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2009 – EUROPEAN YEAR ON CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Exploration and Analysis on Creativity and Innovation in Initial Vocational Education and Training

by Walter Stach / Gabriele Stöger

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RATIONALE / BACKGROUND

The decision for the *European Year of Creativity and Innovation* 2009 has to be regarded in the frame of the revised Lisbon strategy (2005) which highlights the importance of general and vocational education and training. *Innovation* and *Creativity* are crucial for economic growth and fundamental for social and cultural progress, the development of active citizenship and ethical values.

During our long lasting experience with projects in the context of initial vocational training we could discover that co-operations between apprentices, artists and cultural mediators have an impact on the promotion of "key skills" by encouraging the ability to think creatively and act in an innovative way. Our inquiry is based on the hypothesis, that *Creativity* and *Innovation* are required particularly in artistic processes and are strongly demanded and therefore promoted when dealing with art.

Regrettably, in the current practice of initial vocational training the elements *Creativity* and *Innovation* are not systematically addressed, thus discriminating young people in vocational training against those who attend general education and furthermore disregarding remarkably rich potentials for the creation of economic values.

OBJECTIVES

- to investigate the relevance of *Creativity* and *Innovation* in the present European VET-systems.
- to describe the theoretical foundations required to encourage *Creativity* and the potential for *Innovation* in the context of "key skills" in initial vocational training processes.
- to collect and analyse examples of *good-practice*, which help visualise the impact on *Creativity* and *Innovation*.
- to draft recommendations by involving EU specialists in the discussion (expert's hearing).

The investigation aims at devising strategies and relevant measures deriving from successful practice that will acknowledge the potential of *Creativity* and *Innovation* in initial vocational training and foster its systematic implementation.

ACTIVITIES

- Definition of the terms "creativity" and "innovation", theoretical underpinning to find manageable indicators.
- Analysis of relevant documents and data on the present status of the initial VET systems in 27 EU member states with regard to their attention to creative and innovative potential of apprentices.

- Pre-selection of 12 apprenticeship trades that will be examined more closely.
- Discussion of the results in interviews with representatives in charge of Education from those countries that
 - a) explicitly emphasize the need for creativity and innovation in initial vocational education and training,
 - b) do not show concern for these factors in formal or in informal education careers.
- Collection of examples of activities in the field of initial vocational education and training that systematically aim at encouraging *Creativity* and *Innovation* in Austria and in other EU member states that can serve as models for good practice for other vocational training systems.
- Discussion of our findings with a small group (2 - 3) of invited experts, in order to draft recommendations as well as strategies for the implementation of the recommendations in the different EU VET-systems.

By the end of the *EU Year on Creativity and Innovation* these recommendations will be published and publicly discussed in the course of a conference (arranged by the Austria Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture).

PROVISIONAL FINDINGS

The Terms *Creativity* and *Innovation*

The Council of Europe stated in its conclusions on promoting creativity and innovation: *Creativity is the prime source of innovation, which in turn is acknowledged as the main driver of growth and wealth creation, as key to improvements in the social field and as an essential tool in addressing global challenges such as climate change, health care and sustainable development.*

Reverting to its Latin origin *creare* the word means *to create or to make something new, to invent or to produce something*, but it also stands for *making a choice* and there is a relation to the Latin word *crescere*, which means *to grow, to become or to let grow*.

For our purpose, we use a definition of *creativity* which is based on G.H. Mead's theory of the act (see G. H. Mead: *Geist, Identität und Gesellschaft*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1998).

CREATIVITY

The term creativity therefore incorporates the development of ideas for (re)designing habitual practices and products in order to find more satisfying solutions than those already established. To act merely by routine will inhibit creativity.

Creativity can be applied to all areas of activity:

- the design and the use of products and services, sales and marketing
- working processes and production techniques
- co-operative relationships and organisation
- working conditions and social climate at the workplace

The following features characterise creativity:

- a (self-)critical view on problems and weak points in traditional practices and products;
- the analysis of the area of acting and its deconstruction into simple elements, the activation of former experience and the inclusion of additional aspects which had not been taken into account yet.
- linking the results of the analysis to new solutions and testing them in practice.

Creativity only shows on the way to new solutions. (it depends on the value measure which solutions are considered „more satisfying“, or „better“ than another, e.g. low-cost vs. sustainable).

Every individual has creative potential.

INNOVATION

We regard as *innovation* proposals for solutions that emerge from creative processes and are able to change, amend or replace traditional practices.

The degree of their newness can be regarded as relative to existing reference groups, such as *new* in respect of the practice of a particular individual, a working group, an enterprise, an industrial sector, a market etc.

With reference to *creativity* the term *innovation* expresses whether the creation of ideas has led to results that are practicable (which does not inevitably mean that they have to be successful on the market).

Pre-selection of apprenticeship trades that will be examined more closely

To find out about the relevance of creativity and innovation in initial vocational training a selection of apprenticeship trades will be investigated. 12 trades were selected that represent all economic sectors (primary, secondary, tertiary) and the most important industrial branches (like production of goods in industry and crafts, distribution of goods/services – trade, transport and administration). The apprenticeship trades should also be relevant in all countries selected for closer investigation (see next chapter), they should apply to a representative number of enterprises and employees in general and to a representative number of apprentices in particular and cover a variety of competencies (as to their different relationships to objects, tools and human beings).

According to these criteria the following professions were selected:

- *Market Garden Expert*
- *Plastics Technology Expert*
- *Painting, Coating, and Decorating Workers*
- *Travel Agency Assistant*
- *Electrical Engineering Technician*
- *Motor Vehicle Driver (passengers or goods)*
- *Motor Vehicle Engineering*
- *Cook*
- *Masseur*
- *(Industry) Office Assistant*
- *Information Technology Expert*
- *Reprocessing and Recycling Expert*

Pre-selection of countries that will be examined

After having obtained an overview of the initial vocational training systems in the EU member states, we selected 7 countries where vocational training (on ISCED Level 3) takes place in school as well as in a company. Different education systems in a wide spectrum should be represented, where a relevant percentage of young people enter an apprenticeship contract. The countries chosen should also geographically situated across Europe and there should be a mixture between old and new member states:

The countries selected are

- *Austria*
- *Denmark*
- *Hungary*
- *The Netherlands*
- *Poland*
- *Portugal*
- *United Kingdom*