-groups. This means that it has to be described which relation exists between the work process and the elements of classification.
- For this purpose, a basic difference should be made between elements directly related to the work process and organisational elements.
- In order to make the framework useable as an instrument of showing best practice, key questions should be formulated as below:
 - For *elements directly related to the work process*: How is the development of abilities required in the work process supported by activities of VET personnel?
 - For *organisational elements*: How do structures of VET institutions support or hinder the development of abilities required in the work process?
- Answers to these questions can be easier found if original reasons for the use of training methods, set-up of structures, etc are described and confronted with the current requirements of work processes.

Acknowledgement

I want to thank warmly Herold Gross, Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB) , Co-ordinator of TNet Germany, for being at my disposal when I wanted him to discuss with me the approach described in this paper . The debate helped me clearer to formulate my ideas; I appreciate his help in particular as I know that he is overloaded with work.

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