
Common portfolio of additional supporting framework and
instruments to support non-traditional target groups in
(entering) HE (R09)

LEONARDO DA VINCI Transfer of Innovation Project
“RELATE – PROMOTING THE RECOGNIZABILITY OF LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO HIGHER
EDUCATION”

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1 Introduction

Non-traditional target groups are very heterogeneous and each group is peculiar with regard to personal aspects, competences and experience in life and profession.

Traditional students opting for study after finishing school with an entrance qualification for higher education. The number of non-traditional students has increased in recent years.

Two different target groups of non-traditional students can be distinguished. 'Older' students were willing to study after VET, after a period of professional activity, with a high experience in their professional activities and practical expertise in the job or those, mostly women, who 're-entry' in job after spending time on family responsibilities by beginning studies. These candidates feel that they can benefit from their vocational education and their professional experience for a successful course of study in the HE.

Previous learning often goes hand in hand with learning of facts and acquisition of knowledge. Critical reviews of themes are of little or no significance. The motivation of this target group of professionals is mostly based on interest in an extra occupational study program, they want to complete their vocational biography or reaching a different position on the base of the academic degree.

The other non-traditional target group collects the trainees, which get interested in further education after VET. RPL enables younger people, who opt at first for vocational training after school education, to enter studies in HE. RPL offers a perspective for qualification and professional activities. The first decision for these students to enter VET can be based on their socialization in

family, social environment and the experience in school, absentee economic resources or uncertainty, less self-confidence or a lack of any ideas or interests in the time of decision making.

2 Extra occupational students in the study programs socialpedagogy & management and nursing management

The Institutions of HE address increasingly and explicit employed persons for studies. For example, in a faculty of social and health, kindergarten-teachers and nurses are asked to begin a study program in socialpedagogy & management or nursing management parallel to their job. To guarantee the success in studies it is important and necessary to development instruments or methods to support the students.

Students in extra-occupational studies with the aim to acquire a degree of higher education are often working full time. Precondition for studying in the extra-occupational study program is the profession of kindergarten teacher or nurse and to work half-time in their profession. Generally they work more in their job and they have families so that the time for study tasks is limited. In addition to that, the major part of the study program is planned as self-study. This leads sometimes and some students to the assumption that only the attendance period is the relevant part of the studies and the lecturer impart the necessary knowledge.

The extra occupational student groups are heterogenous because of the different educational background of the students and their professional experience. Some of the students have no qualification to enter HE or the schooldays date back to several years. It is therefore necessary to establish courses and counselling to support the students at the transition phase from VET to HE and from working to HE.

For such study programs with extra occupational students it is necessary to do more concerning clarification of requirements for the studies and the development of courses which can help them to compensate the lack of competences (and knowledge).

Preparation courses

Preparation courses can help the beginners of a study program to get involved in themes and knowledge which are precondition for modules of the specific study program. Preparation courses offered before the begin of the study program can help the beginners whose schooldays date back to several years to get involved in basic and general competences required for the studies. (e.g. refreshment in themes of the school subjects).

Preparation courses offer support in themes which require basic competences for example if modules based on the lecture of text in foreign language or modules in business administration or statistics which need knowledge and competence in mathematics.

Because of the recognition of 60 ECTS and the shortening of the study-time (one year less) the time for working with the students is relatively short, especially considering the fact that most of the students are full time workers. They do not have the required time for the studies. Consequences can be that their performances are or get poor, the students drop-out or the level of the modules will be reduced.

The difference of the requirements between studies in HE and VET is not always clear for all students. They are socialized for ‚going to school’ and learning knowledge. These problems appear mainly in the context of writing. Against that is the learning for written examination similar to the experience in school. Therefore it is necessary to develop courses at the beginning of and during the studies, e.g. to support scientific working (technique, the use of the technique, work with literature, ...), trainings and exercises to transfer theoretical knowledge in practical contexts and

issue-oriented aspects of the modules.

The individual counselling of students should make the situation of studying a central theme and to a subject of discussion.

Individual counselling

Since the beginning of the study programs individual counselling should be offered and performed. Before beginning the studies, the course guidance service has to contact all the students to discuss the formalities e.g. the financing of the studies (tuition fees, ...). An individual consultation for the field of study should be obligatory, before or at the beginning of the studies, particularly for extra occupational students. This offers a relevant opportunity to talk about the study program and the contents, the requirements, the effort, and about the compatibility of studying, work and family, because many students work full-time with the consequence that they have less time to fulfil the requirements of the modules.

Beside this optional offer, students will be addressed normally by the head of the study program if the student is not present in the modules, when the performance is poor. In this regard, it is useful to establish accompanying consultations with each student to assess his/her situation about the studies.

The students should know that counselling or talking about problems or issues is always possible.

Modules to reflection the professional activity

In the extra-occupational study programs modules used for reflecting the profession of the student

and their experiences in the job can be integrated. For example, a different perception of the profession can be acquired during these modules. The experience in the job becomes a subject of studies. The students analyze and reflect the items and her/his professional experience.

For example in the study program ‚nursing management’ the students have to attend different reflection modules, defined in the semesters. The students get for each of the modules a subject area and a structure for handling their themes. For example: in the first module the students select a theme of their current professional context: e.g. typical problems or situations with other professionals or patients. The second module asks to look at nursing or at the profession in the context of the society/the public: e.g. reports on nursing in the newspaper, in the news, in television series, in media. The subject area of the third module looks at the professional field of the students in the future (they look ahead to the professional sector they aspire after their studies): e.g. nurse manager, leader of a professional unit.

The reflection modules are a relevant support because the students learn to analyze their professional weekday, the social consideration of their profession with the help of the contents and methods skilled in the modules. They are able to describe a situation, to find problems and solutions.

The reflection process includes a discussion of a part of the selected theme with the study group. The reflection processes have to be documented.

Mentoring by Students

An important instrument in the extra-occupational study program is the participation of ‚older’ students in the process of mentoring the beginners and ‚younger’ students and to establish a

contact between full-time-students and extra-occupational students.

Different forms of mentoring systems between younger and elder students-groups should be created. A main problem is that all extra-occupational students attend the University of Applied Sciences only when they have courses. They have a timetable with closely spaced seminars, so that there is no time in between to meet other student groups. Additionally, some of the students don't live locally, and a meeting outside the times of course units is (or seems to be) impossible.

Possible occasions to realize such a mentoring is to offer to student groups meetings for informal exchange and give them the chance to organize and implement a seminar (half a day) in which the students present their projects and papers they have worked on in the modules.

Another possibility is to nominate mentors. Each student gets an older student as a mentor. The mentor comes along with the younger student during the studies. They help the new students at the beginning to find their way around; they are available for questions during the time.

An interesting approach is to combine the full-time students and extra-occupational students in a mentorship. For example in the domain of social pedagogy, the extra-occupational students are kindergarten-teachers and they work as kindergarten teachers, they have professional experience in this sector. The full time study program qualifies the students to work as kindergarten-teachers and they have to absolve periods of practical trainings. Through the contact between the two target-groups the full-time students will profit from the practice experience and the extra occupational students learn a lot about the younger generation entering their profession.

Information about recognition of prior learning

The possibility to studying and work at the same time is not very common.

It is thus necessary for each HE Institution to have good and up-to-date information about the opportunities for studying alongside the work and the recognition of competencies acquired outside HE. Therefore the HE Institutions can use their homepage to inform about these opportunities, to offer material about the background of the process of recognition, the legal framework, etc. Candidate students have the option to inform themselves e.g. if it is possible to recognize competencies of their profession or/and professional experience. Relevant documents should be made available as a download. Information and information material should contain the contact persons, the address, phone numbers, email address and the office hours.

Another way to inform is to offer information events. Their date and time should be compatible with the working time of the employed persons interested in studying. For example the information events should take place in the afternoon, the evening or at the weekend.

3 Supporting instruments used from beginning of the studies

During the introductory phase of the study program it is important to implement instruments which accompany the students through the whole studying. By this means the students learn self-responsibility and develop a feeling for time management and the workload combined with the activities of the courses.

Personal study plan

At the beginning of their study, the students familiarize themselves with the curriculum and create their own plan for studying they develop a ‚personal study plan’ (web based) which represents the base for meetings with the tutoring teacher. The implementation of the plan is connected with

answering questions about the decision for studying, information about studying, foreign languages, problems or support for study, personal situation, aims associated with studying and the interests in spare time. The questions will be discussed with the tutor and he/she writes a feedback on the students plan.

In a next step another questions shall be answered and discussed with the tutor, which focuses on RPL, the process of studying, the plans for the thesis and ideas after the graduation. They should be asked about required support, to evaluate the individual performance of the last year of study and to give feedback the last year. The discussion about the students plan takes place at least for one year, mostly a longer time (if the student needs support).

The study plan is helpful, because the students monitor their own process of studying. They have systematic and structured contacts to their tutors, so he/she monitors the process too.

Personal portfolio during studying

The results of the courses are collected in a portfolio by the students. It is the base for an essay the students have to write at the end of studying to reflect about the learning outcomes and the competences they have gained.

Practical training teams

The students are guided by practical teams (teachers specified for practical fields). The guidance is designed for a period of five weeks. This is a helpful instrument during the practical education to have a structure and systematic plan and contact persons.

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4 Support and instruments used by VET institutions to help their trainee in entering HE

Trainees of VET who orientate to further qualification needs help to get information about lifelong learning and the possibility of RPL. It can be necessary for them to strengthen their desire. Teachers observe and support those trainees in VET who seem to be suitable for further education through references and assistance in decision making, by talking about the issues, the possibilities and the perspectives of HE and RPL.

Information

The VET institution informs about the possibilities for the trainee for studying. Therefore they work together with HE Institution particularly HEI with study programs addressing the same key aspects as the VET. They can offer information events, provide information material and visits to the HE institution. It is important to talk about studying with the trainee, in order to weight the chances, the precondition and the acquirements. For that it is meaningful to establish a course, which prepare and inform the interested trainee systematically about studying.

Extra qualification

The VET institution offers courses to acquire the entry qualification for a study program of a University of applied sciences. Two general focuses are possible: Courses or themes to support the specific subjects of the school education (languages, mathematics ...) which are precondition for studies. A second focal point can be to acquire cross subject competencies or key aspect of studying (contact with literature, reading and writing, ability for self study, ...).

Bridging courses

The offer of bridging courses in cooperation with HEI to themes of the study program can smooth and fluent transition between both institutions. The candidate students have information about the HE, the institution and the processes. Questions about “studying” can be discussed before the study program eventually starts. An interesting aspect can be to acquire former trainee, who are meanwhile students for mentoring the bridging courses and contact person.

Mentorship between trainee and student

Students can be mentors of trainees in the last part of VET, to answer questions, to inform about studying, etc. They represent a kind of perspective or possibility after the VET and show a way of development for the trainees.

5 Instruments used by the partners in the project

AFBB	Name of Supporting instrument	Stage of implementation (for graduation from VET, Admission stage ect.)	Description
	school counselor	final year of VET	school counselor gives individual advise (counselling hours twice a week)
	Lehrstellenservice	during VET	target-group specific counselling (opportunities on the labour market)
	extra qualification	second/final year of VET	extra lessons after school to achieve advance technical certificates (Fachhochschulreife)

FHD	Name of Supporting instrument	Stage of implementation	Description
	individual counseling	different about the study programs	Students get individual counseling concerning to questions about the compatibility studies/job; about question linked to the papers in the study courses, about personal questions/problems.
	preparation courses	since 2012	Preparation courses makes the begin or the access of same courses easier (e.g. mathematics), they help to find access to the contents of the studies.
	moduls to reflection the professional activity	since 2012	In the extra-occupational study programs are modules integrated which reflected the professional activities. The students have to develop a portfolio and present it in his study group.
	Cross-Year-Mentoring	informal since 2013, developing more formal structure now	We encourage students to keep in Contact with students in the year above. Therefore we offer space in our ilias-online-module and also yearly conferences and seminars with students in different semesters.
	Mentoring between full-time-students and RPL-students	informal since 2013, developing more formal structure now	We encourage RPL-students to keep in Contact with full-time-students. Therefore we offer space in our ilias-online-module and also yearly conferences and seminars with students in different semesters.
TUHC	Name of Supporting	Stage of	Description

	instrument	implementation	
	RPL application form for fulfilling the admission requirements for MA and PhD	Before admission	If the candidates' previous education does not meet the admission requirements for master's and doctoral study programmes (specialty-based or partly open curricula), but the conditions are met in a different way (working within the specialty, engagement in research or creative work, further professional studies, voluntary activities, etc.) the candidate has the possibility to apply for them to be recognized, and in case of a positive decision a candidate can apply for the desired programme. Application together with proof material is combined in a portfolio method.
	Webpage: www.tlu.ee/vota (in Estonian) and www.tlu.ee/rpl (in English)	Any time	Information about RPL has been made available in Estonian and in English. Feedback from spring 2014 showed that the international students were not aware of RPL opportunities and based on that more information was put to the webpage for them.
	Individual counselling	Any time	In each academic unit there's a person whose responsibility is also to provide RPL counselling to the prospective and current students. As RPL cases are quite often very individual, it is a great opportunity to go through previously gained knowledge and skills individually.
	Info sessions	Before admission and beginning of	Info sessions are held for prospective and also new students, who have prior learning experience (studies, training, work etc) they

		academic year	could use.
	Counselling during admission exams	During admission	During admission exams for the Health Promotion Specialist curriculum the candidates are being asked about their previous experience and also possibilities of RPL are being introduced to them.
	Supporting course "Studying at University"	Beginning of studies	In Haapsalu College each student can pass a course "Studying at University" at the beginning of their studies. As part of the course RPL opportunities are being introduced. Also the course emphasizes study skills as for the adult learners these might be a bit rusty.
	Cooperation agreements and comparisons of curricula between VET and HE	Any time	With some of the VET schools the curricula has been compared and in this case with the VET students a simplified RPL is being used.

KRTC	Name of Supporting instrument	Stage of implementation	Description
	Support for information about possibilities	Any time	Webpages of different universities and colleges
	Support for state exams	Any time, state exams during the season (April-June every year)	If needed for admission to university, registration for state-exams, additional course for preparation for state-exams in VET school or Adult Gymnasium, implementation of state-exam
	Support for RPL	Any time	Description of learning outcomes from curricula for RPL form of university

SUAS	Name of Supporting instrument	Stage of implementation	Description
	Webpage: http://portal.savonia.fi/amk/fi/opiskelijalle/opiskelu-savoniassa/osaamisen-hyvaksilukeminen-ahot/ (in Finnish)	Any time	Information about RPL is available in Finnish and in English.
	Info sessions and course "Studying at SUAS"	At the beginning of academic year	Info sessions are held for prospective and also new students, who have prior learning experience (studies, training, work etc) they could use.
	Individual Counseling; study counsellors and tutoring teachers	Different about the study programs	Students get individual counseling concerning to questions about the compatibility studies/job; about question linked to the papers in the study courses, about personal questions/problems.
	Personal study plan and portfolio process	All the time during the education	At the beginning of the nursing studies students familiarize themselves with the curriculum and plan their own studies - if they will follow the curriculum of their study group or - if they will have some RPL or

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if they will take some courses from another group's curricula/study plans to do their studies faster - each student writes these issues in their personal study plan (web based) and then the issues will be discussed in the with the student's tutoring teacher, who will guide the student further on.
	RPL, electronic application forms in Wilma	After admission, all the time	Students can apply RPL for all courses mentioned in their curricula. Application is based to learning outcomes from curricula.
	Course specific proofs of evidence (RPL competence tests) for students entering from VET to SUAS in Nursing or in Nurse Paramedic Education	Since august 2015	The students can participate in to Competence tests and show their previous competences in authentic situations in skill labs, simulations and case studies.
	PRACTICAL TRAINING, SUAS Nursing education		Used to support the practical education in nursing (for all students); guide for the students
	Preparation Course for Immigrants at HE studies	Since October 2014	Preparation Course for Immigrants at HE studies: 20 credits, 5 months. The participants get a possibility

			<p>to apply for HE studies;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -RPL and international comparability of qualifications of immigrants -teacher-tutor assists also in the process with Valvira or Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE).
	Finnish Language studies to reach level B2	Since September 2015	<p>Finnish Language studies in order to reach level B2 to be able to take part in HE studies. Three months lasting course for Written Finnish Language. Some of the participants in the course are VET-based, studying in Savonia for HE. (Also planned Oral Finnish Language starting in December and C1 Finnish Language course starting in March 2016.)</p>

Sakky	Name of Supporting instrument	Stage of implementation	Description
	<p>Individual study plans for all students</p> <p>Student, Group tutor and the school counsellor</p>	<p>During the whole study period, but at least once a school term</p>	<p>It is important that all who are involved in creating individual study plans know the requirements and learning outcomes of the curricula in VET and in HE. The student can choose the best ways to reach the knowledge, skills and competences required.</p>
	<p>Courses from HE</p> <p>Student will make an application with help of the school counsellor</p>	<p>During the specialization year</p>	<p>It is possible for practical nurse students to plan the path to enter HE and choose studies also from HE during their VET education.</p>
	<p>Cooperation with HE</p> <p>cooperation with teachers and school counsellors in VET and HE to improve the knowledge of learning outcomes and the evaluation criteria</p>	<p>continuously</p>	<p>The transition from VET to HE will be smooth, when the teachers in VET know how to coach the students in the transition process.</p>

Table 1: Instruments named by the project partners used to support non-traditional target groups in (entering) HE