



Education and Culture

Leonardo da Vinci
Pilot projects

Roadmap

for further development and implementation of
the open Framework for Continuing Professional
Development for trainers in Europe

Utrecht, the Netherlands, 27th October, 2008

Utrecht University - IVLOS
Ineke Lam

1. Introduction

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

The overall aim of the TTPlus project is to examine the issues involved in the training and professionalisation of trainers in the EU through several key actions:

- examination the context in which training takes place in enterprises through a case study research
- examination of present policies and provision for the training of trainers and consider effectiveness
- development of a framework for the continuing professional development of trainers

These products are available at the website of the project: <http://www.ttplus.org/>

The ambition of this paper is to draw up a roadmap for further development and implementation of the Framework.

The roadmap is addressed to the European Commission. The roadmap is *not* a step-by-step instruction on how to implement the Framework¹. Instead, it is a paper that presents the results of a consultation process and it presents areas of further thinking and research, and recommendations for next steps.

Starting point for developing this roadmap is the feedback on the open Framework that was received during a consultation process amongst focus groups and experts in the field. In total, 8 focus groups and 18 (group)interviews with experts were organized in the six partner countries.

2. General impression of the feedback on the open Framework

In general, people express the relevancy and the need for such a Framework because of

1. new roles and responsibilities trainers have acquired, and
2. the growing importance of life long learning in formal as well as informal settings and with the use of ICT.

More concrete, the Framework is relevant since it covers practical aspects of the training practices, contexts and realities. Furthermore, the CPD of trainers is relevant for the Human Resource Development in general. In addition, it is relevant in terms of the qualifications standards for trainers (professional development).

These are the fundamental ideas behind the Framework:

- its nature is indicative and orienting for the CPD of trainers
- it is flexible,
- it is accessible,

¹ Framework is written with a capital we refer to a specific Framework: the Framework that is developed in the TTPlus project. No capital is used when we refer to other frameworks.

- it is based on the idea that individual trainers, groups of trainers, enterprises, intermediary organisations and social partners and governmental organisations all have an interest in the continuing professional development of trainers
- it may lead to the certification of trainers in order to continuously promote the quality of training,
- it facilitates the mobility of trainers between member states of the EU.

Other crucial elements of the Framework that are mentioned by other partners are its openness, its intercultural (universal?) nature, the idea of a quality kitemark, registration of trainers and recognition of trainers. Furthermore, the Framework is described as reflective rather than prescriptive.

At the same time some people are skeptical if a Framework like this could be valid for all countries. Where on the one hand its openness and orientation nature are appreciated, it is on the other hand evaluated as too general (need for more sharply defined standards instead of commitments) and highly consensual.

3. Areas for further thinking and research

In this paragraph areas for further thinking and research are discussed.

I would like to start with the name 'Framework'. The *understanding of this concept* is different in the participating countries. The translation from the English word 'framework' into national languages creates an image of a stricter and fixed structure than is true for the English language. Furthermore, what is the relation between the Framework and competences and skills of trainers? The TTPlus project doesn't focus on a competence approach and doesn't aim at listing competences and skills. The competence approach comes close to a qualification framework and that's not intended within the TTPlus project. Instead, the TTPlus project focuses on opportunities for learning where the role of the individual in achieving qualifications as well as the role of organizations in facilitating learning is central.

The importance of training and the incorporation of knowledge differ per European country. It is related to the *type of economy* that is prevalent for a country: an industrial economy versus a service providing economy. In the implementation process this perspective should be taken into account, if not be the starting point.

The adaptation of the Framework not only to the national level but also to the *sector level* is crucial. Sectors like the public and private sector differ. In the public sector the adaptation and/or implementation of the Framework can be seen as imposing a regulatory norm, while in the private sector as implementing a process of awareness of the importance and role of CPD in the productivity and competitiveness. Here we can recognize a top-down or bottom-up approach in the implementation process.

Furthermore, it is relevant to further explore the relation of the *different types of trainers* with the Framework. There are full time trainers, part time trainers, freelance trainers, coaches etc. Different kind of trainers do different things and need different types and amounts of professional development. Probably, different types of trainers also perceive the Framework in a different way.

A last topic for further thinking in this stage is related to the infrastructure of the Framework. In order to implement the Framework an awarding or regulatory body would need to be established. National differences exist with regards to the position, authority or power of this *awarding body*. On the one hand it is suggested to assign this awarding body to the Ministry of Education since this Ministry has the responsibility of initial vocational training or even to the European commission. This is called a “critical point for success”. On the other hand it is stressed that the awarding body needs to have professional credibility related to professional training associations like an industrial lead body. In fact, it should not be too much linked to governmental bodies. Here the process is mentioned as more valuable than the award.

4. Recommendations for next steps in the roadmap

In the previous section some areas for further thinking and research are discussed. Here, more concrete suggestions and recommendations for further development and implementation are presented.

Pilots in different countries

Since countries differ in their societies and economies, sectors in their cultures and attitudes towards implementation processes regarding frameworks, and organizations in the type of trainers they deal with, it is recommended to further investigate how the Framework can be adapted and implemented in the different contexts. The first step is to set up pilots in the different countries and organizations. A fruitful way to investigate this might be by performing a multiple case study research. Yin (1984) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (p. 23).

At least two research designs are feasible. In one design similar organizations in different countries are selected in which the Framework will be implemented on a small scale. An option can also be to distinct between the type of economy but this should be labeled as a background variable. In another design different organizations in different countries are selected where the Framework will be implemented on a small scale. Within both designs one should take into account the different types of trainers (full-time, part-time, freelance, coach etc), either as a target group or as a variable. Furthermore, the issue of the ‘awarding body’ need to be further explored in both research designs.

During the consultation process several experts and focus group members indicated that they were interested in piloting the Framework (Portugal, the Netherlands, and United Kingdom). Amongst these were also persons with a critical attitude towards the Framework. Apparently they see the potential of such an instrument.

Possible ways for financing the piloting in different European countries is to apply for a Leonardo da Vinci pilot project or to relate to an ESF structural project, e.g. in Romania, in which transnational participation can be integrated. One of the other first steps could

be the development of a business case that clarifies why organizations would want to work with the framework.

Framework and competences

The naming of the Framework needs to be further explored as well. A more 'Euro-English' word will overcome the different meanings and images people across Europe have with the word 'framework'. The word must not have a 'blueprint' connotation but a orientation nature instead.

A final challenge is to further investigate the relation between the Framework and competences. As previously stated, the TTPlus project doesn't focus on a competence approach but will nevertheless have to deal with competences. Competence clusters or 'families' of essential clusters that are overlapping seems relevant to further explore.

Recommendations

Finally, some general recommendations for the implementation are listed here:

- Focus in the implementation process on the level of training organizations and not on the individual level. Individuals can use the Framework as a guide for their own professional development.
- Involve HRM-departments into the implementation process.
- Collaborate in the adaptation and implementation process with branch organizations.