

REPORT ON THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION BASED ON DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATION DURING PAGOSTE PROJECT WORKSHOP FROM 2.11. - 5.11.2022 AT THE ROME TRE UNIVERSITY

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PREFACE

The author of the report has been invited to be 'a critical friend' of the Erasmus+ CBHE Project PAGOSTE "New mechanisms of partnership-based governance and standardization of vocational teacher education in Ukraine" (No. 609536-EPP-1-2019-1-DE-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP).

The main task of the critical friend is to provide a constructive feedback to the current project implementation and specifically clarify what strengths and weaknesses can be identified by an external expert as well as potential improvements either the project consortium or the individual partner can make in order to achieve the project goal.

The project report is based on the careful study of the project website, project documentation sent by the coordinator and the most importantly on the observations and communication with project partners during the project workshop on 02-05.11.2022.

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List of abbreviations

Association for Development of Vocational and Continuous Education	ADVCE
Institute of Vocational Education and Training	IVET
Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetmann	KNEU
Partnership-based governance	PBG
South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushynsky	SUNPU
Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogics Academy	UEPA
Vocational Teachers	VET-teacher

Introduction

What about the quality, relevance and social acceptance of vocational teacher training in Ukraine and as a second point about the improvement of the labor market skills of VET-teachers? Where do Ukrainian educational institutions stand in the implementation of a partnership-based system and to what extent has the management of the vocational training system at the national level in Ukraine already been subjected to an “examining eye” and furthermore improved?

These were significant questions that were standing in the focus of the PAGOSTE project meeting (from 1.11. to 6.11.2022) in Rome.

The theoretical framework of the meeting was noticeably provided by the idea of partnership-based governance (PBG). Already at the beginning of the meeting, in the course of the exchange with the partners as well as on the basis of the presentations given, it became clear that the different institutions have dealt more or less intensively with different conceptual or theoretical ideas of PBG. Some of them already also from a practical perspective (e.g. by thinking about how they cooperate with stakeholders in organizing internships for their students).

The PBG approach will be described briefly below, for the sake of comprehensibility for the readership of this application.

PBG is understood as a cooperation of different partners (e.g. universities, public vocational training institutions or other actors involved in vocational training, such as professional associations). Informal and formal networks are meant, which cooperate for making decisions, solving problems and pursuing common economic or social goals. The cooperation can take place on a national, regional or local level. Part of PBG is to build and formalize democratic and dynamic structures for cooperation and collaboration processes. However, cooperation and collaboration do not only take place fluidly, but are formalized by jointly creating and binding structures, processes and rules.

Based on the questions listed at the beginning of this article, I will now comment on some of the points discussed at the project meeting.

Designing the initial and continuing training of vocational school teachers (VET-teachers)

The partners seem to be still dealing with fundamental issues around the design of VET education. Some institutions, for example, are dealing intensively with the design and composition of continuing education offerings (e.g., the invitation of external experts in the area of VET to various continuing education courses is being discussed) and they are also

questioning existing offerings with regard to current trends and (digital) transformation processes.

One question that has repeatedly come up is about the weighting of practical vs. theoretical training components in the training of VET-teachers. Behind this question there seem to be different training paradigms, which have developed differently depending on regional conditions in the past years and decades. Moreover, this question has to be considered against the background of institutional cultural developments as well as the vocational orientation of the Ukrainian VET institutions involved in the PAGOSTE project. The South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushynsky (SUNPU), for example, is strongly oriented toward the industrial sector and offers prospective VET-teachers many practical components in their training.

At other institutions, such as the Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetmann (KNEU), the reference to practical training components seems less obvious. During the project meeting, the extent and implementation of internships were discussed in detail.

It seems to be important to strengthen the understanding for the different weighting of solid practical experience vs. academic education or for different training paradigms and not to lead a judgmental discussion about it, which leads more to confusion than to well-founded insights.

Upgrading of the profession of VET-teachers (increase of attractiveness) and recruiting prospective teachers

The Ukrainian project partners seem to have already dealt intensively with the question of increasing the attractiveness of vocational teacher training on the one hand and the labor market qualification of the same target group on the other.

Some institutions are working intensively on the development and implementation of career orientation programs for future teachers, such as the Institute of Vocational Education and Training (IVET) or the KNEU. Olympiads among prospective teachers are also held at the same, second-named institution. Within the framework of the Olympiads, the prospective vocational teachers are encouraged, for example, to carry out smaller vocational education research projects.

The team at the Ukrainian Engineering Pedagogics Academy (UEPA) is also involved in competitions among its students. These are intended to increase the motivation of the teachers as well as to act as a magnet for future students.

Almost all Ukrainian partners involved in the PAGOSTE project work with different quality assurance measures in the evaluation and further training of their education and training measures. In the course of the quality assurance measures and the evaluations carried out,

for example, teachers who have already completed their training are also asked about their interests and knowledge gaps, so that further training can also be profitably designed and knowledge gaps among teachers who have already completed their training can be closed.

There is also a big knowledge among the partners (in some cases statistical records are kept) about which digital, more or less low-threshold channels can be used to reach prospective VET-teachers and, thus, disseminate information in a targeted manner. There is also knowledge about which target groups in which regions use certain channels or platforms for obtaining information particularly intensively.

Another important contribution to increasing the attractiveness of vocational school teachers is certainly made by the representatives of the Ministry. They commented several times on the fact that in the population, and, thus, also among the young, potential future vocational school teachers, there is in part a frightening lack of knowledge about the profession of vocational school teacher. Many people cannot imagine anything about it. The Ministry has made it its goal to do even more educational work here and to provide the population with concentrated knowledge on this point. This is another important area for cooperation and collaboration between the partners involved in the project.

In addition, a project platform will be installed as part of the project to inform (prospective) vocational school teachers and other people interested in VET about training structures, among other things. It is also possible to exchange information via this platform. Behind this is a selective system. All persons who register on this platform and also want to exchange information are checked by the persons in charge of the platform (this responsibility lies primarily with the Institute of Vocational Education and Training) for their professional profile and above all for their seriousness. This is certainly an important security measure.

In addition, the mechanization of the classrooms (as a sign of keeping up with the pace of modernisation) in which the prospective VET-teachers are trained and a general upgrading of the infrastructure probably also lead to an increase in the attractiveness of the training.

It would also be important for the partners to look more closely at different mechanisms that hinder the attractiveness of the profession of VET-teacher. Conceivable mechanisms could be, for example, payment of teachers, lack of clarity about the requirement and activity profiles, time flexibility in the study programme, low offer of exchange programmes for students (here, for example, the initiative of the PAGOSTE team, which is working for an exchange programme between the University of Konstanz and the Università Tre Roma), recognition of degrees abroad and, thus, also professional mobility of teachers.

Increasing the attractiveness of VET

A prerequisite for increasing the attractiveness of VET-teacher training can be seen in increasing the relevance of VET in general at the political and social level. The Ukrainian Ministry has launched an important video information campaign in this regard. Numerous videos report on different VET programmes. Fascinatingly, stereotypes are also strongly integrated and a socially enlightening contribution is made - among others, men are also interested in the profession of tailoring and want to be trained in this occupational field, which historically has been dominated by girls and women.

In addition to the excellent development of these videos, the question remains open as to which channels can be used to disseminate these videos (Facebook was one of the possible platforms). Here, a stronger cooperation with the KNEU, which has well-founded statistics in the area of dissemination of information and can provide information in this regard, would be an option. For the operation of the platform, which has not yet been activated, a separate written instruction manual is being created to make it easier for the target groups (teachers, students, etc.) to use.

Establishment of individual competence centres and centres of knowledge storage on own initiative within the PAGOSTE project

On their own initiative, individual project partners within the PAGOSTE project have founded competence centres (such as the Association for Development of Vocational and Continuous Education (short: ADVCE) in Kharkiv) for vocational education and training. On the one hand, these represent an opportunity for knowledge generation, but also for knowledge exchange. UEPA, for example, has set up such an association on its own initiative. Ultimately, these centres certainly also contribute to the dissemination of knowledge about VET among the primary target groups, such as (prospective) VET teachers or in-company VET trainers, but also among the general population. In the longer term, this could also lead to an increase in the attractiveness of VET in Ukraine.

Disseminating and securing information

- Many different channels are used to disseminate information (e.g. the project's own homepage; in Ukraine also more intensive Facebook or Telegram).
- How can informal information that is exchanged via the different channels be stored and formalised and how can an overview of the different platforms used be created that can be viewed?
- How can the partners also succeed in keeping track of these platforms in the long run?

The cooperation and collaboration of the partners involved in the PAGOSTE project seems to be working well within Ukraine and with the scientific partners in Italy, Germany and Austria and is being made transparent. Common guidelines are also being developed, which all partners then follow after joint coordination. For example, the Dissemination Strategy, which was developed under the special guidance of the coordinator and implemented by KNEU as a work package leader represents an important orientation for the partners with regard to the dissemination of information and knowledge. This enables structured and formalized cooperation among the partners involved in the PAGOSTE project. The Ukrainian partners regularly exchange experience, information and knowledge with each other, and common goals are visibly pursued.

Establishment of a national PBG system

Even though the Ukrainian Ministry is making a valuable basic contribution to building a template or structure for a national PBG system, which can then be further elaborated or filled in by the Ukrainian PAGOSTE project partners, the project meeting only revealed in isolated cases how the partner institutions cooperate and collaborate with their stakeholders and to what extent they have already borrowed from a PBG logic and transferred it to their own system. This is also the case when all partners maintain a regular exchange with stakeholders, which can be professional associations, companies or vocational schools. One example is SUNPU, which cooperates in particular with professional associations in the industrial sector for the organization of internships.

UEPA, for example, has worked more intensively on making the cooperation and collaboration channels with stakeholders visible. Other partners have only marginally dealt with making cooperation and communication with stakeholders visible (e.g. by documenting the agreements that have been made together - transparency towards the outside), as far as this became visible during the project meeting in Rome. In the cooperation with the different stakeholders, the project partners should, if necessary, work on the following questions more intensively and place them at the centre of their further considerations:

Achieving a common understanding

- How can clarity be gained about the expectations and responsibilities of the stakeholders?
- How can different expectations and responsibilities be documented, made visible for questions that may arise at a later stage and thus made transparent?

- What visions and goals are shared with stakeholders? Are similar convictions and motivations shared, which can then also lead to the achievement of goals (e.g. the implementation of internships or stays abroad for students)?
To what extent is there documentation of the visions and goals shared and pursued with the stakeholders?

Shared responsibility

- Are the goals that are jointly strived for and for which responsibility is taken also formulated realistically and thus achievable?
- To what extent do stakeholders and partners participate in steering and control in their different planning processes around goal achievement?
- How are steering and control mechanisms documented on the way to achieving objectives?

Coordinated decision making processes

- At what points in time and how are decisions made jointly? (e.g. how is it decided whether certain information concerning the projects of the cooperating actors should be made public or not).
- The phases or processes of decision-making should also be recorded.

Relevance and added value of cooperation

- Have the stakeholders as well as the partner institutions equally recognized the relevance or added value of their cooperation and can draw motivational aspects from this?
- How can the cooperating stakeholders benefit from the cooperation in the short but also in the longer term?

Compliance with standards and laws

- Is compliance with standards and laws positively influenced by cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders or is this potentially jeopardised (e.g. due to different political orientations and ideologies)?

It would certainly be important for the individual Ukrainian partner institutions to regularly exchange information on their cooperation with their stakeholders in the future and to discuss more intensively possible ways of implementing the principles for a PBG system proposed by the Ministry and to concretize it with regard to the feasibility of implementation in their own institutions.

In this way, the different considerations and approaches of the PAGOSTE partners with regard to PBG mechanisms could be brought together (with the question of synergies) and better coordinated with each other, which would ultimately also be very beneficial for the anchoring of a national PBG system.

Building and maintaining human capital

In the course of the contribution from the Ministry, attention was drawn several times to the importance of maintaining human capital in the current time of war. The focus was also on the period of reconstruction after the war.

The main focus was on the question of how currently available human capital and knowledge can be "secured" and how highly qualified persons and skilled workers who are currently still in the country can be promoted in the best possible way so that they are not lost to the surrounding countries (at least for a short time).

Consideration was also given to more support for students' stays abroad. In order to offer them the opportunity to further their qualifications abroad in the current phase of the war (then: to offer attractive opportunities for a return to their own country). These are extremely important considerations that affect the education system holistically and probably not only the vocational education system.

Accompaniment by the EU partner universities

As can be concluded from the meeting in Rome, the Ukrainian actors involved in the PAGOSTE project are being accompanied by academic institutions from Germany (with the University of Konstanz), Austria (with the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration) and Italy (with the Università Tre in Rome) in the establishment and development of a PBG system. The accompanying institutions have extensive knowledge of dual vocational education and training systems, which are supported in partnership. Based on their knowledge and expertise, the accompanying partners are able to provide the Ukrainian partners with professional and competent advice and support in their development project.

A particularly positive aspect of the PAGOSTE project is that it is not only a research project, but above all a development project. The project promotes the development of vocational education and training and thus the career prospects of vocational teachers in Ukraine and thus makes an important contribution to the social and economic development trends in Ukraine.