

MODULE 9

QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR TRAINERS AND TEACHERS

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Teachers (which includes Trainers) are seen in their double role as professionals and stakeholders of vocational training reform. Initial teacher education is perceived as one among other levers to increase the professional performance of vocational teachers. However, the main emphasis is placed on the dynamic interplay between formal training and the huge variations as regards the real conditions of teaching practice in vocational schools. The schools where teachers work are a crucial factor shaping the quality of their work. Emphasis is put on the crucial role of the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers. CPD is much more than formal training, and experience from EU countries and pilot schools in transition countries indicates that it is both effective and affordable.

1. Trainers as Stakeholders

In many countries, the roles of teachers and students are in a process of change as a result of new approaches to active learning. Responsibility is shifting from the teacher to the learner and the teacher becomes more an organiser and facilitator of the learning processes than the transmitter of expert knowledge. Capacities for change and adaptation as well as learning-to-learn have become important competences *per se* that learners should develop. Self-directed learning has become a necessity for an increasing proportion of the population in rapidly changing societies. The experience of macro-reform, including on reforms of qualification systems, if not enough attention to the ‘micro’ level of classrooms, teachers and students, tend to fail, even in already ‘developed’ systems where the major needs concern such issues as the quality and relevance of outputs, soft skills and life skills, etc. In many developing countries, ‘macro’ reforms address such fundamental issues as legislative tools, funding systems, and improved governance structures.

Vocational schools are the key focus for any reform and the continuing professional development of teachers as well as school principals, configured in school-based innovative development projects, is probably the best way to ensure sustainable, qualitative change in education systems. Unless teachers become professionals *and* stakeholders of reform, it will be difficult to improve results in terms of education system performance. Modern vocational training systems, teachers are at the same time professional educators and key change agents. Continuing innovation and development has therefore become a core task of the modern professional vocational teacher. The crucial challenge is that both of these

teacher roles are now changing.

Professional roles are changing:

1. Teachers will become lifelong and life-wide learning facilitators instead of transmitters of isolated blocks of expert knowledge and skills;
2. Several paradigm changes are taking place: new public management, education management, vocational training policies and school management are changing.
3. Learner needs and labour market requirements are changing and becoming more differentiated.

Stakeholder roles are changing too:

1. They have long been neglected but are now increasingly appreciated;
2. Vocational training reform is seen as an ongoing learning process;
3. Reform increasingly requires articulation between national and system authorities, and between local and school authorities;
4. There is an increasing need for teachers to go beyond the classroom – into the school, the community, the vocational training system at large and even across borders;
5. Teachers will have to become more actively engaged in reform processes

Why are teachers and trainers so important for systemic education and training reforms?

Vocational training reform in most countries has led to the redefinition, diversification and expansion of teacher functions. In modern vocational training systems effective teaching depends not only on teaching skills but on the ability to work in a team; collegiality is a significant challenge for teachers. Another issue is the need for teachers to re-conceptualise their own position within vocational training. It is not enough for teachers to acquire new skills and perform new functions. Effective motivation of teachers requires that they should fully understand the reasons for change (e.g. the NSQF) – making them their own. Many factors influence the changing demands for professional knowledge, competence, practices and performance of teaching staff involved in vocational training. Andreas Schleicher (2006) of the

OECD writes in the Lisbon Council Policy Brief that the most successful countries have something fundamental in common:

“...they have all shifted policy away from control over the resources and content of education toward a focus on obtaining better outcomes. They have moved from “hit and miss” teaching practices to establishing universal high standards. They have shifted from uniformity in the system to embracing diversity and individualising learning. They have changed from a focus on provision to a focus on choice, and they have moved from a bureaucratic approach towards devolving responsibilities and enabling outcomes, from talking about equity to delivering equity. Most important, they have put the emphasis on creating a ‘knowledge-rich’ education system, in which teachers and school principals act as partners and have the authority to act, the necessary information to do so, and access to effective support systems to assist them in implementing change.”

Teachers are rarely seen as subjects or as drivers of change. An almost universal experience in EU and OECD countries in recent years has been that it has become increasingly difficult for policy alone to change practice. Paradoxically, precisely during and since the 1990s we have seen a resurgence in large scale reform in most western countries, few of which had much impact on student achievement levels. At present, many OECD countries focus on policy and systems development without paying enough attention to the management of implementation processes (McLaughlin, 1990). A lesson learned here is that, contrary to the one-to-one relationship assumed to exist between policy and practice, the nature, amount and pace of change at the local level is a product of local factors largely beyond the control of higher-level policymakers (Hopkins, 2006).

Governments policy implementation has most commonly used the school as the focus of intervention, yet international research evidence shows that we have to go even one level further down – to the classroom – to improvement achievement. Increasingly strong evidence suggests that any strategy to promote student learning needs must seek to engage students and parents as active participants, and expand the teaching and learning repertoires of teachers as well as students. This implies a transition from an era of top-down ‘prescription’ to an era of teacher ‘professionalism’. A new balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches must be found.

Educational factors must be rebalanced in pursuit of quality. But how do we get there? As Michael Fullan

(2003) has said, it takes capacity to build capacity, and if there is insufficient capacity to begin with it is useless to announce that a move to ‘professionalism’ provides the basis for a new approach. We can’t just move from one phase to the next without deliberately building professional capacity throughout the system. Here the continuing professional development of teachers must be the central response. Who, then, knows best what teachers should do, why, how, where and when? Most teachers would say that they do. They are the professionals who have a profound knowledge of their field, based on both theoretical studies and a sound practice, know the students, their needs and what is best for them; work in accordance with professional standards and in the best interests of the client (the students).

According to this view they are the best placed to decide where, when and with whom preparation should take place, and how and with what means teaching should be organised. But this point of view does not fit very well into policymakers’ efforts to make both schools and teachers instruments to achieve strategic goals. Another barrier to overcome is a tendency to **reform fatigue** among teachers almost everywhere. Reforms are in reality, and should also be perceived as, major social learning processes, and today, more than ever before, the huge challenge is how to organise such policy learning activities in the coming years.

An analysis of professionalisation strategies for teachers in EU countries points to the same need in all EU countries. Most changes are initiated from outside the vocational training system, either through political decisions or as a result of pressure from industry. The Cedefop study on vocational teachers found that there is a tension between change pressures and the response of teachers:

“Often they challenge the teacher’s view of the vocational training system, of their own role and of the way they teach. And in some cases the changes contrast with the teachers’ ‘implicit’, ‘tacit’ knowledge of how best to behave in specific teaching situations. This situation is made worse when government – or management – fails to provide teachers with the time, or the financial resources to retrain. Where these resources are not available, teachers (and their managers) will give priority to the needs of their students rather than to their own training. In short, and as a result of all these factors, whole-hearted teacher acceptance cannot be taken for granted and teacher resistance to change is one of the most significant threats to the success of vocational training reform.”

In the Cedefop study, a key recommendation for policy-makers in EU countries is therefore that: There is a growing recognition that schools - and classrooms - need to take the lead in the next stage of education reform. The current focus on 'personalisation' is about putting citizens at the heart of public services and enabling them to have a say in the design and improvement of the organisations that serve them. In education this can be understood as personalised learning (OECD, 2006), the trend towards tailoring education to individual needs, interests and aptitude so as to fulfil every young person's potential. Personalised learning is about designing teaching, curriculum and the school organisation to address the needs of the students both individually and collectively. It is a system that is more accessible, open to the individual and involves the learners in their own learning.

This requires professionalised teaching. A much sharper focus should therefore be placed on the crucial role of the continuing professional development of teachers and trainers also in ETF partner countries. Such development implies more than just making teaching more comparable to other modern professions. To personalise learning, teachers must use data and evidence when they choose teaching strategies that meet the specific needs of their students. They must be versed in the application of different methodologies that cater for individual learning styles.

As Hopkins (2006) underlines: *"This in turn implies radically different forms of professional development with a strong focus on coaching and establishing schools as professional learning communities."*

Teacher professionalism will furthermore have to be supported by some form of educational accountability as a driver for raising standards. In the move from top-down 'prescription' towards teacher 'professionalism', an accountability system should strive to build capacity and confidence for professional accountability. More emphasis should be placed on internal assessment; in particular formative assessment will need to develop increasingly refined learning assessments, student progress data, contextual value-added and school profiles. Perhaps the most substantial quality control instrument that needs to be developed is a culture of evaluation in vocational schools. If we are to move towards a system based on informed professional judgment, the capacity for all of this has to be built simultaneously at the school and system level as both schools and authorities learn new ways of working, establish new norms of engagement and build more flexible and problem oriented work cultures. The continuing professional development of

teachers and trainers is probably the key to innovation and change also in countries of transition; it is much more than formal training, there are other pathways to relevant learning, and experience from EU countries and pilot schools in transition countries indicates that it is both effective and affordable. To this can be added that for transition countries there is an urgent need to reach out to the majority of vocational schools that were never part of the comparatively narrow reform circle.

Initial teacher education in universities or teacher faculties is an important lever but only one among others to increase the professional performance of vocational teachers. Of special interest here is the lack of a dynamic interplay between formal training and the different conditions of teaching practice in vocational schools. The institutions, in which teachers work, have a huge potential for helping to shape the quality of vocational teachers' work. This implies that any effort to professionalise vocational teaching needs to take into account initial teacher training providers as well as vocational schools.

New professionalisation strategies based on 'horizontal' learning principles form a promising response to future challenges. Such horizontal learning principles include (i) schools as learning organisations, (ii) engaging teachers as stakeholders in vocational training reform, (iii) central innovation funds for local school development, and (iv) establishing 'communities of practitioners' among vocational teachers as vehicles to nurture a culture where teachers may (again) become professional innovation agents.

Almost everywhere, there is a lack of awareness of the fact that the primary socio-economic function of vocational teachers and trainers is not to produce "teaching" but to produce the "qualifications" needed in a modern economy. The qualification needs of companies require competent workers who are capable of combining theory and practice. This calls for a new configuration of teaching, learning and practical work exercises. This configuration might gradually help to strengthen the capacity of individual students to move, as the context requires, between theoretical-analytical competence and a more experience-based, intuitive competence. However, developing this type of configuration is a serious challenge to the existing structures of vocational teacher and trainer training everywhere, including in most EU countries. A good way to encourage such an integrated approach is to support the efforts of vocational schools to become continuing vocational training providers. Continuing training offered to experienced workers from local companies will challenge teachers to combine their own

Box 15: A modern approach: Training of trainers in Denmark

To become a trainer in Denmark, candidates must have a training in Vocational Education and training or a professional education relevant to the concerned field of learning, where appropriate supplemented with higher education. He/she must have 5 years professional experience in the vocational subject. In terms of qualification, a diploma should be obtained within 4 years of employment and the preparation to this diploma must begin within the first year of employment. The duration of the training is 60 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), which is equal to 1 year full time.

The diploma content includes:

- Compulsory modules
 - Teaching and learning – 10 ECTS
 - Planning of teaching and didactics – 10 ECTS
 - Pedagogical science – 5 ECTS
 - Final project – 15 ECTS
- And two elective modules – 20 ECTS
 - Participants in VET
 - VET pedagogical system development
 - Internationalisation of VET
 - Digital technologies in VET

theory with the experience and (often tacit) knowledge of their adult course participants. This procedure should, without hesitation, be required of the teacher and trainer training institutions in their provision of continuing training to teachers in vocational schools.

2. Teachers as Professionals

Standards for trainers and teachers in the VET sectors are the “duty side” of the profession Teachers, which only makes sense in the context developed in the first section. Indeed, in this context, the key purpose of the teacher is to create effective and stimulating opportunities for learning through high quality teaching that enables the development and progression of all learners. In a number of areas, the teacher is committed to behave in a certain way:

Professional Values and Practice

The teacher is committed to:

- Learners, their progress and development, their learning goals and aspirations and the experience they bring to their learning.

- Learning, its potential to benefit people emotionally, intellectually, socially and economically, and its contribution to community sustainability.
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion in relation to learners, the workforce, and the community
- Reflection and evaluation of their own practice and their continuing professional development as teachers
- Collaboration with other individuals, groups and/or organisations with a legitimate interest in the progress and development of learners

These standards apply across all areas.

Teachers are committed to:

- The application of agreed codes of practice and the maintenance of a safe environment
- Improving the quality of their practice

Learning and teaching

Teachers are committed to:

- Maintaining an inclusive, equitable and motivating learning environment.
- Applying and developing own professional skills to enable learners to achieve their goals.
- Communicating effectively and appropriately with learners to enhance learning
- Collaboration with colleagues to support the needs of learners.
- Using a range of learning resources to support learners

Specialist Learning and Teaching

Teachers are committed to:

- Understanding and keeping up to date with current knowledge in respect of own specialist area.
- Enthusiasing and motivating learners in own specialist area.
- Fulfilling the statutory responsibilities associated with own specialist area of teaching.
- Developing good practice in teaching own specialist area

Planning for Learning

Teachers are committed to:

- Planning to promote equality, support diversity and to meet the aims and learning needs of learners.

- Learner participation in the planning of learning
- Evaluation of own effectiveness in planning learning

Assessment for Learning

Teachers are committed to:

- Designing and using assessment as a tool for learning and progression
- Assessing the work of learners in a fair and equitable manner
- Learner involvement and shared responsibility in the assessment process
- Using feedback as a tool for learning and progression
- Working within the systems and quality requirements of the organisation in relation to assessment and monitoring of learner progress.

Access and progression

Teachers are committed to:

- Encouraging learners to seek initial and further learning opportunities and to use services within the organisation
- Providing support for learners within the boundaries of the teacher role
- Maintaining own professional knowledge in order to provide information on opportunities for progression in own specialist area
- A multi-agency approach to supporting development and progression opportunities for learners

3. Community of Practice

The notion of community of practice has become influential within debates in education in the last 20 years: Lave and Wenger among the foremost exponents of the concept offer the following definition of the concept:

“A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity and world over time and in relations with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge.” (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Although not specific to the training and teaching function, Community of Practices (CoP) play an important role in this area. CoP are typically developed by a group of people sharing a craft and/or a profession who shares information and experiences to learn from each other

and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally. Community of Practice also follow the Social learning theory based on the work of psychologist Albert Bandera. He states that people learn:

- Through direct experience
- Indirectly, by observing and modelling the behaviour of others with whom the person identifies (for example, how young people see their peers behaving).
- Through training that leads to confidence in being able to carry out behaviours. This specific condition is called self-efficacy, which includes the ability to overcome any barriers to performing the behaviour.

Communities of practice are primarily a means of categorizing a particular set or web of relations between people as having a particular identity, value orientation and purpose. Within a strong community of practice, there is a strong sense of shared values and beliefs; a consciousness of and a commitment to an overall holistic purpose that shapes the activities of the community; and an agreement on a set of practices that constitutes “competent practice”. To some level, learning is always an induction into a community whose boundary are marked by a commitment to a set of beliefs about what counts as knowledge and skills and what are “good” values and attitudes to underpin and infuse learning as a process of enlightenment, enhancement and attainment.

CoP take different forms such as formal or informal, off-line or on line, with participants presence in a lunch room or on a factory floor or as a virtual community or network/wikis/dropbox/linkedin, etc. CoP are not specific to VET trainers; all subject matters in general education and higher education have their networks. What seems specific to VET trainers is the purpose to bridge the knowing that and the knowing how. Competence in VET is more located in the knowing-how (skills) than in the knowing-that (knowledge), not because there is no knowledge involved, but because knowledge is understood as embedded in gestures, behaviours and skills. The transmission of skills meets specific challenges and those are central in CoP for trainers. Trainers are also keen to hear that they are not the only ones to experience challenges they experience daily in training situations.

Successful CoP are those where individuals are practitioners willing to share with and to learn from others. It is difficult to maintain a living CoP if people never meet. But as CoP are born from voluntary initiatives, and are not compulsory (although professional standards do

mention collaboration with colleagues in the benefit of learners), they are mainly fuelled by motivation.

The participation in CoP can contribute to Continuous Professional Development /CPD). CPD is the means by which people maintain their knowledge and skills related to their professional life. It is closely related to Life long learning . CPD can be (i) Pedagogical, (ii) Domain specific, (iii) Formal (iv) Informal.

There are many obstacles to CPD, which can be individual (lack of motivation or of incentives) or institutional, when conditions of practice are sub-optimal. On the job training of trainers is costly and trainers rarely receive the amount of training they would like/need. Some (but not all) initiatives about professional improvement are left to the trainers themselves but their personal situation and their professional status (civil servant or self-employed) surely affect their motivation to improve continuously.



The most advanced form of CPD is encapsulated in the concept of “reflective practitioner”, who typically ask himsel/herself questions such as: Where am I and how do I know? Where do I want to go? Again, the concept is not specific to VET training or to teaching in general. It is based on a metacognitive process, consisting in the self’s capacity to distance from experience in order

to analyse it objectively. So, with respect to a specific training experience which would have been less successful than anticipated, the reflective practitioner would ask himsel/herself:

- Description – what happened?
- Feelings – what were my thinking and feelings?
- Evaluation – what was good and bad?
- Analysis – what sense can I make of the situation?
- Conclusion – what else could I have done?
- Action plan – what will I do next?

These questions could be answered by an observer, but there is no observer in a typical training session. The capacity to analyse a situation as an observer is what the reflective practitioner is developing.

Conclusion

Teachers will have to be recognised in their double role as professionals and stakeholders, if the quality of education is to be gradually increased. Teaching staff and school managers are the professionals of the vocational training system. As stakeholders they should develop the capacity to help formulate vocational training policies and establish platforms for discussion of reform initiatives, embedded in schools and fitting into their contexts. This would encourage ownership and support the sustainability of reforms. Teachers who are actively engaged in local innovation and experimentation are an important source of expertise for national policymakers.

FURTHER READINGS

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