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**TITLE: Professional Development of Educationalists in the Perspective of European Lifelong Learning Programmes 2007 – 2013**

**ABSTRACT :** The paper researches professional development of educationalists in European Lifelong Learning Programmes 2007 – 2013. The paper argues that international activities in the European Programmes provide opportunities and challenges for educationalists to build their professional identities outside the context of their educational institutions. In the first section of the paper, two current theories of education, teachers' democratic professionalism and expansive learning, are researched to support the argument of opportunities and challenges of educationalists' professional development in international activities. Furthermore, a theoretical framework of communities of practice is researched to explain how learning and professional development takes place in international programmes. In the second section of the paper, competences and learning outcomes that international activities may develop are studied to understand what the nature of professional learning is by educationalists in international activities. Finally, the paper argues that competences acquired by educationalists as informal learning outcomes in international activities, e.g. intercultural competences, could be validated and recognised as formal learning and as part of teacher qualifications in national qualification systems. Recognition of professional development of educationalists in international activities could promote professional career development possibilities and improve the attractiveness of education professions. It could also promote a wider participation of educationalists in international activities and improved integration of EU Lifelong Learning Programmes in the national education systems of the Member States in 2007 – 2013.

**KEY WORDS:** educationalists' professional development, international activities, international communities of practice, intercultural competences, recognition of international professional development

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The paper researches the perspectives of educationalists' professional development in Lifelong Learning Programmes of the European Union (EU) in 2007 - 2013. The paper studies, on one hand, the opportunities of professional development that international activities in Lifelong Learning Programmes offer for educationalists. On the other hand, the paper studies the challenges that are related to professional development of educationalists in supra-national initiatives, like the EU Lifelong Learning Programmes. The concept of educationalist is used in the paper to refer to professionals working in the education sector: e.g. policy-makers, school directors, principals, teachers, trainers etc. The concept of international activity refers to any activities, e.g. project management, administration, mobility, within the European Lifelong Learning Programmes. The outset for the paper is my professional and personal experiences and observations when working as Project Manager in European Programmes in Finland at national level and at European Community level.

Never before have educationalists had so many possibilities of international co-operation globally as today in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Educationalists have a possibility to interact with their colleagues in different education contexts across different countries and cultures. Educationalists may learn from each other, exchange on their professional practices and build knowledge on their profession globally. These possibilities have become available as a result of globalisation and the development of information and communication technology (ICT), which enables fast and easy exchange of information and communication. Globalisation defined as rapid acceleration of cross-border movements of capital, goods, labour, services and information as a result of cheap energy and transportation, trade liberalisation and the development of ICT has impacted all fields of life including education (Green, 2002). However, the impact of globalisation in education has also caused challenges to educationalists. Today educationalists need to adapt to many transformations in education and they are expected continuously develop their professionalism.

Since the late 20th Century in Europe, the EU has created a further external force impacting education in the Member States through the European open method of co-ordination. The method implies that each Member State of the EU is fully responsible for the organisation of its education and training systems and the content of teaching.

However, the role of the EU is to contribute to the development of quality in education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action. The EU aims specifically to develop the European dimension in education, to stimulate mobility and promote cooperation between European schools and universities, to develop the exchange of information on issues common to education systems in the Member States, to encourage the development of distance education and finally to stimulate cooperation with non-EU countries and international organisations. As a result, the educational policies of the Member States are steered towards common goals of the European policies of education.

In Finland, EU membership since 1995 allows practitioners in education to join in European programmes, and the same applies to the rest of the 26 European Member States. At the beginning of the year 2007 a new Lifelong Learning Programme for the period of 2007 – 2013 was launched by the European Commission. The programme comprises four sectoral programmes; Comenius for school education, Erasmus for higher education, Leonardo da Vinci for vocational training and Grundtvig for adult education. In addition, there are transversal programmes focusing on policy co-operation, languages, ICT and dissemination and exploitation of results at the European level. The financial support to implement the Lifelong Learning Programme for the period is about € 7,000 million. The Commission's quantified targets of the programmes are e.g. for Comenius to involve at least three million pupils in joint educational activities, for Erasmus to have supported a total of three million individual participants in student mobility by 2012, for Leonardo da Vinci to increase placements in enterprises to 80,000 per year by the end of the programme and for Grundtvig to support the mobility of 7,000 individuals involved in adult education per year by 2013<sup>1</sup>. The scale of the Lifelong Learning Programme indicates that although the national governments in the Member States are responsible for their education systems, the European programmes aim to steer the education development in the Members States towards common European goals to become a world quality reference. This aim is achieved through fostering interaction, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the European community. The quality of European education is promoted through peer-learning, benchmarking and exchanging on best practices in international activities as cross-border student

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html)

exchanges, international joint activities and placements. Although the students are the main beneficiaries of the programmes, educationalists have a central role in mobilising the programmes by initiating, planning, implementing and monitoring the activities in local education contexts.

On the other hand, participation in international activities in EU programmes implies also receiving teachers and students from other countries to study or work in local educational contexts. As a result, educationalists who may not have initiated the activities may become involuntarily involved. In such cases the need for professional development may be imposed and can be perceived as a threat by educationalists, who lack the necessary skills in the activities. Furthermore, as a result of globalisation and the cross-border mobilisation of people, local communities are becoming more multi-cultural. Therefore, educationalists need to work with students from different cultures and countries of the global village, which also sets new demands for educationalists' professional development in internationalisation. Furthermore, ICT is developing as an integral part of mainstream education and is integrated also in the European Lifelong Learning Programmes. For example eTwinning, an initiative started in September 2004 under the EU transversal programme to promote collaborative ICT-projects in education across Europe, illustrates the impact a European initiative of ICT may have on school work at the local level in the Member States. eTwinning<sup>2</sup> has grown rapidly in participation with more than 20,000 schools registered in ICT-enabled collaborative activities with other schools in other European countries in 2007.

International activities in educational organisations as a result of globalisation and the policies of supra-national bodies like the EU, create possibilities and challenges for educationalists' professional development as new knowledge, skills and competences are required in the changed working environment. The focus of the paper is on international activities within the European Lifelong Learning Programmes, as globalisation is a too broad an issue to be researched in the scope of the paper. The aim of the paper is to contribute to the research by bringing new knowledge about professional development in international activities in the framework of European Lifelong Learning Programmes in education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The research questions of the paper are: What are the possibilities for

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.etwinning.net/ww/en/pub/etwinning/index2006.htm>

educationalists' professional development in the international activities of the EU Lifelong Learning Programmes in the Member States? What are the challenges? What kind of professional development can educationalists acquire in international activities of education? Can informal learning acquired in international activities be recognised as learning outcomes and professional development?

In the following section, current theories of professionalism in education are researched to conceptualise the possibilities and challenges of professional development of educationalists in international activities.

## 2. DEMOCRATIC PROFESSIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISATION

As discussed earlier, a number of fundamental transformations are underway which have an impact on education in modern societies. On one hand, the growth of a globalised world economy and the supra-national body of the EU in Europe transform the education policies and systems of national governments. The fundamental transformations are realised in the daily activities of educational organisations and ultimately have consequences on personal and professional life styles of individual educationalists. The most critical transformation, however, is the demand for professional development, as globalisation has the greatest impact on the demand for skills and qualifications (Green, 2002). Therefore, there is also a demand for educationalists' professional development today in the sector of education.

On the other hand, the current social research has identified the emergence of a new individualism in which people are compelled to define themselves and adapt to the multiple changes caused by fundamental transformations in societies (Giddens, 1991). According to Halpin, a key aspect of the process of new individualism for teachers is the search for a teacher-professional identity that shapes them as teachers and which helps them come to terms with and live and work purposively within modern society (Halpin, 2005). Halpin argues that in seeking the teacher-professional identity, the teachers wish to navigate a professional course that is significantly of their own making. Therefore, the paper argues that educationalists may find international activities as opportunities, where they can build their new professional identities, acquire new knowledge, skills and competences and develop professionalism, which helps them to adapt to transformations in education.

Furthermore, the theory of teachers' democratic professionalism helps to conceptualise educationalists' professional development in international activities (Whitty, 2000). According to Whitty, teachers' democratic professionalism is the next reformation of professionalism in which teachers' professional expertise is harnessed to a new democratic project for the 21st Century, requiring new collectivist forms of association within and beyond the education context (Whitty, 2000). As a result, educationalists may see international activities as ways of associating beyond their education contexts in cross-border activities. In this paper the concept of cross-border activities is interpreted as crossing the borders of educational organisation and crossing the national borders of a country. New collectivist forms of association in international activities enable educationalists from different cultures and countries to build new professional identities and professionalism beyond their educational context. To sum up, educationalists may find international activities in European Lifelong Learning Programmes, as opportunities for professional development, in which they may associate beyond their education context in international activities and construct their own biographies and professional identities.

However, there is a great distinction between educationalists' free choices about joining in international activities and being forced to participate (Halpin, 2006). Further questions rightly raised by Halpin and Whitty about new democratic professionalism also concern international activities: Which international activities are most suited for the purpose of professional development of educationalists? How should the activities be organised in the education context? Who will take the lead in initiating them and with what content and programmes? Although no direct answers can be given to the questions, it is obvious and, as the concept 'democratic professionalism' implies, many of the choices are left for individual educationalists to decide. But, democratic professionalism and new collectivist forms of association beyond the educational context could also imply organisational learning. Teams of educationalists may associate in international activities beyond their educational institution to support not only individual professional development, but also organisational learning. The organisational learning of educational institutions in international activities can be studied with the theory model of expansive learning developed by Engeström (Engeström, 1987). Engeström uses the concept of change laboratory and defines a participative method of developing work. According to Engeström's participative method of developing work, an educational organisation can implement deep changes in working methods and culture as well as continuous

improvement of activities in a change laboratory. First, a desired vision of the future is created and then practical solutions to current problems can be produced, which are steps to the new revised ways of working. The steps in the circle of expansive learning can be described as: (1) realising a need for change, (2) identifying a crisis of old working methods, dead-end, (3) looking for and designing wider objectives, motives and ways of working, (4) testing and developing a new way of working, (5) implementation of a new way of working, (6) establishing the new way of working and applying it in the organisation (Engeström, 1987).

The participative method of developing work explains how a team of educationalists within an educational institution may associate beyond their educational context to look for a solution to an existing problem in their organisation and develop new ways of working in international participation of EU Lifelong Learning Programmes.

Therefore, the new ways of working developed in international activities do not only support professional development of individual educationalists, but organisational learning of the educational institution. Organisational learning in international activities raise, however, further questions: Do all educationalists have access to the international development activities of an educational organisation? If not, what are the criteria for their inclusion and exclusion? Are all forced to participate as organisational practices are developed? How does the development work fit into the full-time daily work of the educationalists in the educational organisation?

The theories of democratic professionalism and expansive learning discussed above support the argument of international activities as forms of professional development of educationalists within and beyond the education context. While the possibilities are supported by the theories, it is evident that there are many questions and challenges not explored yet in educationalists' professional development in international activities of education. Next, the paper aims to conceptualise with the theoretical framework of communities of practice how professional development takes place in the collectivist associations of educationalists beyond the educational contexts in international activities

### 3. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The theory of communities of practice is researched to explain new forms of collectivist associations of educationalists in international activities (Wenger, 2000).

According to Wenger, communities of practice are groups of people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour. Communities of practice share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger, 2000). Wenger argues that learning in communities of practice means developing social structures in parallel with personal transformation. The structure of social learning systems includes three elements: communities of practice, boundary processes among the communities and identities shaped by participating in the systems (Wenger, 2000). The theory model of communities of practice supports the argument of professional development of educationalists in international activities. International activities in the EU programmes can be identified as communities of practice with international dimension. Educationalists' professional development can be explained as boundary processes among their local professional communities and international professional communities. As a result, new professional identities of educationalists with international dimension may be shaped in participating in the learning systems of international communities of practice.

The knowledge-creation metaphor could be used to explain the possibilities of professional development and more specifically, the role of ICT in international activities of education (Paavola and Hakkarainen, 2005). According to Paavola and Hakkarainen, the dialogical approach to learning is a process of knowledge-creation which concentrates on the interaction through common objects (or artefacts) of activity, not just between people, or between people and environment. The metaphor of knowledge creation through dialogue explains the professional development of educationalists when specific ICT tools help educationalists collaborate for the advancement of knowledge in international communities of practice. ICT tools enable educationalists from different education contexts to join in a progressive inquiry on shared objects of interest. Therefore, ICT allows collaboration and knowledge creation of educationalists' professional development, from their local education contexts in international communities of practice.

Finally, the theory of Networked Learning Communities provides a further support to the notion of professional development of educationalists in international learning communities (Daly, 2006). According to Daly, the networked learning communities aim to establish mutual support amongst clusters of schools, local education authorities and universities through collaborative inquiry. Networked learning

communities of education can also be identified at the European and international levels, co-ordinated by international organisations, e.g. EU, UNESCO etc. The concept of networked learning communities supports the argument of learning and professional development of educationalists in collaborative inquiry in international communities of practice of education.

However, the questions of inclusion and exclusion are raised again to discuss the professional development of educationalists in international communities of practice. Who in local educational contexts has access to the international communities? Who has the power to decide on and what are the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of individual educationalists in international activities? The challenges of professional development in international communities enabled by ICT are more prominent. Participation in ICT-enabled knowledge creation communities requires digital literacy skills, which excludes non-digitally literate educationalists from the possibilities of professional development in the international communities. Many other questions are certainly raised with the advancement of globalisation.

To sum up, the paper has conceptualised professional development of educationalists in international activities from the perspective of theory of communities of practice. Professional development of educationalists takes place in international communities of practice, which are characterised by participatory, social and collaborative approaches of learning. Progressive inquiry, advancement of knowledge and knowledge creation in international collaboration are at the focus of learning and professional development in international activities. Specific ICT tools enable knowledge creation and professional development of educationalists in international communities of practice at a distance from local education contexts. The theory of communities of practice supports the possibilities of educationalists' development in international activities of education. The participative, social and collaborative nature of learning in international communities, however, raises further questions. The most critical question relates to the access into professional development in international communities of practice. Who decides about inclusion or exclusion? Is it an individual educationalist, the educational organisation, school authorities at local or national level or external agents?

#### 4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

In the next section, the paper studies the nature of professional development of educationalists in international activities of education. What are the knowledge, skills and competences that educationalists may develop in international communities of practice? In general, it can be assumed that learning in international activities may be formal, non-formal or informal (CEDEFOP, 2000). Considering the participative, social and collaborative elements of learning in international activities, tacit knowledge can be argued to play an important role in knowledge creation and professional development. Tacit knowledge means knowledge creation through a knowledge spiral with four types of knowledge conversion (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995): 1. socialization (learning to understand tacit knowledge through participation in an expert community), 2. externalization (transforming tacit knowledge in a public form), 3. combination (synthesizing expert knowledge), 4. internalization (learning to master expert knowledge through sustained practices) (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Educationalists learn to understand tacit knowledge through participation in international communities of practice. The tacit knowledge is transformed into explicit knowledge locally or globally, which again is transformed and combined into new expert knowledge. The internalized new knowledge is developed into new practices in local education contexts.

To understand professional development, the concepts of knowledge, skills and competences need to be defined. According to Freidson, knowledge and skills are essential to work and they complement each other in work performance (Freidson, 2001). Skill refers to the capacity to accomplish a task, and it may be kept separate from the substantive knowledge connected with the task itself, while competence comprises knowledge, skills and attitudes (Freidson, 2001). Key competences defined by the European Commission give a starting point to analyse the competences that educationalists may develop in international activities of education (EC, 2005). Key competences, which are essential for people's successful life in a knowledge society, in personal and social spheres and for employability are (1) communication in the mother tongue, (2) communication in foreign languages, (3) competences in maths, science and technology, (4) digital competence, (5) learning to learn, (6) interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competence, (7) entrepreneurship, (8) cultural expression. Firstly, educationalists' participation in international activities can be assumed to develop communication in

foreign languages of educationalists coming from outside of the major language areas in Europe. Secondly, international activities enabled by ICT may develop digital competences of educationalists. Thirdly, interpersonal, intercultural and social competences can be argued to develop due to the participative, social and collaborative aspects of learning in international communities. Finally, cultural expression and learning to learn could be competences that are developed in the processes of international activities.

According to the Commission, some of the key competences, for example social, interpersonal, civic, entrepreneurship, learning to learn, and cultural expression, cannot be taught in traditional ways but require new approaches in organizing learning. The Commission (EC, 2005) notes that today teachers need to work together with each other, with the local community and deal with heterogeneous groups and, therefore, teachers also need new competences and continuous learning in order to respond to these new challenges. As discussed in the paper earlier, educationalists need to respond to globalisation which impacts education with major transformations and, therefore, professional development and new competences are needed. Educationalists have the possibility to participate in international activities to develop competencies that are needed in today's globalized world. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century professionalism in education and teacher training should take into account the modern globalized world. Therefore, an international element should be part of all teacher training programmes at all levels of education to provide international competences for teachers to work in the changing world of education. Furthermore, educationalists already working in the education sector should have the possibility to acquire international competences as informal learning through participation in international activities.

Eraut (2000) questions why we should make tacit knowledge more explicit, and proposes practical reasons, e.g. to improve the quality of a person's or a team's performance, to help to communicate knowledge to another person, to keep one's actions under critical control or to construct artefacts that can assist decision making or reasoning. The paper argues that reasons for turning implicit and informal learning of educationalists in international activities into explicit formal learning outcomes and qualifications is to give value to the professional development acquired in international contexts beyond the context of their institutions. Therefore, there is a need for valuing educationalists' professional development in international activities

in national teacher qualifications. The present European Qualifications Framework<sup>3</sup> (EQF) and European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training<sup>4</sup> (ECVET) provide good policy frameworks for such developments. Valuing professional development of educationalists in international contexts could support educationalists' vertical and horizontal career progression within educational systems. It would also help educationalists still lacking the competences to identify and acquire them and become full members of international professional communities of education. Valuing professional development of educationalists in international contexts could motivate a wider participation of educationalists in the international activities of the EU programmes and thereby promote the attractiveness of education professions.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The paper argues that today the European Lifelong Learning Programmes offer educationalists new opportunities for professional development outside the educational context in international activities. However, there are challenges not yet fully explored yet that educationalists may encounter in their new democratic professionalism and participation in international activities. Professional development may take place through participation, social interaction and collaboration in international activities. Educationalists may develop their professionalism through collaborative, progressive inquiry and knowledge advancement. The concept of tacit knowledge can be applied to explain the transformation of the acquired knowledge, skills and competences by educationalists into new practices and professionalism in local educational contexts. The specific knowledge, skills and competences that could be acquired in international activities are for example communication in foreign languages, digital competences as well as interpersonal, intercultural and social competences that are essential for successful professional life in modern society and which cannot be taught in traditional education. The paper argues that it is important to validate informal learning outcomes and recognise them as formal learning and part of teacher qualifications. Valuing professional development of educationalists in international activities would help career progression of educationalists in the education sector. Therefore, it could promote the attractiveness of education

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<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html)

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/ecvt/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/ecvt/index_en.html)

professions. It could also motivate a wider participation of educationalists in the international activities of education in the EU programmes.

The paper has brought new knowledge about the international activities in education in 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the possibilities and challenges related to professional development in international activities. The topic has not been widely researched yet and further research would be needed to explore the research questions in more depth. Furthermore, the lack of empirical data limits the argumentation of the paper. Considering the scale of the international activities in the current Lifelong Learning Programme and the wide participation of the different European countries, it would be important to continue research on professional development of educationalists in the European programmes. The research could continue to collect educationalists' insights and perceptions regarding their professional development through participation in international activities of the EU programmes. The research could also study the life stories of educationalists who have participated in international activities and the effect the international dimension has had on their professional development and career progression in education. At this point, the paper makes an initial attempt to contribute to the discussion of the impact of globalisation and the EU on education and professional development of educationalists in the Member States.

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