

# Optimizing knowledge transfer between working life, vocational institutes and vocational teacher education

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# Theory – practice gap?

- The central challenges and goals of vocational teacher training are to have qualified teachers for all fields of vocational education and with updated skills in their own field.
- Like in all educational practices there is often a gap between theory and practice.
- It is challenging to have up-to-date information about the needs of working life and the demands of the future. The challenge is mutual. Trainers and representatives of working life need each other
- To fill this gap, networks are needed that help its members maintain knowledge and skills and create channels of influence that are necessary for the successful operation of one's own field.

# Leadership Interaction in Sustainable Partnerships to Enhance Continuous Improvement of Vocational Teacher Education- LeadVET”

- Project aims at enhancing vocational teacher education (VTE) and vocational education and training (VET) by developing sustainable university-school partnerships, together with leadership and networking skills for professionals in the field.
- Connections between educational and occupational practices are crucial. VET Teachers work at the intersection of these practices. Jobs and occupations change and thus VTE and VET should be...
- 1) attuned to the needs of vocational teacher students 2) influence the skill levels of employees through effective supervision and training, 3) to develop a research based vocational teacher education, closely linked to practice 4) to be a positive force for collaboration and partnership in the VET ecosystem.

# In this multiplier event we investigate some insights to successful networking

- **Optimizing knowledge transfer with mentoring. (Mika Saranpää & Crister Nyberg, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences)**
  - **Work & Study model as knowledge transfer provider for regional co-operation. (Petteri Tiljander. Head of development, recognition of learning. Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences)**
  - **Green City Farm learning environment of sustainable development. Unique way for innovative network co-operation. (Heidi Hovi-Sippola, Perho Perho Culinary, Tourism & Business College)**
- Heidi works as an expert of horticulture at Green City Farm which is sustainable development learning center in Perho Culinary, Tourism and Business Collage. She is Master of Science (Agriculture and Forestry) and her previous main fields of study for the qualification are Natural Resources and Environment, Degree Program in Horticulture.

# Optimizing knowledge transfer with mentoring.

Mika Saranpää and Crister Nyberg

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# Leading VET is close co-operation with networks

- To lower the theory - practice gap we are developing a mentor network as a collaboration structure between vocational teacher training and vocational educational institutions. The high-quality organization of vocational education is strongly based on the management of networks. Mentoring is one way to promote up-to-date vocational training that meets the needs of working life and the challenges of the future.
- The goal of the current education policy is not only that education follows changes in society and working life, but also that the goal is to develop them. This requires networking.
- Networks enable the sharing of information, experiences, support and expertise. What kind of information is available through the network depends on the official nature of the network. Official, set and semi-official networks are, as their name suggests, more official than informal networks.

# Optimizing knowledge transfer with mentoring.

- **Goal: A co-operation structure between teacher education and Vocational institutions to smooth the transition from working life and teacher education to Vocational institutions and to bring teachers to fields where there is a shortage of them.**
- Mentoring is networking. Networking can be put into a theoretical framework through the interactivity of leadership, participation, asking and listening, and team play. Network requires interaction skills, active dialogue both within the educational institution and with stakeholders. (Seppälä, M. & Tapani, A. 2018.)
- A functioning network is based on trust and commitment, and its operation can be facilitated or hindered by, for example, communication, a common object of interest, attitudes and the similarity or lack of them among members. (Miettinen et al. 2006, 8; 370.) Järvensivu et al. 2010, 7; Kallio et al. 2016)
- Mentoring is often considered to help the mentee develop a sense of professional self, provide problem-solving and a sounding board, giving respect, support, role modeling. (etc. Kram (1985a).

# Which networks are most useful for VET leaders?

- Colleagues from other institutions, official and unofficial networks of leaders.
- Mentoring systems organized by own organization. Teachers' and VET leaders' official and unofficial working life networks.
- In larger organizations (Cities or national level institutions) the co-operation is also coordinated by non-educational leaders. In that case representatives in boards etc. are needed.



# Optimizing knowledge transfer with mentoring.

- What separates strategic networking from other co-operation is a commitment to common goals. A network relationship requires the sharing of essential knowledge and know-how, from which all parties benefit. (Valkokari, K., Hyötyläinen, R., Kulmala, H. I., Malinen, P., Möller K., Vesalainen, J. 2008.)
- Through informal networks, it may be possible to get information that you would not get at all or at least would be difficult to get through more official networks.
- Being part of several different networks is an advantage. (Koivu 2006, 67.)
- Mentoring could be described as informal semi-official networking. It may contain formalities but it is essentially informal.

# Mentoring can fill the gaps unfilled by formal networks

1. In our approach, mentoring is understood very loosely. It is not so much a matter of a personal mentor-mentee relationship, but of acting as a contact person between vocational training and vocational teacher training.
2. This does not prevent personal mentoring or official representation in co-operation bodies.
3. According to our research, these emphases depend on national structures and resources as well as personal interests. However, in most cases structures and resources do not prevent these semi structured informal solutions.
4. The openness and freedom to influence the structure and content of the mentoring structure is an essential part of the benefits of an informal network. This makes mentoring in our case as semi-official informal network.

# National variations

1. Is a contact person between VTE and VET units and enhances the recruitment of new VET teachers together with VTE and VET administration. **The practices vary from semi –official meetings to formal structures coordinated nationally. Considered possible.**
2. Coordinates teacher students' trainings in mentor's unit. **In use with minor differences**
3. Is involved in developing curriculum of teacher education. **Variation from systematic to occasional participation.**
4. Visits regularly in VTE sessions with planned role (“expert by experience”). **Variation. Might require extra resources**

# National variations

- 5. Organizes study visits to VTE students regarding topics of VTE curriculum. **Not in systematic use but possible. Might require extra resources**
- 6. Has a special role in bringing insights on wellbeing at work (teacher's perspective). **Considered as natural part of mentor's role. Depending on resources not mandatory.**
- 7. Has a special role in ensuring that all the elements of everyday work in VET are considered in VTE and especially in training sessions in VET institutions. **Is taken seriously but mentor teachers' potential not utilized.**
- 8. Is a valued member of organized mentoring structure coordinated by VTE institution. **Still semi structured activity**