

SUMMARY OF THE “EDUCATORS AND EDUCATORS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR NEW LEARNING” LITERATURE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

“Creating New Learning” (CNL) is a multi-annual, multi-thematic initiative which is central to the ETF’s support to the “Innovative Teaching and Learning” and the implementation of its 2027 Strategy “ETF Vision for the Future“. In 2020, CNL conducted a desk research focusing on the academic literature review around five thematic focus areas underpinning innovation in teaching and learning:

- Educators and educators’ qualifications
- Learning environments
- Personalised and differentiated learning
- Digital and Online Learning
- Curricula and key competences

The CNL review of evidence-based, academic research publications concluded with a cross-thematic analysis that helped the ETF to identify two most promising – according to the initial results of this research - areas of support to new learning in the partner countries. These areas of innovation are:

Flexible and personalised learning pathways to support lifelong learning,

and

Authentic and engaging learning environments.

This analysis sets the basis for shaping up the CNL’s engagement in support of the development of innovative practices starting from January 2021.

This report will present a summary of the “Teachers and teacher professional development for new learning” literature review study. The full study is available on the [ETF Open Space](#) social platform.

ETF will further define its vision and strengthen its expertise in supporting innovative teaching and learning starting from 2021 - the 1st implementation year of the „Creating New Learning“ initiative – by building the body of knowledge in examining and supporting innovative practices in the ETF partner countries. CNL will apply a participatory research approach to draw the lessons on how innovation could be nurtured and strengthened in different country contexts.

EDUCATORS AND EDUCATORS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR NEW LEARNING¹

Changing Roles and Behaviours of Educators

VET systems are under pressure. Shifting labour market dynamics and new jobs contribute to new forms of learning, work and interaction. Traditional methods no longer work with the new generation of learners. The literature review revealed six main factors that are shaping current trends:

- digital transformation, including industry 4.0
- new teaching paradigms and approaches, including competence-based education
- migration and other demographic shifts
- climate change
- new forms of entrepreneurship
- increased networking and collaboration

These factors help fuel four trends that affect educators in the VET world:

1. **New roles** - Educators are encouraged to take up new roles: the trend is to avoid using the words teaching and training in favour of terms such as facilitators, coaches, supervisors, mentors, counsellors, orchestrators, alchemists and welders. Especially given the typical profile of VET learners, characterised by lower socio-economic background and lower cognitive abilities, the everyday work of a VET educator has been defined as a mix of pedagogy and social and career development. They must draw on socio-emotional skills such as empathy, self-regulation and emotional intelligence. Studies show that educators feel this pressure to change.
2. **Expanded responsibilities** - Educators are expected to expand their responsibilities, taking on administrative, managerial and quality-assurance tasks. They are supposed to actively cooperate with colleagues and companies, and weigh in more heavily in curriculum design. Educators should be prepared to: equip individuals with broad-based skills and knowledge; prepare diverse learners for the labour market; develop close partnerships with industry; forge links among formal, non-formal and informal learning methods; improve levels of participation of individuals with low skill levels; and tailor their efforts to the specific needs of different firms.
3. **Becoming change agents** - Educators are increasingly considered to be change agents in VET reform processes, instead of the “targets” of such reforms. They are expected to lead the way and contribute to advances in areas such as new classroom design, workshop learning, and training outside the classroom. To fulfil these demands, they must not only adopt new methodologies but also provide occupational guidance to their learners, and stay abreast of innovation and new developments.
4. **Focus on collaboration and cooperation** – There is more emphasis on collaboration and networking with colleagues, experts and external stakeholders such as companies. This implies a

¹ This is a summary of the CNL literature review ‘Teachers and teacher professional development for new learning’ written by Fabio Nascimbeni. The review is based on 222 relevant scientific papers and reports. For more details regarding the articles or books used to conduct this literature review, please refer directly to the original report.

major cultural shift in how educators see themselves and their roles. When people share expertise, everyone can focus on their own strengths. Team teaching can be an effective way to integrate theory and practice. Educators are also expected to be more flexible and to adapt to the individual characteristics of learners and allow them greater freedom to choose when and where to learn.

In order to address these new demands, educators must re-evaluate their self-identities. They must rethink and reshape their old roles in light of the new image of an educator in society. This is complicated because many educators are not comfortable with innovation and collaboration. Many lack sufficient grounding in areas such as ICT, diversity, and counselling. Educators should be given support and training to help address these new challenges and demands.

21st century educators

In the 21st century, educators need to add several new skills to their old set. These include:

- the ability to implement new teaching approaches that are learner-centric, IC-based, and collaborative and open;
- fluency in four new areas: digital competence, intercultural competence, ecological awareness, and entrepreneurship;
- a new professional attitude based on engagement, lifelong learning and networking.

Traditionally considered *experts* tasked with transmitting knowledge to learners, educators are increasingly asked to adopt learner-centred, ICT-intensive, collaborative and open methodologies that take into consideration individual characteristics and lifewide learning. While it might be overly ambitious to expect everyone to make significant progress in all areas, that should be the ultimate goal.

Learner-centred pedagogy is responsive to the interests and needs of contemporary learners and can encourage them to take more initiative and become more autonomous. Tools include group work, project work and enquiry-based learning. Connected to learner-centred pedagogy, vocational pedagogy entails taking a personal approach to students or trainees based on the skills and knowledge they need. It stresses individual agency and the independence of educators. Related to vocational pedagogy, authentic learning attempts to situate activities in the context of future use - enabling learners to develop real-world practical knowledge.

ICT-enhanced open collaboration combines e-education with collaborative learning. It involves five key competences: (1) personal data management - the capacity to understand online platforms and the business models based on collecting our data, as well as how to adjust one's behaviour based on legal and technological developments; (2) the capacity to work in open settings in an increasingly participatory society; (3) the capacity to engage through ICT to prepare learners as stakeholders in a knowledge-sharing society; (4) critical media literacy; and (5) the capacity to deal with digital ethical issues. These skills are expected to evolve over time.

The emerging concept of lifewide learning asks educators to inspire, guide and challenge learners to look beyond the present, and to encourage reflection, understanding, critical thinking, development of competencies, self-confidence, self-esteem and respect for others.

Contemporary educators must be digital, intercultural, green, and entrepreneurial. They will need to understand the implications of these factors for their learners and their careers, and make adjustments

accordingly. They will need to be lifelong learners themselves, and inspire their learners to follow suit. They will need to learn how to adapt to new technologies and other changes in society.

VET educators should embrace lifelong learning, including a willingness to learn about emerging concepts and new pedagogical methods – and to integrate them into their teaching.

The review mapped 19 national and supra-national educators' competences frameworks (ECF) and professional standards. Most reflect a holistic approach that combines professional knowledge and beliefs, motivation and self-regulation. They generally encourage innovative teaching approaches, new professional development attitudes, lifelong learning for educators, and networking. Yet most ECFs fail to address the new areas of competence listed in the section above.

Career paths and career development for educators

The literature revealed low barriers to enter the profession and sub-standard initial training programmes for educators in many countries. It also highlighted the lack of connections between VET educator training programmes and practical workplace schemes. Prevailing academic models for VET seem to be poorly coordinated with the acquisition of skills in the workplace.

Many countries are trying to improve, and some progress has been made – for example, via coordinating bodies for pre-service training or masters programmes. Hybrid teacher/trainer programmes see educators splitting their time between employment in a company and as VET instructors. This concept opens new career opportunities that are related to closer collaboration among VET educators, with more emphasis on mentors and career counsellors to help learners. Other programmes address low motivation among educators, encouraging them to focus on professional development.

The top-performing national systems all have policies to make sure that the best possible educators are recruited and are offered an inviting career path. The following characteristics are common to these systems:

- They have a very limited number of educator training programs, just one in the case of Singapore; they are run by top research universities.
- Entry into the educator profession is very competitive (with, for example, a one of 10 acceptance ratio in Finland) so that only the most qualified candidates are admitted; some countries allow only the best high school graduates to apply.
- Selection requirements are multiple and include interviews, exams and demonstrative lessons.
- Initial training tends to emphasize the content that educators will be expected to teach, the capacity to apply teaching techniques to help learners with problems, and the capacity to improve one's teaching abilities, including piloting new approaches, evaluating the impact on learners and making corrections.
- At least a year of training is provided for practical on-the-job experience, under the guidance of qualified mentors, sometimes in specific schools that collaborate with the preparation programs.

Educators are a key component of structural reforms in many countries. A recent ETF report identified efforts to improve the quality of educators in places such as Tajikistan, Ukraine, Serbia, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Retention is a priority in Azerbaijan and Moldova, and wage increases are on the agenda in Georgia, Albania, Kosovo, and Lebanon.

Educators professional development (EPD)

The literature shows that high-quality professional development programs for educators tend to improve the quality of instruction and learner outcomes. Yet few educators participate in such programmes. Top down compulsory programmes often turn out to be ineffective, partly due to a reliance on conventional teaching methods and scanty attention to practical issues.

Successful programs tend to share a handful of characteristics:

- relevance to the labour market
- partnerships with employers and other stakeholders in the design
- the inclusion of both subject-related knowledge and transversal skills
- context-rich learning
- team-based
- possibly, blended with informal learning

The job of educators is increasingly complex. Sophisticated and innovative programmes are needed to help them keep up. The literature highlighted four kinds of forward-looking schemes:

- digitally-enhanced and mobile programmes;
- professional communities of practices;
- personal learning networks;
- innovative design-based approaches, including new ways to engage stakeholders.

Digitally-intensive EPD strategies are gaining ground because they are more effective than traditional approaches, and they can help teachers to develop digital skills. One promising trend is the use of mobile-devices that can support learning anywhere, thereby helping to break down the walls between the classroom and the workplace.

Professional communities of practice (CoP) work through the interplay of individuals and groups of educators both online and offline. CoP includes peer-observation, observational visits, mentoring and coaching. Participants use CoP to discuss problems, strategies, and solutions. Behavioural change becomes an ongoing, collective responsibility rather than an individual one. CoP also enhances mentoring.

Personal learning networks (PLN) are emerging in response to the growing evidence that traditional top-down approaches such as expert-led workshops are often ineffective. PLN relies on a combination of interactions among people, resources and digital tools. Whereas CoP emphasizes the community, the focal point of PLN is an instructor at the centre of a network of colleagues and experts. It is supported by activities such as microblogging and social networking.

Innovative design-based approaches allow educators to participate in the creation process to help ensure that programmes help them obtain the competencies they need. Social partners and employers increasingly help design EPD activities, chiming in with their needs and concerns.

These schemes overlap to a large extent, especially in terms of using ICT and collaboration. They appear to be converging toward a model called “educators as connected professionals.” This combines the pedagogical, personal, and public arenas of learning – along with the concept of *teacher as learner* and PLN, with help from social technologies. The model stresses connections, interactivity and autonomy, and could pave the way to further innovation.