

CENTRES FOR CONTINUING ADULT EDUCATION

FINAL EVALUATION

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1. Introductory notes

The final evaluation of the establishment of five centres for continuing adult education in five VET schools (Secondary School for Civil Engineering “Neimar” – Nis; Second Secondary Technical School – Kragujevac; Secondary Technical School – Bor; Secondary School for Food Treatment, Chemistry and Textile “Uros Predic”- Zrenjanin; Secondary Technical School “Novi Beograd” – Novi Beograd) was carried out through four parallel parts of research:

1. A total evaluation within the overall Reform Programme, encompassing all 55 schools (findings from this part are summarised in the Final report).
2. Repeated research of the resources of the centres for adult education (March 2004 – June 2005) which enabled the comparison and tracking of changes occurring during the intensive work of establishing the centres.
3. Monitoring the current situation in the centres in order to record the performance of these schools in providing the conditions for the realisation of programmes for adults and recording of realised training sessions.
4. Examining attendants, representatives of ordering party – the financing party, (representatives of companies or National Employment Service, who ordered and financed training) and the main organiser of training sessions for adults implemented in the centres during 2005.

The instruments¹ used for collecting data under 2.,3. and 4 can be found in the Final Programme Documentation, Components for continuing vocational and adult education.

2. The Resources of the Centres – a comparative analysis

The instrument for examining the centres’ resources comprised three parts: personnel and self-assessment of school; students; and material / technical conditions. All three aspects were viewed from the point of necessary preconditions for the transformation of schools into centres. During the first part of research (March 2004) the schools had already been involved in intensive work on the extension of their activity in adult education. The second part of research was carried out

¹ The instruments are: The Protocol for research the resources of the centres for adult education; The table for monitoring the current situation in the centres; and three questionnaires - one for participants of the trainings, one for the representatives of financiers, and one for the main organiser from the centres.

during the intensive process of establishing the centres supported by the VET Reform Programme Component. This overview will contain the most evident differences as well as the most characteristic trends recorded in the process of comparison of results from the two parts of research.

A dramatic increase has been notified in the number of vocational subject teachers who have been trained within the Reform Programme compared to the last five years. This finding relates to both training within the occupation and training in the field of teaching. For example: data compiled in the Centre for continuing adult education – Nis show that in the last five years none of the vocational subject teachers has been trained neither within their occupation nor in the field of teaching, whereas in the course of the Reform Programme 30 teachers were trained within their occupation and 40 in the field of teaching. In RTC Kragujevac 25% of vocational subject teachers have been trained in the field of teaching in the last five years whereas in the course of the Programme that number increased to 53%. In RTC Zrenjanin this difference is even greater 5% as opposed to 55%. These figures are much smaller in relation to general subject teachers. Both managing staff and technical assistants (pedagogists and psychologists) were trained in all five centres.

The attitude of staff in schools / centres towards extended working commitments has been significantly improved. In comparison to the attitude expressed first when teachers were primarily unmotivated and had a negative approach to increased working requirements that were caused by the establishment of centres, the second statement of opinion showed a much higher level of motivation.

Contrary to the described change, the teachers' attitude towards reform has not been significantly changed after almost two years of active work within the Reform Programme. Apart from being interested, the centres expressed reservation, lack of understanding for some of the basic components and distrust towards reform requirements.

Attitude towards work with adults is extremely positive in all five centres.

Significant changes took place in-between the two parts of research related to the openness of the school to the local community, namely its cooperation with other institutions and organisations. Findings from March 2004 showed conclusively that schools were rather closed organisations and

that their cooperation was mostly or exclusively with enterprises in which students had professional practice. Data collected in June 2005 show that the centres have realised cooperation with other VET schools on a larger scale; more intensive cooperation has been established with the National Employment Service (at municipal and regional level); cooperation with enterprises and employers has been significantly extended and cooperation with regional Chambers of Commerce has been established.

According to their own statements, schools have experienced significant and surprisingly fast changes of image thanks to “organisation, teaching, equipment, security and professional training” (RTC Zrenjanin). Elements that contributed to image improvement can to a large extent be ascribed to the Reform Programme, which is directly pointed out in the response of RTC Kragujevac, saying that “the rating of the school has been growing lately due to its participation in the VET Reform Programme....”.

The number of full-time students has fallen dramatically in all five schools. In comparison to the school year 2003/2004, the number decreased by 668 in school year 2004/2005. Special attention has been paid to this trend in the “Concept and development strategy of centres for continuing adult education”, as a phenomenon that requires attention in the future, and which, among some other phenomena, supports the idea of establishing such centres in our country. The drop out ratio is also significant in 2004/2005, which is indicated by the number of 125 students who dropped out of the education for different reasons. What can be estimated as positive in work with full-time students is that centres, in comparison to previous years, started monitoring students after graduation.

In considering the material-technical conditions, it is easy to notice a significant increase in the number of computers in schools, in total an increase of 114 computers. Four centres claim that their buildings are now in a quite good condition, which was not the case before, since all were negatively assessed (category “in a very bad condition requiring further reconstruction”). As opposed to the buildings, it is emphasised in the responses of all centres that the furnishing of the schools is not completely appropriate for adults.

Different answers were received from centres when asked to describe very briefly the differences, if there were any, between the staff in the beginning and at the end of the Reform Programme. On the one hand, the answers show that the employees in the schools have been activated and that the

number of teachers involved in activities of the Reform Programme has increased whereas, on the other hand, dissatisfaction has been noticed related to the speed of changes and transformation from big expectations in the beginning to distrust at the end. Findings that signify dissatisfaction can be primarily ascribed to lack of legal regulations related to the status of centres for continuing adult education.

The answer received from the Centre for continuing adult education Zrenjanin when asked about the existence and nature of differences, describes briefly but very precisely the situation in, we can freely say, not just this particular centre. The following is stated in this answer: “The staff is acting more energetically, we deal with things that we have not even thought about before, all activities are being planned in more details, the furnishing of the school has been improved a lot..., working conditions have been improved... There is willingness to take part in projects. Two projects are in the process of realisation, and we wait for information about the third one, on whether the application was successful. More than ever teachers are being trained and teaching materials produced (a great number of teachers are involved)”.

This answer also leads us to conclusions about the resources in centres, or the most prominent changes and trends. The biggest differences are related to the highly increased involvement of teachers in the training process, together with the necessity of greater involvement of general subject teachers. Their involvement in training brings about the much more complex and essential question of place and role of this category of teachers in the reform of VET and adult education. Generally speaking, teachers are now more motivated for implementation of reform than in the beginning, they are more engaged, although there are still some misunderstandings and distrust related to reform activities as well as dissatisfaction with the speed of changes. The five schools in which the centres have been established are much more open institutions than they used to be during the first recording of resources in terms of their cooperation with other institutions and organisations. Positive changes have happened in the image of these schools. The material-technical conditions have been significantly improved, though this conclusion cannot be drawn when it comes to furnishing the schools for work with adults. In order to further adjust the centres to the adult population, some of the forthcoming investments can be directed towards upgrading of the conditions “in classrooms”. Taking into consideration both staff and material-technical resources, we can say that the centres for continuing adult education, after two-years’ work on their establishment, have to some extent become different institutions which possess much better prerequisites for educational work with adults.

3. The current situation in the centres

The recording of the current situation in the centres involved the part of their activities that is related to adult education. Subtasks, planned in the project, such as skills needs analysis for competences (subtask 3.3) and development of modules (subtask 3.4) were taken into consideration. Some of the necessary conditions for their realisation were added to them in the analysis as well as data on implemented training for adults. In that way, the analysis of the current situation in the centres was focused on collecting data on: modules that are designed, sold and in the process of agreement, realised training, the number of participants, signed contracts on business and technical cooperation, enterprises where needs have been recorded, adaptations of rooms in the centres to work with adults, persons from and outside the schools that are involved in the establishment of the centres and about institutions which were involved in the establishment of the centres.

Data obtained in this segment are shown both individually for the centres and collectively in Annex number 1.

Taking into consideration the situation in all the centres, the data show that in total 144 modules have been designed (not taking into account six more modules for the business administration system (BAS)). The first modules were created as a result of teacher training devoted to modules in June 2004. The second round of work on their upgrading (closer contact with the world of work and achievement of better inner consistency) was organised in spring 2005. Five training sessions have been realised up to now, and seven more are on-going. 61 participants attended the implemented training and 57 are involved in the ones that are on-going. It is important to mention that all centres implemented training which is an important step beyond the subtasks planned in the project. 11 modules are in the process of agreement.

Contracts on business-technical cooperation have been signed with 46 institutions. Among them, the most frequent are enterprises, followed by National Employment Service, regional Chambers of Commerce, municipalities, other VET schools, faculties and institutes. Needs have been assessed and recorded in 59 enterprises. Schools have established cooperation related to works on

establishment of the centres with 54 institutions, among which are the regional branches of the National Employment Service, the regional Chambers of Commerce, Employers' Associations, Unions of Entrepreneurs, Trade Unions, the Agency for small and medium size enterprises, the Centre for Vocational and Artistic Education etc.

According to their own estimate schools stated that 148 persons from the schools were involved in works on establishing centres, and 55 external persons assisted in these activities.

The presented data confirm the claim that works necessary for starting the operation of the centres have been to a large extent carried out in schools where centres for continuing adult education have been established. These works involve: recording skills needs, involving a greater number of staff? from school and external persons in the process of establishing the centres, establishing cooperation with different institutions, signing contracts on business-technical cooperation, designing modules, adjusting space for work with adults and realisation of the first trainings with adult participants. It should not be neglected that all completed works to a large extent have been coordinated by the Reform Programme, so there is a separate issue raised concerning the sustainability of the centres and the continuity of the started activities. What proves the resoluteness of centres to involve adult education in their work as well, apart from training sessions that are on-going and those that are in the process of agreement, are the parts from their business plans that are dedicated to sustainability as well as the action plans. In spite of that, it seems that it will be necessary to help the centres further on in order that they become completely competent in this, for them mostly new type of operation.

4. Implemented adult training

Data on the evaluation of the quality of different aspects of already realised training in the centres for continuing adult education were collected by the means of three separately designed and interrelated questionnaires. One was intended for trainees, the second was intended for the main training organiser and the third one for the ordering party, i.e. financing party. In that way 42 trainees were questioned (RTC Nis – Elementary IT training, 7 trainees; RTC Bor – Elementary IT training, 15 trainees and Training for dairy producers on production of dairy products, 6 trainees; and RTC Kragujevac – Training for carpenters – 14 trainees). Apart from them representatives of two ordering / financing parties were questioned for IT training in Bor (National Employment Service) and training for dairy producers (The dairy producer “7 July”,

Podgorac) as well as three main organisers (one from RTC Nis and two from RTC Bor). The main reason why participants of one more completed training have not been questioned (RTC Kragujevac – Training for pressers) as well as two more organisers and representatives of ordering party, should be found in the fact that the centres could not issue certificates at the end of the training, which caused, apart from additional dissatisfaction of all three questioned parties, these training sessions to be considered as not completed yet (apart from the training for press operators. This also includes the training for carpenters in RTC Kragujevac).

Representatives of the ordering party (the same as organisers and trainees), among other things, assessed the following aspects of the implemented training on a scale from 1 to 5: knowledge about training before its realisation; the venue where the theoretical part of the training took place; the training time-table; trainers and instructors; equipment used in the training implementation; materials; overall organisation of the training; overall attitude of trainees towards training and work of training organisers. Based on the computation of the arithmetic mean, an average rating was obtained for all observed aspects; two ordering parties assessed the training at 4.5, which indicates that the level of the delivered training was high. In both cases, the time-table of the training implementation was assessed with a lower (though not much) rating. Ordering parties also claimed that they were very satisfied with the cooperation with the centre, that their employees upgraded their competences very much thanks to the training and that they were very satisfied with the training in general.

Answers received from the training organisers (three organisers) show that trainings were realised at the initiative of enterprises, rather than at the initiative of individuals who were interested, and based on an analysis of the needed competences. In two cases the training was realised completely independently, and in one case it was in cooperation with an enterprise. The following were under the category “the best” in implemented training sessions: the working atmosphere, trainees’ interest, trainees’ eagerness to learn and cooperation between Centre and enterprise. For category “the worst”, the following were recorded in the implemented training: too tired trainees, time organisation of the training and scope of the lessons. These answers indicate that both organisers and ordering parties had the same estimation related to dissatisfaction with the time-table of the realised training and that the same estimation can be applied to all three realised training sessions. Too tired trainees are also the result of a bad time-table, since the training took place after their working hours in this particular case. The organisers claim that a small income was generated from the training in all three cases. Two organisers are satisfied with the training,

whereas the third one is very satisfied. An average rating of ten different aspects of the realised trainings is 4.5 in the case of organisers as well, which means that they share the opinion of the ordering parties² about the high level of delivered trainings. Slightly lower ratings were given by organisers to the following aspects: knowledge about training before its beginning, overall organisation and overall attitude of participants.

The participants (trainees) think that they have upgraded their theoretical knowledge to a large extent (M=3.76), which can also be applied, though at a slightly lower level, to their practical knowledge (M=3.59). Anyhow, they estimate furthermore that they will be able to use the big amount of newly acquired knowledge (M=4.12) in practice. Taking an overall training into consideration, trainees are satisfied (M=1.61). In examining the satisfaction with ten aspects of the implemented training, the following ranking list based on the level of expressed satisfaction has been made:

1. work of trainers and instructors (M=4.81);
2. work of training organiser (M=4.76);
3. venue where the practical part of the training took place (M=4.71);
4. equipment used for the implementation of the training (M=4.7);
5. overall organisation of the training (M=4.62);
6. venue where the theoretical part of the training took place (M=4.59);
7. time-table (M=4.52);
8. material used for training implementation (M=4.36);
9. self-involvement in training (M=4.19);
10. knowledge about training before its implementation (M=4.17).

The trainees ascribe a very high level of satisfaction to the first seven aspects of the ranking list, whereas they are satisfied with three remaining aspects. The trainees' self-involvement in training, or the overall attitude of trainees towards training, as well as knowledge about training before its beginning were placed on the two last positions of the ranking list. Even though they are still within the category "satisfied", the lower value of the arithmetic means is to a great extent corresponding to the lower rating in the organisers' estimation of quality for these two aspects of the training.

² The companies and National Employment Service

The most significant among the findings is the high level of satisfaction for all examined aspects of training, and this opinion is shared by all three actors of the training organised: the ordering parties – financing parties, organisers and trainees. Aspects that were estimated with slightly lower satisfaction and/or quality imply possible directions of future activities that may upgrade the overall quality of trainings realised by centres. Insufficient knowledge about the training before its implementation indicates that more serious work must be done in the preparation phase on informing and promotion, not just because of the needs of future participants but at the level of the whole local community. It is obvious that more attention should be paid to the planning of time organisation for training realisation (period of year, duration, weekly and daily time table). Work with too tired trainees, the overall attitude of the trainees towards training and the trainees' self-involvement in training signal the necessity of organising further teacher training on pedagogic work with adult participants and educational group, with emphasis on: knowledge of trainees' needs, motivating trainees, individualisation of the process of learning and acquiring skills, activating trainees, work in a small group etc. The small income generated from the realised training implies that further training is necessary for centre's staff related to price formation and the general positioning of the centre's programmes on the training market. It is obvious that data obtained from trainees, ordering-financing parties and main organisers of realised training can be very useful for the planning of the next trainings for the teachers in the RTCs for enabling the five schools to work with adult participants, too.

5. Conclusion

The presented and analysed data in all three segments show very clearly that the work on establishing the centres for continuing adult education was large scale and performed jointly by the Reform programme and the five VET schools. It is obvious that schools selected for this segment of reform have dramatically changed as institutions, and that those changes are easy to notice in relation to various aspects of their working life. Those changes encompass training of the staff; a different school image; the connection of the schools with other institutions and organisations; upgrading of the material-technical aspect; lots of new activities have been introduced to school practice, such as: analysis of skills needs, providing resources, production of modules, work with new population, marketing solutions, planning etc. What still does not let centres use the maximum of their potentials and what can seriously threaten their sustainability is the lack of a legal framework for their operation, which contains a series of elements, starting with quick response with accredited programmes to the needs of employers, National

employment service and population; then the inability to issue certificates; the lack of a legal regulation of the generation of income; work with the adult population; and finally possibility to generate income for teachers engaged in the organisation and realisation of educational work with adults. Everything that centres have accomplished until now, as well as everything they are still not able to accomplish, gives directions for the future work on establishing and developing quality short term trainings for adults as well as upgrading its already achieved level.

Annex no 1:

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN CENTRES FOR CONTINUING ADULT EDUCATION

/Centre/

Situation in June 2005

/Date/

Number and names of designed modules	Names of trainings that are		Number of trainees that		Names of sold modules and to whom	Number of modules that are in the process of agreement
	completed	on-going	completed trainings	are currently attending trainings		
RTC Zrenjanin 26	0	5	0	7	0	0
RTC Nis 25	1	1	8	24	1	0
RTC Bor 38	2	0	8 + 15	0	0	3

RTC Kragujevac 28	2	0	15 + 15	0	0	5
RTC Novi Beograd 27	0	1	0	26	1	3

Institutions with which	Number and names of	Is working space in school	Number of persons that	Number and names of
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contracts on business – technical cooperation have been signed	enterprises where needs have been recorded	adjusted to adults and in what way?	have been involved in formation of centre until now		institutions and organisations there have been cooperation with in works related to the formation of the centre
			from school	outside school	
RTC Zrenjanin 14	4	Yes, wet dock, three cabinets (two for IT), (students) restaurant	45	10	20
RTC Nis 3	6	Yes, separated space with its own wet dock and entrance	15	10	3
RTC Bor 9	8	Yes: classroom, bakery, space for reception, coffee and other kinds of service	15	10	11
RTC Kragujevac 13	11	Two teaching classrooms have been separated with separate entrance from yard and a part of the hall in front	45	15	10

<p>RTC Novi Beograd 7</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>of the classrooms has been separated from the students' hall. The adaptation of workshop for welders has been completed – 4 separate cabins</p> <p>Yes, school building area of 90 square metres has been divided into two parts, one part is for IT training with 16 computers and 24 hours connection to the internet, and the other part is for theoretical teaching also connected to the internet</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>10</p>
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