



## **Towards an Open Framework for Continuing Professional Development for Trainers in Europe: a TT+ project document on the principles for an open framework**

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## 1. About this paper

The European Commission, Lifelong Learning Programme funded, TT-Plus project is examining the changing role and practice of training with the aim of developing a Framework for Continuing Professional Development for trainers in Europe. This paper provides some first thoughts of what such a framework might look like. The paper is based on work undertaken by the EC funded Eurotrainer project and contributions to a recent conference at the University of Leiden, Netherlands, organised by the project and on the outcomes of the initial research undertaken by the TTplus project.

This is not a finished paper, neither does it necessarily represent the views of the entire TTplus project partnership but neither do we wish to restrict access to our thinking.

### 1. 1. *Background to the TTplus project*

The TTplus project is based on a number of initial hypotheses.

The primary hypothesis is the diffusion of the training process, with increased numbers of people taking some role in training as part of their occupational profile. At the same time, professional trainers have gained new roles and responsibilities.

Secondly, we suggest that in some countries traditional structures and systems for the training of trainers have failed to keep up with these changes. In particular most systems for the training of trainers are oriented for full time professional trainers and do not address the training of skilled workers who may have some responsibility for training as part of their occupational profile or work role. Present provision fails to take account of people who may have a responsibility as experts for coaching novices or for peer coaching for example. Previous studies have shown that training of trainer provision is often inconsistent and fragmentary (Brown, 1997).

There exists no European framework for the training of trainers. Whether such a Framework is desirable or necessary or indeed would improve professional development is questionable. Participants in the Leiden conference were strongly opposed to any top down framework. However, there was general support for closer collaboration between European Member States, especially in providing examples of effective practice. Furthermore, the European Qualification Framework calls for the benchmarking of different national qualification frameworks against the EQF and for increased transparency in the outcomes of different qualifications (European Commission, 2008). The adoption of the EQF may offer opportunities for the development and implementation of a common European intercultural Framework for Continuing Professional Development for trainers and those with responsibility for training as part of their job

The growing recognition of the importance of lifelong learning places an increasing focus on the importance of training and the development and recognition of work based learning and e-learning offers new opportunities for the training of trainers.

Whilst the overall aim of the TTplus project is to develop a Framework for Continuing Professional Development (and to examine articulation with the EQF), we have been careful not to pre-empt the scope or form of such a Framework. The initial work of the project was to undertake a series of case studies to validate the hypotheses and to explore further the changing roles and practice of trainers. We also were concerned to examine the extent and effectiveness of existing

training the trainer provision.

The following section provides a summary of the outcomes of our initial findings.

## 2. Project hypotheses and Research

In alignment with one of the overall hypothesis within the TTPlus project of “the spread of the training function” (Attwell & Brown, 2001) each country selected three companies or organizations in which training takes place (van Elk, Leijen and Lam, 2007). Different methods for selection were used. Some countries chose for companies with the same training concept (Germany) and others used existing networks of companies (the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania).

In each company or organization three or more interviews were held with stakeholders (managers or persons responsible for training), trainers and when possible, with trainees. For all interviews, the same semi-structured interview pro-forma was used. It was divided into four main parts:

- Personal and organizational background information
- Information on training practice
- Reflections on training practice
- Reflections on boundary conditions

The questions in each part were adapted to the different functions of the interviewees. A case study report was written from the interviews with each organization. This resulted in 19 case studies in total: three in Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Romania and the United Kingdom and four in Portugal.

An important issue for the project has been the question of contextuality or internationalisation of training cultures (Kämäräinen, 2007). The project has avoided such methodological pre-conceptions that would put over-emphasis on the national backgrounds or on alleged ‘meta-trends’. Instead, the partners have been encouraged to produce authentic ‘contextual images’ in which country-specific factors and (potentially) trans-cultural factors can be explored without overemphasising their relative weight.

One of the focuses for the research is innovation and trends in training and in the professional development of trainers (this will be looked at in more depth in the following section). The survey identified seven major trends:

- A focus on workplace training
- Broader learning paths
- An increased focus on training practice
- Mentoring
- E-learning
- Self-directed learning
- Shorter, faster training

It seems that some of the major trends are contrary to each other. For example, the trend towards broader learning paths seems in contradiction to the trend to shorter and faster learning. However, these two different trends can appear at the same time and in the same company. A company in which the general trend is towards a broadening of learning paths can nevertheless implement short and fast training programs in addition to other methods.

## 2. 1. *Instances of Change*

One of the reasons we wished to focus on trends and innovation was to examine the relation between innovations and changes in practice in companies and changes in the practice of training and the professional development of trainers.

Pekka Kämäräinen has undertaken an in depth analyses of such ‘instances of change’ based on the case studies undertaken in Germany. Kämäräinen says it was possible to trace a common pattern for the ‘instances of change’ in different companies. In each case it was possible to identify an earlier layer of innovative practice and a newer layer of innovative initiatives.

He identifies underlying patterns to integrate trainees into the working and learning culture in the companies studied (*‘instance of good practice’*) and newer initiatives or extension activities that build on the underlying patterns (*‘instances of innovation’*). By taking both layers into account, he says it is possible to understand the dynamics of pattern maintenance and change in the development of the respective training cultures.

Kämäräinen has looked at three different companies identifying instances of change and instances of innovation in each. He has examined the developments from the point of view of the managers, the trainers and the trainees and written an extended narrative for each, including their ‘satisfaction’ with the change and their particular interest in such change. Space precludes a detailed account of his work. Here we look at one such example based in an international steel company.

Often the role of industrial training workshops in the ‘workplace-based training’ of larger German companies has become problematic, he says. Although the workshops have been introduced as support environments in the transition to real work environments they have, to some extent, become buffer zones and extension areas of school-based learning. Therefore, pedagogic initiatives with ‘working and learning tasks’ and ‘connective projects’ have tried to link the workshop-placed learning to production sites.

Regarding the grounded innovation, the workshop-placed learning phase is shaped with the help of working and learning tasks. In the first instance, these require presence in the workplace and cooperation with the production units. Later on these are shaped into broader working and learning projects that require teamwork by the trainees and the development of products and services to be used by production units (e.g. the projects that build electric control panels to be used in production units).

In an extension of the original change, decentralised learning (at different work sites and including self-organised learning by trainees) requires effective support structures. However, the questions that arise at the work place may require input from the training managers (project leaders) or from VET school teachers or from full-time trainers. In particular, such needs arise if the trainees’ assignments are contributions to common project results.

This has resulted in the introduction of web-based support to be incorporated into the development of working and learning tasks and into the overarching projects. The trainers, teachers and trainees are required to develop their user-profiles and web 2.0 technologies are used to support interaction and the sharing of information.

Kämäräinen’s study shows how different contextual factors are leading to changing roles for trainers and new needs for professional development.

### 3. An Open Framework for the Continuing Professional Development of Trainers in Europe

#### 3.1 Introduction

One of the major findings from our case studies was a confirmation that the tasks and activities related to training have indeed spread to increasing numbers of workers, especially to 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 training trainers and for professional development that are targeted at full time trainers. If the aim of an architecture or framework for continuing professional development for trainers in Europe is to raise the profile and quality of training the findings of the project would suggest it should address all those concerned with training and learning.

A second issue is the role of different organisations involved in training and the professional development of trainers. This includes trainers - both full and part time - but also employers and enterprises, sector organisations, trade unions, regulatory bodies, regional economic bodies, examination and certification organisations and local, regional national and European governmental organisations. One of the findings from our case study was the importance of these organisations, not only in providing frameworks, courses and programmes for professional development but in shaping the learning landscape both in terms the importance placed on professional development and opportunities of professional development but also critically in determining the context for training practice. This suggests to us that whilst traditional approaches to professional development for trainers have tended to focus exclusively on the individual trainer, if we wish to develop a holistic approach to improving the quality of training an architecture for Framework for Professional Development should also address these organisations. In these terms we have sought to develop a framework which is inclusive and to support trainers and organisations in developing, promoting and facilitating opportunities for professional development.

A further issue is that of regulation. There was a strong feeling of antithesis towards any compulsory framework expressed at the Leiden conference (although it should be noted that the issue under consideration at the conference was confined to an individual qualification framework). Our studies of existing national qualifications and initiatives for the training of trainers reveals great diversity and fragmentation, not only at national level, but between different sectors or branches and even between individual enterprises. It is felt that any architecture or framework should be flexible to allow a voluntary commitment to both implementing its principles and monitoring progress towards that implementation. This is not to rule out a degree of regulation at enterprise, local, regional, national or sectoral levels. However, in determining such choices a principle of subsidiary should probably be followed.

#### 3.2 Underpinning principles

- I) *Recognition of the importance of support to learning and the role of learning for individual competence and organisational development*

The framework for the continuing professional development of trainers is based on the recognition of the importance of training for the development of individual competencies and lifelong learning for individual employees and organisational development within enterprises and other organisations.

- II) *Recognition of different modes of learning*

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 it also includes informal on the job

learning and self study. The framework recognises that trainers may have a role in supporting all these different forms of learning.

### *III) Framework for learning versus Frameworks for qualification*

Over the past period we have seen an increasing focus on qualification frameworks (Commission of the European Communities, 2006; Young, 2005). Such frameworks are designed to promote access to training between different pathways, to facilitate mobility and to acknowledge competence development in an ex-post manner. Yet, qualifications frameworks might fail providing access to opportunities for learning and overlook the centrality of work practice on such provision (ITB Working Group, 2008 (in print)). 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.

## **4. Contradictions in the professional development of trainers and design principles for the open framework**

Our research -and that of other projects- points to a series of contradictions and dilemmas for those seeking to develop opportunities for the training of trainers. Such dilemmas are not easily resolved. But they must at least be taken into account and addressed in attempting to outline a Framework for the Continuing Professional Development.

The section is structured as follows: First the contradictions and dilemmas are described enriched with findings from the case studies, based on a report by van Elk, Leijen and Lam (2007). It is noteworthy that the findings cross national systems. Afterwards: the consequences for the framework are outlined and where possible, examples for a solution are given.

### *IV) Professionalisation versus the spread of training and learning*

One approach to the training of trainers is to professionalise the occupation. Indeed, this was the aim of the Leonardo da Vinci funded Europrof and Euroframe projects (Attwell, 1997; Heidegger, 1997). The projects sought to increase the recognition of the importance of the role of trainers and vocational teachers through the development of a professional occupation. This in turn would be facilitated by higher levels of qualification and regulation and by a greater emphasis on research in the field. However, such a focus implies the emergence of a coherent cohort of professional and full time trainers. Our research suggests that the training function has in fact spread, with increased numbers of skilled workers for whom training is only one part of their work responsibilities. Ironically, this is consequent on the growing recognition of the importance of training and of the increasing emphasis on practice in training provision. Such a development implies that any move to introduce a regulatory or qualification framework might fail to address the needs of such part time trainers that are working in many different and not that well delineated contexts. A further option would be to develop a series of different frameworks or different qualifications for different target groups. Our preference is to attempt to develop a flexible overall architecture which can support different initiatives to support professional development. The challenge is to develop an architecture which is on the one hand cohesive but on the other hand is sufficiently flexible to allow such approaches.

### *The Framework recognises the role different groups and individuals play in training and learning*

The framework recognizes that many different people play a role in supporting learning. These include full and part time trainers but also those who support others in learning as part of their job for instance through the induction of new

staff. They may also include those responsible for the design and development of computer supported learning or those who facilitate professional networking (Grollmann & Rauner, 2007; Harris, Simons, & Bone, 2000; Schmidt-Hackenberg, Neubert, Neumann, & Steinborn, 1999).

For example in one case we have undertaken trainers are usually skilled workers who are responsible for the domain-specific further training in a company. There are traditional patterns of mentoring that are characteristic of the handicraft trades. The identity of part time trainers is grounded in their identity as skilled workers where training is a part of their profession as skilled worker and not as trainer.

#### *V) II. Pedagogic skills versus technical skills and a wide range of competences*

In some cases we have seen the provision of training in didactics and pedagogy, in others professional development measures in occupational competences. However, these are not add-on or cumulative skills or competencies (Shulman, 1986). This also relates to the identity of trainers: a trainer with a professional identity as a skilled worker will try to develop his technical skills further to perform better in his technical profession. A trainer who considers himself as a trainer will focus on the development of pedagogic skills and competences.

There is also a slower than predicted but increasing use of ICT for learning. On the one hand, this is bringing new people within the orbit of training. On the other hand, it is leading to new pedagogies and new roles and competences of trainers (many of whom seem very unsure of their competence in this field).

In general, there is surprisingly limited regulation of trainers. However in some countries and some sectors and for some roles, regulation has been introduced requiring practising trainers to hold a formal training qualification. This has been introduced as a general measure to increase quality, as a measure for recognition or to improve health and safety. Despite this lack of regulation, there are both national and sectoral frameworks for the training the trainers, as well as other initiatives and measures for professional development. Many of these do lead to formal recognition. This might suggest willingness on the part of trainers – at least full time trainers – for self regulation.

Portugal was the only country included in our study that has introduced a regulatory framework, requiring trainers to acquire a formal qualification. There is some evidence to suggest that the focus on the didactics of training within this approach may prove a barrier to practising trainers who are experienced expert workers.

Although this finding is tentative, some studies suggest a greater recognition of informal learning. Another EU-funded project is currently aiming at creating a European Observatory on the Recognition of Informal and Non-Formal Learning (OBSERVAL). If and where this is so, it may be leading to a new role for trainers as facilitators or developers of the learning environment - both in the workplace and through communities of practice.

Note – see youth worker informal learning initiative.

*The framework promotes the integration of pedagogic and technical, subject specific knowledge and skills and foresees the development of a broad range of competencies*

Learning research has shown that in many cases so-called interpersonal, soft or key skills are bound to specific contexts, skills and knowledge in terms of learning, mental representation and acquisition (Boreham, Fischer, & Samurcay, 2002). Therefore, the ability to train as a skilled worker both involves the practice of occupational skills and the practice of training skills. Our case studies and the survey undertaken by the Eurotrainer project also drew attention to a wide range of other competences and skills that trainers may use – including interpersonal competences, didactical competences, organisational competences and inert-cultural competences. There is an obvious temptation to try to list such competences. We have avoided such a temptation. On the one hand such lists are always incomplete; on the other hand they run the risk of becoming overly pejorative.

The reality is that the particular competences and skills displayed by trainers in practice is heavily contextual and dependent of a considerable number of different variables including the teaching and learning environment, the trainees, the subject of the training and not least the skills and preference of the trainers themselves.

More promising is an approach which recognizes the broad range of competencies required of trainers and supports them both in identifying and developing their competences.

#### *VI) Formal versus informal learning*

On the one hand, as researchers, we understand the importance of informal learning for trainers. This is borne out by our research, which shows the importance of team work and peer feedback in professional development. On the other hand, we are seeking to develop a framework for Continuing Professional Development. How can a Framework incorporate and recognise the centrality of informal learning? And how can we recognise informal learning, without reducing it to a series of formalised competences?

The case studies pointed to a change in the function of trainers towards becoming guides or coaches. Opposed to traditional classroom style teaching this may offer more space for informal learning.

More importantly the case studies point to a wide variety of different forms of professional development. Many of these – including peer group exchange and discussion and self directed study are informal.

*The framework foresees the recognition of the role of formal qualification as well as the role of reflection and learning in practice. The framework needs to establish interfaces between those two realms.*

The framework recognises that although many trainers have no formal qualification in training and may not wish to acquire such a qualification, for others the achievement of a formal qualification may play a role in their learning and may offer them opportunities for professional advancement. Thus commitment to the Framework includes the development and recognition of relevant qualifications, forms of assessment and evaluation that recognise practice and offer appropriate ways of access to such qualifications. On the other hand the framework recognises the importance of reflection on practice as a key element in professional development. Thus it advocates the provision of opportunities for reflection through peer review and mentoring and though the promotion of activities and tools for recording reflection such as diaries and (e)-portfolios.

Examples from Instances of Change or Case studies to solve this contradiction

- *Individual self-study*: This format is used very much for professional development. It is the responsibility of the trainer to take care over the professional development, but as an organizational commitment trainers get additional time from the companies for professional development. Trainers are encouraged to read relevant literature (books and articles on internet) and keep up with professional journals of one's own subject matter or domain.
- *Following a course, training*: Training courses are usually followed either to develop pedagogical skills or learn more domain-specific knowledge. This format can be issued for initial training of trainers in form of a basic pedagogy course or for the professional development of more experienced trainers who up-date their pedagogical competences. Second, trainers also follow courses to upgrade the domain-specific knowledge for example with regard to changes in technology or quality assurance rules. This training format is one of the formats with the most obvious restrictions: lack of money, time, but also access to the courses is hindering trainers to make use of this way of professional development.
- *Supervision/mentoring within a company*: Coaching and/or supervision should also be regarded as an element

of professional development. There are several ways to make use of this format, for example each trainer is supposed to draw up a year plan that contains agreements concerning his professional development. The professional development plans are regularly discussed with a training manager. Trainers are getting coaching. This can be done within a company or as a self-initiated way of professional development.

- *Organized team learning*: Team learning is an important way. Team members meet on a regular basis to discuss work related matters. This format needs also organizational commitment from the company e. g. allocating 30% of the available time of trainers to meetings and professional development.
- *Development days, conferences, and other events* (often more formal).
- *Work experience*: This part points out that trainers also develop based on their work experiences. This represents the importance of work-based learning in the context where trainers themselves are skilled professionals. For example, trainers are often skilled workers who are responsible for the domain-specific further training in a company. There are traditional patterns of mentoring that are characteristic for handicraft trades.

#### VII) *Identity as a trainer versus identity as a skilled worker*

Probably the most important trend across Europe is the move towards more work based training or learning. This is driven by the desire to provide more authentic learning and increasing recognition of the importance of lifelong learning, particularly the context of fast changing technologies in the work place. The increased focus on workplace learning is leading to the rapid diffusion of the training process with increasing numbers of people involved in training in some way as part of their work tasks.

Whilst in some countries, e.g the German speaking countries, managers may hold formal training qualifications, they are no longer the ones delivering training. Those responsible for training usually hold no formal qualification, more importantly they identify themselves as skilled workers rather than as trainers but as skilled workers or managers who undertake training as an additional part time part of their work role. Indeed, this identity is important, in providing them with the technical and subject-specific competences to perform as a trainer.

They are unlikely to identify with a Framework or qualifications for professional development for trainers as such. How can we provide opportunities for learning and practice in training, whilst relating to their occupational or professional identity as a skilled worker?

*The framework acknowledges that there is spectrum of training roles that cover the spectrum from largely pedagogical and organisational tasks to tasks that require specific and deep content knowledge and skills. Therefore promotion of the co-operation between different roles of learning support is a crucial design principle for the architecture (Huys, De Rick, & Vandenbrande, 2005; Skule & Reichborn, 2002).*

The framework recognises that many different people with different backgrounds and experiences play a role in supporting learning. What is critical is that co-operation between such roles is guaranteed for the sake of individual and collective learning processes.

### VIII) *Individual versus organizational learning*

Whilst traditionally training courses and qualifications have focused on individual performance and skills development, many organisations especially small and medium organisations are more concerned with organisational learning and development and about how such training impacts on the development of the organisation as a whole.

With increasing interdependency between companies in production processes and increasing formal quality requirements, training is being organised through supply chains. Training is often organised by those higher in the supply chain and may be compulsory as part of supply chain quality conformance..

Managers, particularly in Small and Medium Enterprises, may have new responsibilities for the management of training. How does or can the role of trainers contribute to both individual and organisational learning?

*The framework foresees the recognition of the importance of trainers in facilitating learning for individual competence development and organisational development*

The framework for the continuing professional development of trainers is based on the recognition of the importance of training for the development of individual competencies and lifelong learning for individual employees and organisational development within enterprises. This includes how to organise rich learning environment within enterprises as well as direct training. (Skule & Reichborn, 2002)

### IX) *Organisational identity versus communities of practice*

A related dilemma is that of identification with organizations as opposed to identification with communities of practice and the other way around. Research suggests (Attwell, 2007) that much learning takes place in communities of practice. Such communities can transcend individual organizations; indeed, the increasing use of the internet for (informal) learning is leading to the development of distributed communities of practice. Our case studies suggest the importance of contact and discussion with other trainers for the professional development of trainers through:

Yet, research also suggests that managers (especially in SMEs) remain wary of contact with other organisations and companies whom they perceive as competitors.

*The framework foresees the importance of networking and partnerships*

The framework recognises the importance of networking - within companies, between companies and in broader Communities of Practice as a means to professional development. It commits organisations to facilitating participation within networks and communities for trainers. The framework recognises the importance of appropriate tools and platforms for networking between trainers, for the exchange of experiences and practice and for monitoring opportunities for professional development. The framework will promote the development and use of such tools and platforms. The framework recognises the importance of partnership in recognising professional development and in providing opportunities of that development to take place. such partnerships may include employers and enterprises, sector organisations, trade unions, regulatory bodies, regional economic bodies, examination and certification organisations and local, regional national and European governmental organisations.

Examples from Instances of Change or Case studies: to solve this contradiction

- *Informal peer tutoring*: Informal peer tutoring for professional development is the first step of collaboration. First trainers learn a lot from colleagues through informal discussions. The exchange with other professionals can happen in the office and also by sending around e-mails: “Look what I have made”. In general, a lot of encouragement is provided by colleagues. Second, informal peer tutoring can be considered as direct means for designing and assessing current training practices. If, for example, the training is delivered by two trainers, this can be used for extensive feedback and assessment.

X) VII. *Regulation and certification versus the practice of training and its innovation*

Regulation of training and the introduction of a mandatory system of training qualifications may be seen as a means of professionalisation and of raising the quality of training. At the same time research suggests it may inhibit innovation in practice. Additionally, in our interviews most trainers talked to us about the practice of training. It is in the realm of practice, that the quality of training is most critical. However, training courses often focus on the theory and codified foundations of training, rather than the practice.

*The framework foresees the importance of opportunities to practice for learning*

The framework recognises the importance of opportunities to practice. It commits organisations to providing varied opportunities for practice as part of professional development and promotes innovation in training practice.

*The framework foresees the importance of opportunities for initial and continuing professional development*

The framework recognises the importance of both initial and continuing professional development for the effectiveness and quality of training. The framework is based on an individual commitment by trainers to their own professional development, a commitment by teams of trainers as well as a commitment by enterprises to providing opportunities and supporting professional development and a commitment by other organisations to supporting and recognising that professional development.

## **5. Application and implementation of the Framework**

The principles outlined in this paper are only the first stage in developing a framework for the continuing professional development of chambers. To further develop this to a full framework requires several steps:

- a. the development of commitments for several stakeholder groups that are related to the principles of this document
- b. the illustration of this commitments through exemplars of how practice might be advanced to meet the commitments and tools to assist individual and organization in using the principles and commitments for professional development
- c. the development of an infrastructure for implementation.
- d. a summary of the principles for stakeholders
- e. a series of guidelines how to implement the framework
- f. attendant process mechanisms and documentation

These steps from a-c are drafted in the accreditation document that is also part of the framework. Steps d to f will be the focus of the next stage of the TTplus project.

All in all the application and implementation of the Framework does not have to be a uniform process. It is

possible to imagine different frameworks for applying these principles in practice. It might also be that it is possible to develop a unitary infrastructure that could be applied in different and flexible forms in practice, in different sectors and in different countries.

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