SUPPORTING TEACHERS AND TRAINERS FOR SUCCESSFUL REFORMS AND QUALITY OF VET

UNITED KINGDOM
Mapping their professional development in the EU

THEMATIC PERSPECTIVES
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The thematic perspectives series complements the general information on vocational education and training (VET) systems provided in 'VET in Europe' reports. The themes presented in the series feature high on the European agenda.


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1. Introduction

Professional development (initial and continuing) of VET teachers and trainers is key to ensuring quality and relevance of VET, both school-based and work-based. Achieving aims such as implementing new curricula, strengthening links between education and the labour market, providing more and high quality apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning, developing quick and flexible responses to emerging competence needs and applying the common European transparency tools all requires committed and competent teaching staff who have access to adequate professional development and support. The Riga Conclusions moves support for initial and continuing professional development of teachers and trainers higher up on the policy agenda, as one of the five 2015-20 deliverables for European cooperation in VET.

The purpose of this article is to gather updated information regarding systematic national approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuing professional development (CPD) of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work-based settings.

1.1. Main categories of teaching and training professionals in IVET

VET is offered at various levels within the UK education systems, starting with introductory courses at levels benchmarked to EQF level 2, through secondary level to post-secondary education and training, and including apprenticeships. This article focuses predominantly on VET teachers and trainers practising at upper secondary vocational (EQF 4) level. VET providers are known by several names, but will mainly be referred to as further education (FE) colleges in this article. Formal school-based VET at FE colleges and work-based learning are available as both Initial VET (IVET) and Continuing VET (CVET).

This article focuses on IVET provision. Cedefop's definition of IVET is “vocational education and training aimed at equipping people with knowledge, skills and competences necessary to enter particular occupations or more broadly the labour market”.

The terms IVET and CVET are not officially defined within the formal education systems in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In Wales, vocational qualifications were categorised into IVET and CVET groups from January 2015. IVET programmes in Wales are introductory and do not lead to occupational competence, whilst CVET programmes lead to occupational competence. Only IVET should be available to learners at 14 to 16, with either category available, as appropriate, post-16. Moving from IVET to CVET should be recognised as progression even where learning remains at CQFW level 2 (EQF level 3).
Teaching staff in the UK further education (FE) sector are not employed as civil servants, and may be public or private sector employees, depending on which type of education and training provider they work for. Furthermore, a variety of job roles and job titles exist for teaching staff within the FE sector in the UK. Those teaching in FE colleges are often referred to as lecturers and those delivering work-based learning are often called trainers. The sector also includes tutors, instructors, assessors, mentors, coaches, and workplace supervisors.

1.2. Recent policy developments and challenges faced

Several new strategies and policies relating to the VET systems in the UK have led to debates in recent years over the different policy directions taken by education administrations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the areas of professional registration, initial teacher training and continuing professional development (CPD). These various strategies and policies pose challenges to teaching staff, as frequent changes and guidelines from governments and other national authorities often require new or updated skills.

Teaching literacy and numeracy skills to students is currently a challenge to many providers delivering mainly vocational education in England. A survey conducted by the Association of Colleges shows that there is a shortfall of teachers in England’s FE sector teaching maths and English, resulting in providers relying on agency and sessional staff, large class sizes, co-opting teachers from other areas and working in partnership with local schools. Respondents also anticipate that the situation will get worse going forward as demand increases (1). The education and training inspector Ofsted also reports a lack of teachers, particularly in maths, science and engineering groups. Colleges currently find it difficult to recruit the best new graduates, as teaching in the FE sector is not considered equally attractive to teaching in general education schools or working in industry. Whilst inspectors found examples of initial teacher trainees integrating reading, writing and oral communication skills into their specialist teaching, trainee teachers’ understanding of, and confidence in, how to develop mathematical skills was much more limited (2).

Moreover, the Ofsted annual report 2012/13 found that too many teachers in the FE sector did not have the confidence and capability to teach and support students with special educational needs. There is an increased focus on colleges meeting local

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(1) Association of Colleges (2014), AoC second 16-19 Study Programme Survey Report

(2) Ofsted (2014), Transforming 16 to 19 education and training: the early implementation of 16 to 19 study programmes
labour market needs, using industry experts with up-to-date occupational expertise. The Perkins Review also discovered that teaching staff are not using technology enough to support teaching and learning. This could free up teachers’ time to focus on other activities, such as mentoring (3).

Implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence reform of the Scottish education system and teaching of the new Welsh Baccalaureate qualification have led to needs for upskilling of teaching staff (4).

A consultation on the introduction of a revised framework for initial and continuing FE teacher education is on-going in Northern Ireland, including facilitating the provision of a broader range of qualifications and modules that have been formally recognised as meeting quality standards. The need for FE teaching staff to update their industry practice is also a high priority in NI to support the new and innovative approaches being taken to apprenticeships and youth training. Legislation is planned that will extend the remit of the General Teaching Council NI to include FE colleges, in recognition of the professional status of FE teachers as comparable to their colleagues teaching in schools. Current challenges remain in regard to ensuring that part-time FE teachers are equipped with the necessary pedagogical skills, and a module designed to meet the needs of this group has already been piloted.

There are other policy developments in the last few years that have had an impact on VET teaching, such as a divergence in professional registration requirements in England and Wales. In England lecturers and trainers in the FE college sector were formerly required to obtain Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status and register with the Institute for Learning (IfL). These regulations have been replaced with discretionary advice to employers on appropriate qualifications. The criteria to teach at FE level are now more flexible; the education provider decides upon the suitability of the teaching staff. Recent developments in Wales have seen the General Teaching Council Wales being replaced with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) that now requires FE lecturers to register with the EWC from April 2015.

(3) Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2013). Professor John Perkins’ review of engineering skills.

2. Teaching and training professionals in school-based settings

2.1. National legislation and strategic documents that regulate or guide professional development of teachers and trainers

The Further Education Teachers’ Continuing Professional Development and Registration (England) Regulations 2007 were revoked in 2012 following recommendations from the Lingfield review of Professionalism in further education (5). These regulations have been replaced with discretionary advice to employers on appropriate qualifications and CPD (Section 2.2), in addition to the Education and Training Foundation’s (ETF) Professional standards for teachers and trainers in education and training in England (6) which expect teachers and trainers to demonstrate professional values, attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills. More recently the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills’ Further education workforce strategy (7) was launched in 2014. It focuses on four priority areas:

- improving quantity, quality and professionalism of teachers and trainers;
- being responsive to employer needs;
- improving the quality of leadership including system leadership; and
- using technology effectively in teaching and learning

The Review of Scotland’s colleges report (8) recommends that full-time college staff should fulfil at least six days of CPD per year; and that CPD should also be available to part-time staff. The Scottish Government’s Lifelong Learning Directorate holds responsibility for policy on professional development of lecturers, and has adopted the above recommendations (9).

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Professional standards for teachers, tutors, trainers and instructors in Wales (10) were developed by the former sector skills council Lifelong Learning UK on the request of the Welsh Government and based on the vision of the Department for Education’s strategy outlined in The learning country: vision into action (11). The professional standards ask teaching staff and education providers to use mentoring and coaching to support professional development, and actively access sources for development in specialist areas. The implementation of the common contract for further education colleges (12), which will be fully implemented by general further education colleges by September 2016, has specified a requirement for a minimum amount of CPD per year for each member of staff. A review of professional standards for the FE and schools workforce will culminate in the introduction of a revised framework of standards in 2016 that will apply to all practitioners registered with the EWC.

Minimum qualification standards for teachers working in the statutory FE sector in Northern Ireland are set out by the Department for Employment and Learning based upon the standards developed by the former Lifelong Learning UK sector skills council (see footnote 16). In the context of Northern Ireland’s consultation on a new FE strategy (13) and a new teacher education framework, CPD for college staff is considered important in order for colleges to develop and meet expectations to raise skills and qualifications levels in the local economy. CPD courses have since been developed in conjunction with University of Ulster, both in relation to industry placements and essential skills teaching.

Education and training provider inspectorates and funding agencies also monitor how colleges are providing CPD for their staff.

2.2. Qualification requirements for teachers

There is no longer a legal requirement for FE teaching staff in England to hold specific qualifications (see information about the Lingfield review in Section 2.1). Education providers were given the responsibility to decide upon the suitability of their teaching staff from 2013 onwards. Qualification requirements therefore vary depending on the provider and job roles, but a QCF level 3 (EQF level 4) occupational qualification and a

teaching qualification are often the minimum requirement. A number of teaching qualifications are available and listed on the FE Advice website (14), with the QCF level 5 Diploma in Education and Training generally being considered the lowest full teaching qualification.

Scottish colleges also determine which qualifications are desirable for employment as an FE teaching staff member. Despite there being no national legal requirement to hold a teaching qualification, most college lecturers do possess a teaching qualification, such as the Teaching Qualification (FE) at SCQF level 9 (EQF level 6), and additionally a sector-specific qualification such as a Higher National Certificate (EQF level 5) or higher.

In Wales, lecturers in FE colleges are required to hold a teaching qualification, such as a Certificate in Education or Postgraduate Certificate in Education (FE), according to the Further education teachers’ qualifications (Wales) regulations 2002 (15).

FE lecturers working more than eight hours per week in Northern Ireland must possess a degree level qualification in a relevant subject area; or a qualification at QCF level 5 in a relevant subject area plus three years relevant industrial experience. Lecturers must also possess a recognised teaching qualification, such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (FE), or enrol on an appropriate course, which should be completed within the first three years of appointment. A list of acceptable teaching qualifications is found in two Department for Employment and Learning circulars from 2012 (16).

2.3. Attracting teachers from general education and industry to the VET sector

Teaching staff at FE colleges in the UK may be full-time employees or work part-time in the industry, and frequently do the latter. Lecturers with industry qualifications and experience relevant to the subjects taught in a college may also complete teaching qualifications, such as the Scottish Teaching Qualification (FE), at the same time as working as a lecturer. This allows industry experts to start working as lecturers whilst their knowledge of the industry is very much up-to-date.

(16) Department for Employment and Learning (2012). Circular FE 01/12: qualification required to teach in institutions of further education, and Circular ES 01/12: qualifications required to deliver essential skills in Northern Ireland.
To teach general subjects at secondary education level in the UK, staff require a Bachelor degree qualification, secondary qualifications such as GCSEs in English, mathematics and science at levels benchmarked to EQF level 3 and a teaching qualification at Bachelor or postgraduate level, and must complete adequate practical teaching experience prior to mandatory or voluntary (depending on the status of the education provider) professional registration. There are no legal requirements for further training to teach the same general subjects in the FE sector.

Extra funding has been made available to new graduates becoming mathematics teachers in FE colleges through a Golden Hello scheme (17) in England, to attract and retain good mathematics teachers. It is a single payment made after the second year of teaching in the FE sector to mathematics university graduates who have completed initial teacher training at QCF level 5 and above.

Additional grants are available for eligible students as incentives to undertake initial teacher training in Wales. A higher grant is available for students who train to teach STEM subjects, literacy, and numeracy at FE level (18).

2.4. Number of teaching staff

The Education and Training Foundation is charged with the annual collection of workforce data for Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funded providers in England. SFA-funded further education colleges complete an IT based individualised record that records standardised details of all staff employed during the year. The estimated number of teaching staff in FE colleges in England in 2013/14 stood at more than 122 000, out of which nearly 71 000 are estimated to be on full-time contracts (19). The figure will be slightly higher when work-based learning staff in independent training organisation is added.

The Scottish Funding Council and Colleges Scotland collect data regarding the teaching workforce at college level. Teaching staff in Scotland’s colleges amount to approximately 5 000 individuals. 72% are employed on a full-time basis, and 92% possess a formal teaching qualification (20).


The number of full-time equivalent staff in Welsh colleges was a little in excess of 9 000 (21).

The six regional colleges in Northern Ireland employ 1 300 full-time lecturers, over 500 associate lecturers and almost 1 700 part-time lecturers on annual contracts. Of part-time professionals on annual contracts, only around 24% were found to hold a teaching qualification and 53% hold a level 5 or higher professional or technical qualification (22).

2.5. CPD requirements for VET teachers

Teachers and trainers in the FE sector in England are expected to maintain and independently develop their vocational subject knowledge as well as teaching skills; however, no legal requirements exist regarding the content, duration or frequency of CPD, which is organised by individual colleges and members of staff.

Full-time lecturers in Scotland’s colleges are encouraged to undertake at least six days of CPD per year, which should also be available proportionately to part-time staff; however, it is the responsibility of individual colleges to arrange CPD on a voluntary basis.

The professional standards for FE lecturers in Wales recommend making use of mentoring and coaching to support professional development in addition to accessing sources in their specialist area. The basis for a Common Contract for further education (FE) colleges (23) was agreed in 2013 and the majority of FE colleges in Wales are now on the new contract. This contract includes a requirement to provide a minimum of 30 hours CPD for each member of staff. However, it is at the discretion of each individual FE college to choose and organise the type of CPD.

In Northern Ireland, full-time lecturers are entitled to a minimum of five days professional development per year, which should be incorporated into colleges’ CPD strategies. CPD is also offered to part-time staff, and it is universally recognised that pedagogical skills and specialist professional and technical expertise are vital to improving the relevance and quality of the VET provision (24).

(21) Statistics Wales (2015). *Staff at further education institutions in Wales 2013/14*.
(23) CollegesWales (2013). *A common contract for staff*.

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2.6. Needs analysis of CPD

Needs for staff development are identified at national level by education provider inspectorates, such as Ofsted, and in relation to reviews and reforms of education systems, such as the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland; however, the main responsibility for identification of training needs rests with individual education and training providers and staff. Identification of CPD needs takes place at education and training providers through staff performance management processes and monitoring of data.

The Scottish Government issued Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland’s Colleges in 2012, and states that lecturers should be able to ‘identify and undertake relevant professional development to enhance practice and maintain currency; develop and commit to personal continuing professional development strategies to achieve individual, team and organisational goals’ (25).

The above is also the case in the Welsh FE sector, although the EWC has additionally developed the Professional Learning Passport, which is an online portfolio intended to record lecturers’ professional learning. Using the portfolio will be optional, but should assist practitioners identify and reflect on training needs (26).

CPD needs analyses in colleges in Northern Ireland are based on evidence from staff appraisals and self-evaluation, and in one instance also a college-wide skills audit. Colleges are also establishing links and partnerships with businesses to inform and support CPD. This enables staff to benchmark contemporary education and industry practice through links with sectoral bodies, participation in national and international study visits, supporting skills competitions, and collaborating with other national and international further and higher education providers.

2.7. CPD content and types

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) has developed training pathways designed to meet different needs of teachers and trainers in the sector in England. There are events scheduled, and it is possible for organisations to run their own training for groups of staff. The ETF maintains the Foundation Online Learning website which contains online courses for the UK education and training sector in areas such as teaching and learning, and literacy and numeracy teaching (27). A number of

(27) Foundation Online Learning website (accessed 7.9.2015). Online professional development opportunities for the education and training sector.
Centres of Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs) have developed training options, such as regional network meetings and the English Enhancement programme, that are designed to help teachers to deal with the challenge of delivering English language programmes in the FE sector (28). There is also an Association of Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training, which represents the interests of providers of Initial Teacher Training and CPD.

A number of institutions offer CPD training to teachers in Scotland, including the College Development Network which offers courses in learning and teaching for college lecturers (29). Professional Development Awards for teachers, trainee teachers and technicians exist in the same area within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, some developed by the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (30). The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is also delivering a programme designed to help teachers and lecturers gain understanding of new national educational standards and qualifications that should be applied when assessing candidates' work (31).

CollegesWales delivers CPD programmes for FE practitioners in areas such as preparing teachers for teaching new general qualifications, and a suite of essential skills including literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, under contract to the Welsh Government. Courses in professional learning and education leadership are available from the Centre for Continuing Professional Learning at the University of Wales (32). However, it is at the discretion of each individual FE college to choose and organise the type of CPD to provide.

CPD activities in Northern Ireland’s colleges have traditionally focused on updating specialist expertise. More recently CPD is increasingly including pedagogical skills development, and maintaining expertise in more narrowly targeted priority areas.

Mentoring of other teachers and trainers, furthermore, occurs within the FE sector. The University of Westminster runs a CPD course in mentoring lecturers in the lifelong learning sector (33), and the EWC runs a service where external mentors are matched

(32) University of Wales website (accessed 9.9.2015). Centre for continuing professional learning and development.
to non-qualified teachers in Wales. A report of a survey conducted by the Gatsby Foundation (34) found that a number of teachers in England working towards an initial teacher training qualification, and fully trained teachers, stated that they benefit from having a mentor that offered support, opportunities to collaborate and advice about CPD. However, just over one-third of respondents has or has had a mentor within the same institution in the last two years. Whilst the study indicates that the quality of mentoring in FE colleges has risen in recent years, the quality is variable. Challenges include limited time available to meet, issues with selection and training of mentors, and the use of mentoring as a remedial measure to deal with under-performing teachers.

CPD may be provided as formal education in a college or higher education setting, through online distance learning, as well as through in-service training. In-Service Education of Teachers (INSET) days are organised in most colleges on specific days during term time on which staff are required to be present for training. Online training materials and courses are available from a variety of sources. The Excellence Gateway (35), supported by the ETF, contains resources for staff in the wider learning and skills sector in England.

In Northern Ireland, colleges are developing virtual learning platforms with a range of online modules on topics such as health and safety and safeguarding vulnerable learners, as well as pedagogical training for part-time lecturers. Colleges additionally take part in local and international skills events, and form national and international partnerships to stimulate interest and enthusiasm amongst key staff. Lecturers also undertake industry placements and training, and attend professional symposiums.

The Professional Development Network (36) represents staff development managers in Scotland's colleges, and aims to provide a forum for coordinating professional learning opportunities, facilitating dialogue about staff development needs, encouraging best practice in the delivery and development of professional learning, and strengthening and consolidating partnerships.

3. **Apprentice tutors or practical training instructors in companies**

Apprenticeships in the UK comprise in-college training or training with an independent training provider alongside employment in a company. Practitioners involved on the training provider’s side are subject to the same conditions as other practitioners in the UK FE sectors, described in Section 2. Professionals providing training or coaching to apprentices in companies must comply with the requirements of the employer and any regulations specific to the occupational area. Professionals and companies determine how they stay up to date on industry specific matters. There are no central requirements for the training of teachers who provide vocational training outside colleges.

The ETF funds the Apprenticeship Staff Support Programme (ASSP), which provided professional development support designed to improve the quality and professional capacity of provider staff to deliver apprenticeship programmes. Support comprised production and dissemination of resources. The ASSP has recently been replaced with the Future Apprenticeships Support Programme (FASP) which will assist managers, teachers, trainers, leaders and those involved in governance. The first phase of the FASP focusing on implementing apprenticeship reform in England has been extended due to popular demand. The programme is managed by the Association of Employers and Learning Providers (AELP) along with partner organisations (37). The AELP, through the Apprenticeship Staff Support Programme, carried out a survey which includes CPD needs of staff (38).

4. **Cooperation and partnerships between VET and business in support of teachers and trainers’ CPD**

Employers are connected to schools and colleges through Education Business Partnerships (EBPs), which may also arrange professional development placements for teachers. EBPs allow teachers to gain insights into how subject areas translate into business environments and practice. These placements typically last for a half day or a full day (39). The Teacher Industrial Partners’ Scheme arranges placements for science, technology, engineering, maths and computing teachers at local employers,

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followed by face to face and online CPD delivered by the National Science Learning Network (40).

Scottish teachers have the opportunity to undertake short placements in businesses to update and develop their knowledge of specific industry related issues through the Excellence in Education through Business Links programme (41).

In Wales, CollegesWales established a Teaching and Learning Network in 2012 with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning in FE in Wales. The network meets once per term to discuss key developments in pedagogy, share good practice, including links with industry, and support projects that aim for excellence in teaching and learning. The network has shared good practice developed through the supported experiments project funded by the Welsh Government's Quality Improvement Fund (QIF), and through national conferences on teaching and learning.

A review by the Education and Training Inspectorate found that there is increasing use of links and partnerships to inform and support CPD in colleges in Northern Ireland. These are often in highly-specialised curriculum areas, and include links with sectoral bodies, participation in national and international study visits, supporting skills competitions, and collaborating with other national and international further and higher education providers (42). Lecturers in Northern Ireland have the possibility to participate in the Lecturers into Industry scheme (43) that provides a link between FE and industry in Northern Ireland. Lecturers are invited to return to the workplace for six to twelve weeks to update skills and knowledge about working practices, technologies and business management, and develop effective partnerships with industry. This is also thought to build confidence and credibility in the classroom.

5. National and EU-funded projects to support VET teachers’ and trainers’ professional development

The College of Teachers-led Policy for Educator Evidence in Portfolios (PEEP) project was a collaboration between European institutions, including the General Teaching Partners’ scheme.

Teacher industrial partners’ scheme.


Learning and Skills Development Agency Northern Ireland (2007). Lecturers into industry, programme, review and case studies.
Council for Wales (now the EWC), and aimed to create a policy relating to the way electronic portfolios can be used to support the professional development of educators as well as improve their ability to access employment across Europe. A prototype e-portfolio tool was developed and tested (44).

Many of Wales’ colleges have established international partnerships on teaching, learning and coaching, and have shared examples of their international partnership work through CollegesWales’ Teaching and Learning Network. In 2014, the FE sector first became eligible to apply for the British Council’s International Professional Learning Communities fund (45). The Network collaborated on a successful bid, which resulted in eight FE delegates from Wales visiting six Community Colleges in Ontario, Canada.

CollegesWales has successfully bid for two EU-funded CPD visits through Erasmus+ (to Finland to look at literacy and numeracy, 2015; and the Basque Country to look at innovation and FE engagement with SMEs, scheduled 2016). An FE partner organisation, Sgiliaith, has also received funding for a visit made up of delegates from a number of colleges and CollegesWales to visit the Basque Country to look at issues of bilingualism in VET, Oct 2015.

In Northern Ireland international study visits are mostly funded through European Union exchange schemes. Through these schemes, curriculum managers and staff are able to experience contemporary professional practice and develop new approaches to teaching, training and learning. In particular, these study visits have been used to support the introduction of cross-college initiatives, such as enterprise and entrepreneurship and online learning.

6. Conclusions

Whilst some minimum requirements and guidelines from official authorities exist in the UK, education and training providers operate with a large degree of autonomy in determining the focus, content, mode and timing of CPD for the teachers and trainers on their staff. Teaching staff are also involved in identifying their needs for professional development. Teachers and trainers, in conjunction with college management, ensure that CPD is relevant to staff needs. An increased focus on collaboration with local

(44) The College of Teachers (2014). PEEP.
businesses furthermore helps to improve the understanding of local business needs and maintains teachers’ knowledge of specialist areas of industry. Reduced budgets for the FE sector and the autonomy of the FE colleges mean that some teachers received more CPD than others, and there are concerns that part-time staff does not engage sufficiently in gaining teaching qualifications. Recent years have also seen raised expectations that teaching staff in FE colleges will teach basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, which has resulted in a need for upskilling. Reforms of the education systems in the UK, and labour market needs for a more highly skilled workforce, mean that it is important to have teachers and trainers with the skills necessary to prepare young people for working life.