Proposal for the ECER 2002, Network 2: VETNET

Individual paper:

Vocational identity and working conditions in the sector of tourism:

The views of vocational education teachers.

Presenter:
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Abstract

This work is presented within the framework of the research “Vocational identity, flexibility and mobility in the European labour market” (HPSE-CT-1999-00042), funded by the 5th Framework Programme of the European Union. It attempts to analyze the notions of work that vocational education teachers in the field of tourism have, both in relation to their work as teachers and to the profession for which they are training. We want to find out what is the impact of these notions upon the images of profession that they portray to students in their schools, particularly in a sector which demands flexibility on the side of workers; in which there is not a long tradition in formal vocational education and in which there is a strong appeal in the region for its contribution to the economic growth. The result is a labour market with great mobility.

What are the identity features of vocational education teachers? Our analyses will be based upon the replies of these teachers to a questionnaire, which interrogates the following points: career, initial and continuing training, working conditions, their images of the profession. Teachers’ identity will be framed within these dimensions.
Summary.

Vocational training of young people cannot be based only on providing them with professional competencies. Teachers have to prepare their students for the continuous changes in the workplace and the conflicting demands of the labour market. This is of particular importance in a sector like tourism, where these demands are as important as the need for particular competencies.

Teachers can adapt their training to these demands thanks to their experience of the sector in previous or current work activity, as well as by continuing training. All of these will be embedded in teachers vocational identity, an issue which has been hardly studied, even less in the case of vocational education teachers.

This paper intends to address the above issues, within the framework of a wider research project (‘Vocational Identity, Flexibility and Mobility in the European Labour Market’, financed by the 5th Framework Programme of the European Union -contract number HPSE-CT-1999-00042-, acronym FAME). Its focus is how the work of teachers as teachers and their knowledge of the sector have an impact upon their vocational identity, and how they perceive the demands on flexibility and mobility.

What are the key identity aspects of this teacher group? To answer this question, we have prepared a questionnaire addressing the following aspects: previous career and expectations, initial and continuing education, working conditions and teachers’ image of the profession they are training for. Of particular interest to us is the relation between their identity as teachers and their identity as the professionals they are and for which they are training: that of the tourist sector. The questionnaire has been sent to all teachers in formal vocational education in the tourist qualifications in the region.

We have also paid attention to the training they have to undergo in order to carry on their work as vocational education teachers: their experience and knowledge of the sector, as well as their pedagogical background. We will show the relation of their training careers to their working conditions and those of their colleagues. Finally, we intend to see how these careers and working conditions and their notions of work have an effect on their career prospects and their further development and training.