

APEL IN VET TEACHER TRAINING IN ESTONIA

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ABSTRACT

The present article gives an overview about APL and APEL in Estonian VET Teacher Training. The article presents shortly regulations and act's in Estonian VET Teacher Training, common principles in APEL and content of VET Teacher Training Curricula in Tallinn University

Key words: APEL, APL

VET TEACHER TRAINING IN ESTONIA

In Estonia, there are two types of teachers in vocational schools. These are general subject teachers (upper secondary general education teachers) and vocational teachers at vocational education institutions who teach theoretical subjects and supervise practical training. Vocational teachers are the generic term for teachers for both IVET and CVET. It is not possible to separate VET teachers according to the IVET or CVET system in Estonia as there is no such division in the system: VET institutions provide both initial and continuing vocational education and training.

In general, vocational teachers acquire their professional qualification from a vocational educational institution (where they study to become a joiner, builder, hairdresser, chef, tailor, etc) or from a higher education institution where they acquire a degree in economics, engineering, etc. After completing their studies they may acquire higher education in the field of vocational pedagogy or participate in short-term teacher training programs. The Teacher training framework requirements (*Õpetajate koolituse*

raamnõuded) recognize that not all professions require a level of higher education and are therefore not necessary to become a vocational teacher (e.g. builder, hairdresser, etc.).

There are three universities, which educate VET teacher in field of pedagogy: Tallinn University, University of Tartu and Tallinn Technical University.

As all other fields of education, VET teacher training is also regulated by different legal acts and regulations, such as Teacher Training Framework (*Õpetajate koolituse raamnõuded*), Standard of Higher Education (*Kõrgharidusstandard*), Professional Standard for VET Teacher (*Kutseõpetaja kutsestandard*) and Teachers Qualification Framework (*Pedagoogide kvalifikatsiooninõuded*).

General requirements for general and vocational teacher training are set by Teacher Training Framework. This framework also describes requirements for initial year of novice teacher and for teacher's in-service training.

According to this framework the vocational teacher must be able:

- to teach a subject or a speciality on the assumption of today's requirements;
- to connect the speciality subject with general subjects to be studied; to support developing connections between the theory and the practice;
- to be a confidential and a contact person for a student when communicating with the adult world,
- to co-operate with other teachers, parents or with persons replacing them and with other institutions and adults in the area following the educational-pedagogical intentions of the educational institution and the study group;
- to consult the student in questions about personal successful education and learning and about designing work career in view of the principle of life-long learning.

According to Teachers Qualification Framework VET teachers have to apply after each three year in in-service training, to update his/her both pedagogical and professional qualification. Duration of in-service must be at least two month.

Teachers Qualification Framework describes requirements for educational level of working teacher, for teacher's prior professional education and/or training in field of management. According to this framework a VET teacher must have either:

- bachelor degree in vocational pedagogy of other higher education in field of teaching and at least 3-years working experience in field of teaching;
- higher education of post-secondary education in field of teaching, at least 3-years working experience in field of teaching and 320-hour's in-service training in vocational pedagogy; or
- higher education or post-secondary education in field of teaching, at least 3-years working experience in field of teaching and continuing working in professional field.

APEL IN ESTONIA

Estonia has been in the midst of a major transition processes involving all sectors: policy, education, job market and third sector. The developments of the first decade following the restoration of independence have received considerable support from international cooperation: Estonia has joined the Bologna and Sorbonne conventions establishing a European Higher Education Area, joined the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region and adopted the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act.

There are enormous changes and reforms that have taken place in Estonian educational policy within the past decade. Reforms were accompanied by diversification of educational institutions, curricular changes towards flexibility, high level of drop-outs from educational system, increase of adult learners in higher education, international and local mobility and establishment of the requirements for professional qualifications. After the reform of higher education according to the principles of the Bologna Declaration in 2001, Estonian universities recognised the need for accreditation of prior formal learning. Being the second reform during the last ten years, the Bologna process introduced several new qualifications that differed from the previous ones both in purpose as well as length of study.

A common term *VÕTA* (*varasemate õpingute ja töökoguse arvestamine*) is widely used in Estonia to refer to accreditation of prior experiential learning. Process of implementing APEL started mainly 2003, after some international seminars, participation in European projects and discussions the University Act allows up to 50% of the HE programmes to be obtained through APEL. From September 2007 there is no limitation but is stated that HE institutions cannot award whole diploma or certificate on the basis of prior and experiential learning. Neither APL nor APEL could be used for access to the university - replacing necessary qualification in entrance, everybody needs to have previous level diploma.

The University Act requires the universities to accredit prior and experiential learning and gives the universities the obligation to elaborate the rules and procedures for APEL. Last year (2007) the rules and purposes of APEL are set in manor principles by Higher Education Standard that requires the Universities to update and uniform their regulations.

Development of the APEL system and regulation in legislation is also started for vocational education and training. Today the Vocational Education Act (*Kutseõppeasutuse seadus*) regulates only mobility between VET institutions and requires accreditation of prior studies.

ATTESTATION AND AWARD OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

According to the Professions Act (*Kutseadus*), the award of professional qualifications is a process by which a person displays the level of his or her professional competence. Attestation methods are a written or oral examination, test assignment, attestation on the basis of documents or a combination of methods. They are set by the awarding body.

Generally, for lower level professions (level I and II), the qualification attestation does not demand a formal education certificate as a prerequisite. The awarding body should validate and recognise the results of non-formal education. Standards in higher levels (IV-V) demand a higher education diploma. In a re-attestation process, the awarding body takes into account the results of non-formal education certificate or higher education diploma.

Future developments

In a situation characterised by increasing importance of the lifelong learning agenda and the pursuit of a better match between education and changing needs of the job market, developing a nationally effective APEL system has become a priority for the Ministry of Education and Research. APEL is one of the key issues on the National Adult Education Priorities List and the National Adult Education Strategic Plan. In collaboration with the Ministry, the University of Tartu has launched an ambitious project financed by the European Social Fund (LÜKKA, www.ut.ee/lykka), for developing a national APEL system. The project and the envisaged system encompass also other universities, applied higher education institutions, vocational education institutions, qualifications agencies, and employers' associations. The project aims to develop APEL tools and practices, promote APEL networking in Estonia, provide advanced training to APEL assessors and set up and implement a system of quality standards for APEL. The next period of ESF Programmes including APEL developments is now in working process. Thus, the coming years may be expected to speed up progress in many aspects of APEL.

Main important developments:

- Estonian Qualifications Framework and level descriptions (including HE qualifications) – will be adopted 2009
- Curriculum development – describing (redesigning) study programmes in learning outcomes, started lately and will be finished and adopted in September 2009
- Integrated guidance and counselling services
- Training and support system for APEL professionals
- APEL information database, user guides and web-based portal
- Broadening of APEL network
- Quality assurance system for APEL

In Tallinn University the input of APEL is guaranteed by competency based curricula (bachelor level, Vocational Pedagogy), which is in use since autumn of 2007. This

curriculum is based on 2006 adopted *Professional Standard for VET Teacher*. This standard defines vocational teacher competence requirements on three levels. All three levels require very good knowledge in professional field and pedagogical knowledge. Differences between three levels express in requirements of methodical and administrative tasks.

Differences are also between levels of education:

- III level requires at least vocational post-secondary education;
- IV level requires higher education or education in equivalent level and teacher training, which is set by professional standard for VET teachers;
- V level requires master degree or education in equivalent level and teacher training which is set by professional standard for VET teachers.

Passing the bachelor curriculum of vocational pedagogic allows the graduate to apply for vocational teachers' IV level.

The vocational teacher of III professional level must be able:

- to create and to preserve a learning and a working environment;
- to plan the learning process, to carry it out and to analyze it;
- to understand her/his working environment and to follow orders;
- to analyze and to evaluate students' study results;
- to support student's development and to guide her/him to life-long learning and to analyze and to improve herself/ himself;
- to develop specialty study.

VET teacher, who applies IV level have in addition to deal with development of vocational education in general. Teacher, who is in V level have in addition also mentor and guide his/her colleagues (VET teachers in level III and IV) and be active in developing of image of vocational education.

The curriculum structure of vocational pedagogy has been compiled according to the principle that the general readiness and skills necessary for working as a vocational teacher will be acquired when covering introducing and specialty subjects. The introducing subjects give to the future vocational teachers an overview about general field's related to pedagogy as for example about psychology, philosophy and sociology. During the introducing subjects the future teachers also get the primary readiness for pedagogical studies.

The specialty subjects are divided between three specialty modules:

1. The module of vocational teachers' social competences aim is to create an opportunity for forming social competences necessary for working as a vocational teacher; for understanding the importance of guiding and consulting the students and for forming teamwork skills.
2. The module of vocational training theory and didactics aim is to create an opportunity for understanding the basics and the nature of vocational pedagogic, for forming the readiness necessary for planning and carrying out a vocational

training process and for researching/developing the field of vocational pedagogic and vocational education.

In those modules is possible for student to apply prior learning (APL) only if those studies are finished in higher education level. According to Tallinn University Study Regulations (*Tallinna Ülikooli õppekorralduse eeskiri*) can student apply only those studies, which are finished 6 years before he/she start his/her studies in curricula of Vocational Pedagogy.

3. The module of vocational teachers' professionalism aim is to create an opportunity for forming self-analysis skill and independence, for forming readiness necessary for improving one's own vocational and professional knowledge and skills and for planning one's own professional development and for realizing these plans. The pedagogical practice and professional self-education of vocational teachers are carried out within the frames of this module.

During the professional self-education the vocational teachers can choose subjects supporting their specialty in the Tallinn University or in other Estonian national higher education institution in compliance with their wishes.

This module is mainly based on prior learning and work experience. In this module student can apply also those studies, which are finished in in-service training or in post-secondary level (but it have to be connected with teacher's professionalism).

For applying prior learning and work-experience a board of commissioners is called together and this board will assess the equality of studies and work experience with Professional Standard for VET Teachers.

There is three different ways to apply prior learning in curricula:

1. Applying prior studies in level of higher education as part of elective studies. For this student has to fill application, where amount of studies and name of studies are described. Total amount of elective studies are 45 ECTS. Applied will those study's, which are related to teacher's pedagogical of professional competency. It means that studies have to be connected with those tasks, which are set in Professional Standard for VET Teacher.
2. Applying studies in level of higher education is also possible, when content of prior studies is same with content of curricula. Then student have to agree with professor, who is teaching similar subject. This way is possible only when subjects are part of curricula of vocational pedagogy. For this also application with all information about prior studies is needed.
3. Applying studies in level of post-secondary education is possible when student is choosing subject Professional Placement. For applying prior studies student have to fill application and add copies of diploma(s). Application is assessed by board of experts, who consider link between prior studies and Professional Standard for VET Teacher.

Application of professional work experience as a part of teacher training is going in same path as applying prior studies in level of post-secondary education.

As written before – all prior studies and/or work experience have to connect with Professional Standard for VET Teacher.

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