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## Introduction

### Objectives and Structure of the Erasmus+ Project ITE-VET

In the field of vocational education and training (VET) quality has become one of the most relevant issues. As stated by the European Council, “the knowledge, skills and commitment of teachers, as well as the quality of school leadership, are the most important factors in achieving high quality educational outcomes” (European Council 2009, p. 2). Therefore, besides regulation patterns, curricula that fit the demand by labour markets, and reliable and efficient organisations for the delivery of VET, one crucial “input variable” is the professionalization, the professional status and the pedagogical and subject-specific competences of teachers working in the field of VET. For the quality of teacher education – mostly carried out in higher education institutions, such as universities or pedagogical academies – the mode in which teachers are trained has become more and more complex since teachers need to be (1) experts in their vocational field or discipline, e. g. Economics and Business, (2) pedagogical/didactical experts who have a broad understanding of their function and who know how to teach effectively; and (3) they also need to know what young people who enter the teacher education courses have to expect when they start their career (Kell, 2011, p. 444; Grollmann/ Bauer, 2008). This broad motivation is the basic starting point of our project which deals with the question how “applied learning” of teacher education students can meet these requirements, i. e. in particular helping them to promote this “applied learning” among vocational students within the context of their future profession. Hence, “applied learning” had a double meaning in the framework of the project.

The focus has been on Ukrainian institutions dealing with teacher education in the field of VET. The reason for this is manifold:

1. According to our pre-studies for the proposal we learnt that Ukrainian teachers have a low reputation (Koshmanova/Ravchyna, 2008, p. 148), have low salaries (Zinser, 2015, p. 694), and that teacher education students avoid the courses or drop out of courses since they anticipate better career opportunities outside schools/colleges (Shchudlo, 2012). So there has been a “social value” dimension in this project. This also implies that there is normally high fluctuation among the teaching staff in the vocational sector in this post-Soviet country.
2. It seems that in Ukrainian universities pedagogy and didactics are still under-represented as disciplines besides the subject fields future teachers study. So there is a “discipline” dimension in this project. Most future teachers are obviously good experts in their discipline field but not didactically trained specialists. Also, course structures in universities are mostly heterogeneous and sometimes there exist different curricula/schemes for this group of students even within one institution. In some curricula elements are included which have no direct pedagogical relevance (Melnyk, 2017).
3. In terms of teaching methods, Ukrainian universities have indeed recently developed a more substantial awareness of what teacher education students need and that they have to become competent in this field in particular. However, it seems that didactical innovations form a special field of interest from the perspective of teacher education institutions. We have called this the “relevance” dimension of our project. It focusses on the competence of future teachers to master classroom situations and conduct lessons with students.

An even more fundamental and general problem seems to be weak correspondence of teacher education in universities with the specificities of vocational activities in the employment sector. In contrast to a growing awareness of discipline-specific innovations (taking shape in the university class room), there are hardly links with the world of work for which young people should be trained. Above all, there seems to be a lack in the organisation of study programmes for VET teachers that do pay close attention to these links, e. g. by prescribing and/or offering internships and structural links in curricula between the world of work and the university, but also with schools/colleges where future teachers are supposed to be employed after graduation (e. g. career and technical

education schools, higher vocational schools, vocational lyceums) (see Prytomanov/Kolyshko/Garmash in this book). This “relevance dimension” has been fixed as a reform perspective in the recently passed new Ukrainian Law of Education (EACEA, 2010, p. 2) and also in the National Strategy of Education Development by 2021 (Verkhovna Rada, 2013), with a number of activities prescribed to make the education system as a whole more functional and efficient. This also means that university curricula in Ukraine have to be developed further, which means beyond the formal reforms that have already taken place – e. g. in the wake of the Bologna process and with the introduction of the ECTS system. In particular, non-academic work experience in companies for future teachers ought to become a natural part of VET teacher education courses.

The project consisted of three EU partner universities and five Ukrainian programme institutions (three Ukrainian higher education institutions, one VET research institution and a VET counselling and development body with numerous contacts to the employment sector). The project issues were embedded in a broader approach taken by other EU projects, e. g. such as BUSEEG (Vienna University of Economics and Business, AT), to strengthen links between higher education, and hereby teacher education/training in particular, and the employment sector. Therefore, we named our project “Improving Teacher Education for Applied Learning”. This title has two connotations: It marks the importance to make university education in this field more relevant for the “outside world”, and it helps to underlay VET in schools/colleges with a clear practice-oriented perspective. This requires a professional structure of teacher education programmes in the field of initial teacher education. Both connotations, being overall objectives at the same time, also allude to a clear European perspective articulated by the European Council in 2009 already when stating, that “there is considerable national and international research evidence to show, however, that structured programmes of support for all new teachers” (European Council, 2009, p. 2) can lead to better practice of teacher education and can help make the profession more attractive to young people.

Our project preparation started in summer 2015 by establishing contacts with the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) and Kiev National Economic University (KNEU), which both were partners of the consortium leader in the Tempus Project BUSEEG (2013–2016). In

November 2015, we held a seminar in Konstanz which was attended by our potential partners from Vienna (WU), Kiev (KNEU) and Ivano-Frankivsk (PNU). The Ministry of Science, Research and Arts of the federal state of Baden-Wuerttemberg (Germany) funded the preparation of the project in 2015, including the workshop, and preparatory journeys to Vienna and Kiev. At the seminar in November 2015, the objectives of the project were specified after consultations with potential further partners in Ukraine.

The consortium consisted of three EU partners with a long-established expertise in VET teacher education. Both the University of Konstanz and the University of Economics and Business in Vienna offer teacher education for future teachers in commercial high schools and part-time vocational schools. The University of Valencia also runs a master programme for future secondary school and VET teachers.

The Ukrainian universities in the consortium are leading institutions both in the field of economics and business and in the field of teacher education for colleges where young people are trained to become competent specialists in various sectors of the economy.

The project came up with the following issues which were defined as working packages in the context of the EU project guidelines. These issues also represent the major contents and arguments in the following chapters of this book:

- Ukrainian VET teacher education and VET system and analysis of their needs
- Didactical input from EU countries on modern teaching
- Revision of course programmes and curricula (pedagogical part)
- Implementation of new forms of practice-orientation.

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## Literature

### A) Literature in German or English

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