

Model for Developing Learning Materials

Helsinki City College of Social and Health Care



Lifelong Learning Programme

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This booklet has been designed to provide an abstract description of how to develop supporting learning materials for students going abroad for practical training periods.

The description of the development process, different topics and issues included in the model will definitely not act as the only way to plan such a project – but are to provide a model structure for any interested party thinking of doing so for the first time. The presentation is in the form of a process – from the forming of a partnership group and planning, to partnership meetings and issues dealt in those – even to finalising the materials. There are also a lot of problematic points highlighted and recommendations given.

The booklet is based on two Leonardo da Vinci-pilot projects carried out during 2000-2008. These “ETM” and “ETM II” -projects were co-ordinated by Helsinki City College of Social and Health Care, Education Department, City of Helsinki, Finland. Both underlying pilot projects were carried out in initial vocational training in the field of social and health care. However, the presented model will be applicable to any sector’s vocational training purposes.

This Model for Developing Learning Materials will definitely not answer all possible questions and problems – but will provide some assistance for vocational training organisations that are considering setting up projects and co-operation to develop learning materials. This Model for Developing Learning Materials can be freely modified and exploited!

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1. Why Develop Learning Materials for Students Going Abroad for Practical Training Periods?

◆ The opportunity for students in initial vocational training to go abroad to learn and gain international experience has become a common part of vocational education during the last decade within the European Union. In different Members States the number of students who include in their qualification either studies done in foreign colleges or practical training periods completed abroad has been - and is - continuously and steadily increasing. This is because national level training policies emphasise facilitating such opportunities for students. Similarly the European Union's Life Long Learning Programme and various specific programmes within it support these national level policies and thus promote the increase in different Members States.

As there is a genuine increasing interest from both young and adult students to have a foreign work placement and study experience – there is also the need to develop various supportive learning materials and the tools to facilitate this. During the last decade more emphasis is being placed on improving the quality of the students' foreign training periods. The aim of improving the quality of training periods abroad and developing more systematic procedures requires new approaches, practices, materials and tools. To reach such an aim also demands an extensive international co-operation from training organisations. It is an acknowledged fact that improving the quality of foreign training periods is a common aim that can only be reached by continuous development.

Regardless of the vast numbers of projects that have a stated goal, a continuous need will prevail to develop different types of new tools and learning materials and to update already accomplished ones. A lot of work has already been carried out successfully, but this type of work is never actually completed. New needs will arise on regular basis and the old needs that we think have already been met tend to change.

Long-term experiences with student mobility-projects have indicated that in preparing students for practical training periods abroad, there is still a further need for appropriate learning materials. This is especially the case with level three – initial vocational training students.

Thus it is of added value to develop specially designed learning materials for different sectors' initial vocational training qualifications. These learning materials are to provide a framework of underpinning knowledge and skills required to work in another country. The aim is to describe what the actual work in the working life organisation is going to be like and make the beginning of practical training period easier to cope with. The learning materials to be developed should also give them a broader basis to understand the work in the placement country's socio-cultural setting.

As suitable learning materials are rarely available – any organisation acknowledging this need should co-operate with a group of training organisations sharing the same goals and launch development work. Otherwise it will not be done.

2. Forming a Partnership Group

Vocational Training Organisations

A pre-condition in starting to plan the development of learning materials is to form a partnership group with colleges that share the same need. Usually the most natural basis for forming a partnership group is to make use of already existing networks consisting of several colleges that are involved in student mobility. These colleges typically have a mutual interest to improve the student pre-placement preparation process and are therefore the most likely to commit themselves to long-term development work.

It is difficult to draw a limit on how many training organisations i.e. vocational colleges should participate in one project. The bigger the partnership group the more challenging will be the planning, organising of project meetings, reporting and the actual development work. On the basis of previous projects' experience it is recommended that all participating organisations are or have been co-operating with at least one other partner organisation within a partnership group. This will ease the actual work load and further consolidate positive working relationships on an individual level during the process. These connections are definitely not a necessity but an advantage when establishing a network.

The starting point for forming a partnership group should be based on participating colleges' shared interests to develop learning materials. Shared interests create a solid basis not only for the development project but also to support students' mobility projects in the long term. The development projects, e.g. developing learning materials, should in the end serve the students' interests in supporting their foreign work placement periods or studies abroad.

If the partnership group is to be based on existing contacts and / or networks, then the forming of partnership groups will be an easy "natural" process. The types of networks that are based on existing contacts are relatively easy to launch as major discussions on the colleges' interests and different practices have already been established.

On the other hand if the partnership group is going to be established from colleges that have no shared co-operation history, then it might be worthwhile to consider the following questions when selecting partners in different countries:

- ◆ What are the students' preferred work placements in that particular country and the reasons for their choice?
- ◆ What is the level of language competence required in the partnership countries? i.e. are students expected to communicate in English or some other language at work placements
- ◆ What experience do potential partner colleges' have in student mobility and development projects?
- ◆ What countries are being considered for partnership working? - Old / new Member State - south / north / east / west (when applying for money from EU-programmes, equal division between e.g. north and south and recruiting organisations from new Member States is considered as an advantage)
- ◆ Would it be more worthwhile to look for new partners via already existing partners' networks? By using such an approach one can have recommendations on candidate colleges. All colleges do not have to have co-operational history between them.
- ◆ Could you make use of EU-level contact seminars as lot of potential candidates may be available for the recruiting organisation?

Necessities:

- ◆ Shared needs and interests: all participating colleges have the need for developing the learning materials for their students
- ◆ Having a manageable number of partnership organisations

Recommendation:

- ◆ Make use of existing direct or indirect contacts and networks that participating organisations already have.

Working Life Organisations

When developing learning materials for vocational education, the working life-viewpoint has to be clear and visible. The learning materials should have a "theoretical" framework and thus provide the required underpinning knowledge for students to comprehend the work and its guidelines, reasoning and norms regulating it. At

the same time learning materials have to provide a realistic and pragmatic description of the work they are going to encounter in their destination country during the practical training period. It is recommended to include descriptions of daily work in relation to the work placement types that are going to be the most typical for the foreign students.

There are two alternative ways of acquiring descriptions of daily work from the working life organisations.

The first one is to contract necessary working life organisations as project partners. The advantage with contracting is that the working life organisations will be committed to the development work all through the project. The organisations' staff members should be utilised in the production of practical descriptions of daily work and also on other textual parts of the learning materials.

However the number of project partnership organisations will grow if each country's college(s) have several working life organisations supporting them. This will lead to a significant increase in the project budget and that could be considered as a disadvantage.

If the working life organisations are going to contribute as contracted partners – their involvement and participation must extend also to project meetings in their home country and/or abroad. This will also increase travel and subsistence costs extensively.

Advantages with contracting working life organisations:

- ◆ A long-term commitment to the development process
- ◆ A broader exploitation of working life organisations' expertise

Disadvantages with contracting working life organisations:

- ◆ An extensive partnership group – extensive amount of bureaucracy
- ◆ An expansion of the budget

The second way of obtaining working life organisations' contribution is through **subcontracting**. The advantage of the subcontracting option is flexibility allowing for the possibility of having several organisations' contributions whenever needed. By using subcontracting the actual partnership group will be smaller in number which will lead to fewer reports for checking. In addition the budgeting of the project will be easier: there will be

separate allocations of funds for participating colleges to carry out subcontracted activities. On the basis of previous experiences the recommendation is for subcontracting working life organisations'. Please see also next chapter!

Advantages of subcontracting working life organisations:

- ◆ flexibility in acquiring working life contributions
- ◆ lighter bureaucracy and easier management of the project
- ◆ broader possibilities: to make use of working life organisations' expertise.

Disadvantages with subcontracting working life organisations:

- ◆ Securing the organisations' commitment to the entire development process.
- ◆ The additional amount of work when looking for suitable organisations to contribute.

Social Partners

The concept of social partners refers to non-profit organisations or other types of organisations relevant in the field of vocational training. These organisations may consist of different types of interest groups e.g. client associations, charity organisations, labour unions, employer organisations, federations of service providers etc. The social partners' participation in the development project has to be carefully considered. It may be of added value to have social partners – but their role, duties and possible contribution have to be carefully planned. All participating organisations have to have a functional role in the project. If the core of the partnership group, training organisations, is to recruit also social partners, then the chosen organisations have to be participating in the planning as well. This is to secure their integration into the partnership and allow them to have their say in the forming of the entire project.

In different participating countries there may exist variations in the type(s) of social partners who could be considered appropriate to recruit into the project. The decision to recruit social partners has to be unanimous and their roles defined in a clear manner. The role of social partners may vary from peer evaluators to suppliers of

relevant information, providing channels for dissemination of the final products, marketing the project and its final products etc. – and ultimately be the ones utilising the materials as well. The roles and duties will also define whether they will receive funding from the project or will their participation be complementary and supportive without any funding shares.

Advantages of having social partners:

- ◆ A variety of expertise.
- ◆ A broader and more versatile participation and contribution to the project
- ◆ An excellent channel in marketing and dissemination
- ◆ Wider contacts in society

3. Planning of the Development Process

◆ All the phases described in this chapter have to be dealt with before the project application is even handed in. The established partnership group has to agree on numerous topics to be included in the project plan. This pre-planning i.e. making the project plan / application should be the responsibility of the co-ordinating organisation of the project. However all organisations have to participate in the planning in order to achieve a joint/shared project plan.

This pre-planning should be carried out via a shared IT-platform on which all participating organisations have access to and before the deadline for proposals by organising a preliminary meeting for finalising of the application together. Nevertheless: once the application has been successful and approved – the same discussion should take place when launching the project work in the first meeting, in an even more detailed manner. This is not only to remind participants of the content of the project but also to carefully revise the planned project.

Necessities:

- ◆ all organisations participate in planning of the project: this will achieve better commitment
- ◆ all organisations' interests can be included in the project
- ◆ timetabling and budgeting are discussed and agreed together allowing for greater awareness of the project, its aims, process and goals by all organisations.

What Qualifications to Include in the Project?

Planning of the learning materials for the project has to start with partnership colleges' joint decision making: what qualifications are to be covered with the development project. It is recommended to focus on joint qualifications that benefit all participating colleges in a similar way. The most useful starting point is to launch the development of the learning materials for qualifications that will benefit the majority

of students and that are in the need of the materials being developed. Thus the number of beneficiaries, end users of the products i.e. the students going abroad, will be the most extensive investment of time and funds spent.

In one development project it is also recommended to focus on a limited number of qualifications to be covered – otherwise the development process may become too diverse and difficult to manage. If the learning material project is going to focus on several vocational qualifications at the same time, it would be preferable if these qualifications were closely related to each other, e.g. belong to same sector's training field. This would be beneficial as teachers responsible for developing the learning materials can support their colleagues and give valuable feedback to each other during the development process within participating colleges. This kind of internal continuous evaluation of draft materials during the development process can be considered as an advantage.

It is recommended that selecting the qualifications will be done at the same time as the partnership group is established as these two are the key factors that the project is based on.

Partnership group's colleges should all make their own internal prioritising before a final joint decision on qualifications to be chosen is made. After this a negotiation should take place within partnership group: what will be the chosen qualifications to be included in the development project.

How to Plan the Content of the Materials

Once partnership colleges and qualifications have been chosen, there should be a partner colleges' preliminary meeting in which discussion on following topics should take place:

1. **What are the most typical and easy-to-arrange work placements -types** for foreign students, thus defining the provision of work placement opportunities? Regardless of the chosen qualifications for the development project, the students whilst abroad can usually do their practical training periods in slightly different types or working life organisations. The tasks and duties may vary

from one organisation to another however the core of the work is naturally based on core competencies. It is recommended that learning materials should include descriptions of daily work in real working life organisations. Selecting several of the most common types of work placement organisations and including descriptions of daily work in those organisations will provide students with a realistic overview of what they are going to encounter during their placement period abroad.

2. **What are most important competences** (skills and underpinning knowledge) required in such placement organisations in different countries? Each partner college should approach this issue from their own curriculum – viewpoint: as colleges are training professionals for their own national labour market sector(s), they should analyse the curricula of the chosen qualifications.

The outcome of the analysis should lead up to a summary of core competencies required in professional working and these competencies should be included in the learning materials. As vocational education within the EU is moving towards a competence-based format these core competencies can be mapped out rather easily.

The analysing of the core competencies of the chosen qualifications is first carried out by the participating colleges. After this, partner colleges' representatives should have a meeting and compare the outcome. The comparison is important so that participants are all aware of the required competencies in different countries and that they have a shared idea of what has to be incorporated into the developed materials. The comparison will also lead to finding out and comprehending similarities and differences in the required competencies in different countries.

This comparison will serve two interests:

- ◆ it will form a framework for the application – what the project's final products will focus on.
- ◆ it will also act as a basis for a more elaborated discussion that will take place at the first official meeting of the project i.e. implementation plan for the development process / what to include into and how to produce the learning materials.

The differences in the competencies of the participating countries' qualifications usually derive from different training systems and their socio-cultural context. It is recommended that the differences are also given explanations in the learning materials. It is of added value for students that the learning materials will also provide them with explanations and justifications why the required competencies, norms and regulations (e.g. work safety norms), work approaches, code of conduct, tasks and duties in working life organisations abroad etc. vary from their own home country to their destination country. This is especially important when describing legislation regulating work to be done abroad.

3. What are the most common work tasks and duties of students in placement organisations? The partnership group should come to a joint decision on how these will be presented in the learning materials per qualification. As the content should be obtained from working life organisations representing the most typical work placement opportunities available for foreign students, there should be an agreed format for gathering this information from actual working life. The agreed format will serve to reach the same level of coherence in the materials.

As stated earlier, it is recommended that the information be gathered from selected working life organisations by subcontracting their contribution.

Those from the subcontracted working life organisations' writing the daily work descriptions and highlighting the most common tasks and duties need to be reminded that they have to provide the information in such a general format that it would be applicable to other similar working life organisations. This is a challenging part: information has to be clear, understandable and practical enough, referring to daily work and at the same time general tasks (applicable to similar type of working life organisations). However this format of obtaining descriptions of daily work may be too big a challenge for working life organisations' personnel.

An alternative method of producing daily descriptions is to gather several practical work descriptions concerning chosen types of placements per qualification and then to assimilate those into different types of abstract 'ideal descriptions'.

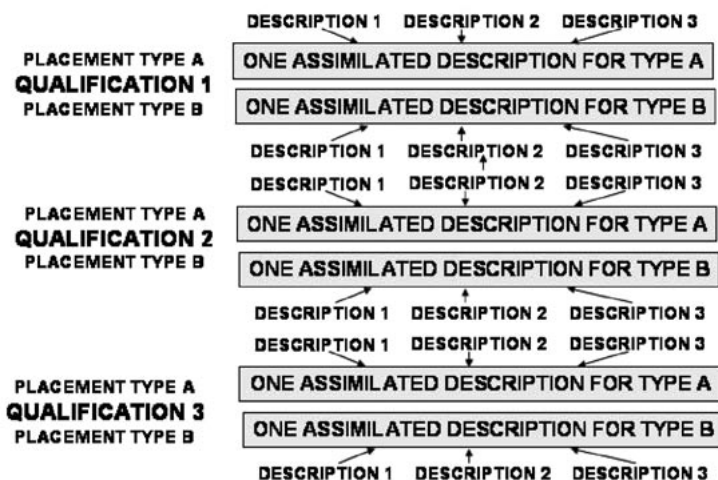
As an example: the partnership group has agreed to develop learning materials for three different qualifications (QUALIFICATIONS 1, 2, 3).

In each of these learning material packages there should two descriptions of daily work in different types (PLACEMENT TYPES A, B) of working life organisations where students of this qualification could do the placement period.

The partner colleges could acquire three descriptions (DESCRIPTIONS 1, 2, 3) of daily work for both work placement types (A, B) for this qualification-focused material package, by subcontracting.

After receiving the three descriptions, these will be assimilated into one general description (ASSIMILATED DESCRIPTION FOR TYPE A and B) of daily work in a similar manner for both placement types. Thus three different working life organisations have produced their own daily working descriptions that have been assimilated into one representing type (A or B) of daily work.

Subcontracting descriptions of daily work from working life organisations (to be carried out in all partner colleges in similar manner)



Assimilating of three different descriptions into a single description is done by the participating college's teacher who is responsible for developing the material package for the selected qualification.

4. Professional limitations are always encountered especially with practical training at the work placement / working life organisation. This can be particularly important when materials are developed for tightly regulated fields of professional working e.g. within field of health care. In different participating countries professional duties and limitations may vary from one country to another, nevertheless the qualifications may in general look alike.

As a recommendation: when the project is planned and at the first meeting these limitations (if any) should be discussed in small groups deciding on the detailed content of the learning materials for the chosen qualifications. Major limitations should be clarified by the individual countries in their learning materials.

The more detailed the discussions have been when planning the project during the applying phase the easier it will be to launch a more detailed implementation of the development process in the first official meeting of the project. As the most important key issues have already been discussed and considered, it will be easier to launch the writing process of the draft versions of the materials.

Time-Related Challenges

Another factor to be taken into consideration is the time span available, which is usually limited, as well and the development work typically carried out as a part of the participating persons' daily work. On a practical level, this means that the timetable for the development of the project has to be built from the partnership network's viewpoint. The project timetable exists for the project itself– however the amount of work for participating staff members in different countries may only be 10-15% of their full working hours during a term on a calculative basis. Integrating the project timetable to any participating college's timetable may be a challenge as college timetables are usually prioritised within partner organisations. Participating staff members have their main working duties (like

teaching) making up the rest of their working hours (85-90% of full work load) and usually these duties are timetabled in advance and prioritised – and project work has to be fitted in whenever possible as it is considered a secondary priority.

According to experiences from previous projects there are always problems with integrating project- and college-timetables and distributing participating staff members' work load evenly for different weeks and months per term. It would be recommended that staff members participating in developing learning materials have time allocated to mark their "full project working days" in the work plans / timetables before their other work duties, like teaching.

Another factor creating challenges with timetables is the differences in spring and autumn term holidays between different countries' colleges. The coordinating organisation should ask annual timetables from partner organisations and to build up a joint time-line for the entire project period. This joint time-line should clarify in a detailed manner those shared periods of time when all participating organisations are available (not on any kind of holiday). On an annual basis it may be astonishing to note that there is only approximately 5-6 months of shared working time due to differences in the holiday periods. Nevertheless it is beneficial for all participants to be aware when others are available and when they are not.

However there may be situations that meetings etc. will be scheduled on some partner organisation's holiday period. Once completed, the entire elaborated time-table / time-span of the project has to be discussed thoroughly and agreed at the first meeting of the project.

The Recruitment of Staff Members

When recruiting staff members for the learning material project, there are several matters to be taken into consideration. Basically, participation in the international activities of colleges should be an open opportunity for any interested staff member. Therefore it is recommended to have an open application format for such opportunities. If there are more interested persons than positions available, the management of the college should make the decisions.

If the management is involved in choosing project representatives from their college they should pay emphasis to a persons:

- ◆ expertise and ability to produce learning materials.
- ◆ command of the foreign language used in the project (most likely English)
- ◆ ability to commit oneself to a long-enduring processes
- ◆ ability to endure stress, changing timetables and (even unexpected) accumulation of work
- ◆ team work and social skills
- ◆ overall life situation (e.g. family responsibilities in relation to project responsibilities). Matti – under equal opportunities - not sure you can put this in.

From previous experiences of project working the allocated working hours for participating staff members are never enough however resourcefully the project has been planned, thus the recruited staff members should be made aware of this, but what also should be emphasised is the added value to their role through participating and sharing with partners from other countries. These factors should be clearly stated when participating colleges recruit their staff members for project work.

4. Timetabling

◆ The practical implementation of such a project will have the added challenge of timetabling. It is recommended that when the project is planned all participating colleges and possible working life organisations will be present their national holidays. Each organisation's holidays should be marked on a time-line from the official launch to the end of the project. All participants should be aware how much common working time there is during the project and when other participants are available or not. It is quite astonishing to note that there may only be approximately 6-7 months of shared working time during a calendar year.

Keeping up with agreed timetable schedules is an essential factor with such a project. All participating organisations and individuals are responsible for sticking to the agreed timetable. Delays will usually take place and therefore it is recommended to timetable the project quite tightly and plan most of the work for the first half of the project so that there is at least some flexibility during the latter part.

5. Partnership meetings

How Many Partnership Meetings Are Required?

In this chapter the preliminary meeting has been excluded, however these activities are dealt with in chapters 2 and 3. This chapter focuses on official partnership meetings during the time-span of the project.

Developing learning materials is a challenge. In order to obtain a similarly structured piece of work of the same quality from different colleges will require at least three shared meetings. It would be preferable to have four – but this depends on the number of both participating organisations and participating staff members from the partnership colleges. If the number of participating persons in total increases significantly the project budget will become extensive in relation to travel, accommodation and daily expenses. The larger the number of participating persons there is a tendency to achieve less during the meetings. If the total number of persons developing the learning materials per qualification is larger than 6-7, the actual discussions taking place in the partnership meetings will take a relatively long time. On the basis of previous experiences the minimum duration for partnership meetings is three days and there should be at least three meetings.

The First Meeting

It is essential that all persons responsible for developing learning materials (i.e. actual writers of the materials) from partnership colleges are present at the first meeting where the development work is planned in a detailed manner. The project application has already included the work plan for the duration of the project including the division of work and duties for all contracted partner organisations. However, once the project is launched, all of the details have to be checked and most likely also revised in a detailed manner.

The co-ordinator of the development project should remind all participants of the aims of the project when presenting the overall project and its time-span / timetable. Everyone should have a clear understanding of what kind of learning materials are to be produced in the project, who are going to be the end users of the materials and what essential content has to be included. Division of work both between partner organisations and within partner organisations have to be clarified so that everyone is aware of their duties in relation to the timetable agreed.

Discussion of general project related matters: e.g. reporting procedures and budgeting details, subcontracting procedures etc. It is recommended to deal with such practical matters at the beginning of the first meeting.

Budgeting is essential for all partnership organisations: The coordinating person should present the overall project budget and explain thoroughly the different expense categories and norms regulating them. At the same time it is worthwhile to describe reporting obligations and to present the necessary forms / tools for doing this.

The entire budget, partner organisations' funding shares and different expense categories should be dealt with transparently.

Subcontracting, as a tool for the project should be discussed in detail. Partner organisations should focus on the core of the project and have other supportive and necessary activities and processes subcontracted. Such activities include translations, development of marketing materials, establishing IT-tools etc.

Most of these activities have been dealt with one way or another in the preliminary meeting as they are part of project application. However it is recommended that these be discussed at the first meeting, just as a reminder!

The division of work topic should also cover how the working life contribution is going to be included in the learning materials. In different countries there is a possibility that the actual types of work placements for students will vary from one country to another concerning the qualifications the materials are developed for.

If the working life organisations' contribution is going to be; e.g. descriptions of daily work, practical level descriptions, what work

safety regulations mean in everyday working, division of work between different professionals at the work place etc. then these topics should be agreed as well. Written instructions for obtaining practical everyday working life contributions should be compiled so the materials would then be consistent as well. The agreed written instructions are to handed over and explained to working life organisations' representatives in partner countries.

The Key Topics of the First Meeting

After the general presentation participants should form qualification-based small groups and all of the content areas to be included in the materials should be discussed very thoroughly. The structure of the learning materials have to be agreed per learning material package, so that all different countries' learning materials are comparable by content according to the qualification they are meant for. All different chapters and their content have to be agreed in a detailed manner. Small group work is recommended in order to increase efficiency in working practices during the meeting.

As a recommendation it could be stated that special emphasis should be paid to key concepts and terms, so that they are comprehended in a similar manner by participants or if the key concepts are perceived in a different manner in different countries, then these differences should be explained in the context of the specific countries. The more thorough the discussion in the first meeting the less conceptual misunderstanding will take place as all participants writing the materials will be aware how the content should be presented.

All of the planning discussions taking place at the first meeting have to be written into detailed instructions that will act as a guideline for those launching the writing process after the meeting.

Please also see the chapter presented earlier: **'How to Plan the Content of the Materials'**.

During the first meeting, partnership organisations' representatives i.e. participants of the first meeting have to discuss and decide on the best methods for evaluation of the materials. **Please see chapter 6. 'Evaluation for further information'**.

Necessities:

- ◆ Plan carefully as this is the most important meeting and the workload heavy.
- ◆ Provide ready-made tools for partners, elaborate the tools if necessary after discussions have taken place
- ◆ Reserve most of the time to launch the actual development work of the materials
- ◆ Motivate, motivate, motivate!
- ◆ Be realistic!

The Second Partnership Meeting

Once draft versions have been developed as a result of agreement at the first meeting all of those developing the qualification-specific learning materials should meet for the second time. During the writing process each person responsible for developing the learning material package will have encountered unanswered questions and considered how other colleagues solved similar possible problems. Feedback will have been given suggesting ideas on how the draft materials may be improved.

Before the second meeting takes place, all participants have to have access to others' similar materials in order to get acquainted with them before the actual meeting.

The recommended tool for accessing materials for all is to utilise a shared IT-platform instead of sending massive email-attachments to all. All participants have to also bear in mind that they should have their materials available for others according to agreed timetable. It is far too expensive to have reading-through sessions in the second meeting.

The second meeting has to focus on further detailed discussions on problematic issues and topics encountered, comparison of materials and on making decisions on how to finalise the materials. In a similar manner to the first meeting, the discussions taking place should result in a detailed learning material package based on instructions of how everyone should proceed after this second meeting. It is recommended that these instructions be written before the end of the second meeting so that all participants can go through the instructions to ensure that they all have understood them in similar manner.

All participants responsible for their learning material packages have to agree on whether the presented statistical facts and diagrams are in an understandable format in addition to the textual sections. As participants have been proof reading others' packages they are able to point out if any chapters/sections/parts of the text are in too difficult to understand. If any teacher/professional has any difficulty in understanding others' learning materials then it is certain that the students will have far greater problems. These parts of the text have to be revised and made more understandable.

During the second meeting all participants also have to present a summary of peer evaluation feedback. All partner colleges (see section 'Peer Evaluation') are expected to submit their learning materials for the chosen qualifications to other vocational colleges' colleagues for evaluation. Organising peer evaluation is a crucial factor: receiving feedback with improvement proposals from external colleagues is a most valuable form of feedback. It is likely these colleagues are going to use the developed materials in their own colleges' international activities. It is recommended that the draft materials should be submitted not only to peer colleges' colleagues but also to the students who are going for foreign work placement periods. Students are the most valuable target group to provide feedback from as they are going to be the end users of the materials after the materials are published.

Necessities:

- ◆ Ensure that improvement proposals will be made and agreed upon
- ◆ Feedback from the evaluation has to be taken into consideration
- ◆ After the meeting there are written instructions on how to proceed
- ◆ Encourage and motivate participants, especially those that have encountered difficulties

The Third Partnership Meeting – or IT-Platform Based Comparison of the Materials

The purpose of the third meeting would be for the comparison of already checked and revised learning material packages. As partnership meetings are expensive to organise, they can be replaced

by utilising IT-platforms that facilitate provision of feedback on other partner colleges' materials. However experiences have indicated that such IT-based feedback and communication can never replace direct face-to-face discussions. A recommendation would be that if possible from a funding viewpoint, a short two-day meeting should take place. After the third meeting / IT-platform-based comparison of materials the final alterations have to be made according to the agreed instructions and timetable. Thus the third meeting follows more or less the agenda of the second meeting. The focus should be on further improvement of the materials. If the recommended second round of evaluation has taken place, the evaluation results should be the starting point for agreeing on the finalising of the materials. On the basis of experience it would be recommended to have a third meeting – if both timetable and budget will allow this.

Coordinating organisation / coordinator has to have the finalised learning material packages with illustrations and photos to be included etc. in due time as there are still some phases to be completed before final meeting can take place. The final learning materials, final products, have to have a coherent layout. It is recommended that the editing of the final materials will be subcontracted from a professional agency/company. The coordinator should look for an editor after the second meeting and agree on a plausible timetable with the agency.

The Final partnership meeting

The final meeting of the development materials should be a rewarding moment: all the work has been completed and only publishing / releasing of the materials is left.

Please invite all persons that have contributed to the launching of the final products!

All people that have participated in the development process should be acknowledged for their contribution!

6. Evaluation of the Materials

◆ Organising the evaluation of the draft materials is an important phase for this type of project. The participants developing various learning material packages will become more or less “blind” to the text they produce. Those developing the different learning materials have to bear in mind that the final products should be valid on a national level and reflect the work they relate to on general level. Thus the evaluation process will contribute to the improved quality of the final materials. It is recommended that when the first full draft versions are submitted for external evaluation and that once completed and feedback has been received, summarised and analysed, it should be made available to the entire partnership group. Each partner organisation should also build up improvement proposals for the second meeting.

It is recommended to submit the materials for a similar round of evaluation for a second time after the second meeting. In the second meeting the participants are to discuss summaries of the feedback received and improvement proposals made by the participants from the different countries. The result of the discussion should be a set of written instructions on how to improve the materials. Once these necessary alterations have been made the materials should be submitted for second round of evaluation carried out in a similar manner as it was done in the first place.

Internal Evaluation

It is recommended to organise an internal feedback system in partner colleges. Draft versions, even of full chapters of the materials, should be handed in for teaching colleagues to evaluate. Submitting texts piece by piece for colleagues is not as heavy a workload as handing in full material packages at one time. Internal evaluation is easier to organise and will lead to continuous improvement of the materials.

External Evaluation

It is recommended that the peer evaluation of drafts be carried out by agreement or even subcontracts with other colleges operating in the

same field of vocational education on a national level. Each learning material package should be submitted for evaluation to at least two other colleges' colleagues who are specialists in the subject area.

It is also recommended that draft versions should be handed in for external evaluation to selected staff members from working life organisations.

Collecting the feedback should be based on an agreed format (e.g. feedback sheets) and carried out in a similar manner for all participating countries. All parties giving feedback should use the same format making the results of the evaluation easier to summarise and compare.

Student Evaluation

It is recommended to also submit draft materials to students for proof reading. It is recommended to submit the drafts to students going on foreign work placements as their fellow colleagues will be the ones using the final products once the completed materials are available. Students participating in the evaluation process should be acknowledged in the final products. Students' feedback should deal not only with the content but also on the level of language and overall presentation of the materials.

Evaluation of the Work Process

Each and every project regardless of its nature should also pay attention to its working processes. This can be done either by an external evaluator or by the coordinator of the project.

Advantages of using external evaluator:

- ◆ Neutral, professional
- ◆ Is impartial to the actual development work of the project
- ◆ “helicopter view”

Disadvantages of using external evaluator:

- ◆ truly committed? (esp. if done by an evaluation-specialist agency)
- ◆ will effect the budget

- ◆ are the tools and approach used genuinely modified for the project or applying to just a standard framework?

Advantages of using a coordinator as an evaluator:

- ◆ knows the project thoroughly
- ◆ committed, willing to increase the efficiency and quality of the project and products
- ◆ has a pre-awareness of existing problems

- ◆ Disadvantages of using coordinator as an evaluator:
- ◆ too involved in the project, too many personal interests in the project
- ◆ too silvery-lined evaluation results, not objective
- ◆ prefers the actual completion of the project over the evaluation process.

We recommend that the work process evaluation should be to the point and as light as possible. Such evaluation should take place after each term in order to receive feedback in time to improve the working process on the basis of received feedback.

Feedback should be gathered with an easy-to-complete questionnaire. Replies should be given openly and summaries on a national level and on a project level should be dealt with openly as well. A scale could be used, such as; “unsuccessful – fair – good” with a possibility to provide written explanations. Extremely important are the improvement suggestions. Evaluation as whole should lead up to a report covering the entire process.

The questionnaire should at least cover:

- ◆ Planning of the project
- ◆ Implementation of the project
- ◆ Division of work
- ◆ Supportive measures; (tools, preparations of meetings, coordination etc.)
- ◆ Funding
- ◆ Reporting
- ◆ Problems encountered and how solved
- ◆ Improvement proposals

As a final recommendation: please release the final products for free if possible – this would facilitate utilisation of the materials!

Model for Developing Learning Materials

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All materials of the project are downloadable for free from partner colleges' websites:

www.vitaliscollege.nl
www.davinci.nl
www.ttk.ee
www.kbs-pflege.de
www.kellebeek.nl

www.hesote.edu.hel.fi/english
www.linkoping.se/birgitta
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