RE-INTEGRATION

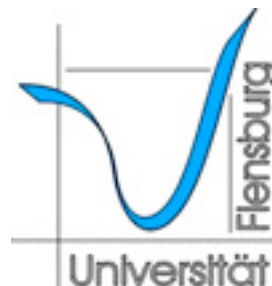# TRANSNATIONAL EVALUATION OF SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL RE-INTEGRATION PROGRAMMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Executive Summary

Gerald Heidegger

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
University of Jyväskylä

biat
Berufsbildungsinstitut
Arbeit und Technik

Hoger instituut
voor de arbeid

Universität Flensburg

The Institute of Education
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Flensburg 2004

Introduction

The project „Re-Integration – Transnational evaluation of social and professional re-integration programmes of young people" was funded by the European Commission through the programme „Leonardo da Vinci II", Reference Material strand, and lasted from the year 2001 till 2004. It dealt with a severe difficulty to be realised in all European countries. Youth unemployment is unbearably high and the transition from school to work is often hampered by strong obstacles that are due to restricted opportunities in the labour market and not well installed systems of vocational education and training. These problems are exacerbated for young people who are at disadvantage with respect to various features. Among them are troubled families with the concomitant restrictions in developing social and personal competences, in general the strong stratification of society which leaves the lower strata with insufficient opportunities for education and gainful employment, language difficulties for migrants etc. That often results in difficulties in coping with the personal, social and also educational challenges during childhood and adolescence, resulting in problems with maintaining stable social relations and also low achievement in school. This again sets a vicious circle in motion so that the opportunities for these disadvantaged young people to move on in (personal and occupational) life are more and more diminished.

Therefore in all European countries, although to a varying extent, measures have been put into place to re-integrate these young people into the mainstream: schemes for re-integration. However, the success of these measures is usually low which is of course mainly due to the unfavourable general conditions. Still the challenge remains to also improve the quality of these programmes, through evaluation which is aiming not only at selecting examples of good practice, but even more at supporting the respective institutions in further developing their schemes.

For this a transnational perspective can be very useful because it shows, for the individual cultural settings, possibilities of how this endeavour can be pursued in a completely different way. Of course it is not feasible to copy the solutions found in another country because those are closely interwoven with the general societal conditions. Even so new ideas can be generated from getting acquainted with those foreign frameworks by way of what is now generally called mutual learning.

To support transnational reflection, evaluation and development for re-integration programmes was the overarching aim of this project. It could build on the outcomes of a previous Socrates project (Studies and Analyses) called "Re-Enter- Improving transition from school to vocational education and training for low achieving school leavers" (1999 – 2001). But while the latter project was explicitly restricted to secondary analysis of existing analytical descriptions, including a meta-analysis, the new Leonardo project carried through primary analyses of the whole "landscape" of re-integration programmes, aiming at innovative methods for reflection, evaluation, development and improvement.

A great advantage was that the partnership remained the same for both projects. Partners were the Institute of Education, University of London, Great Britain, the Laboratory of Sociology and Educational Studies, University of Patras, Greece, The Department of Education, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, the Faculty of Science and Technology, University of Lisbon, Portugal, the Higher Institute for Labour Studies, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, coordinated by the Institute of Technical Vocational Pedagogy, University of Flensburg, Germany.

In the following section, the objectives of the Leonardo project are explained in some detail. In the third section, the outcomes of the project are presented, following the sequence of the objectives although of course there is sometimes some overlapping of the research steps.

The main outcome is an interactive tool on CD-Rom called "QSED – Quality through Self-Evaluation and Development". As a transnational tool it represents the European dimension, but through true interactivity it is adaptable, to the highest possible degree, to the respective cultural conditions by the users themselves. This feature was made possible through an innovative way of programming the tool and represents a result of the project which is much more far-reaching than declared in the proposal. It has been distributed so far in English and German. Greek and Portuguese versions are in the making.

A further outcome is "CRIS – Transcultural recommendations for the improvement of the quality of re-integration programmes", available in English and to be translated into German soon. The Scientific Report explains the research process which led to these outcomes, including an extensive critical reflection on the principles of evaluation and concomitant recommendations.

Objectives of the project

The objectives are outlined in the justification of the proposal, including the envisaged results. In the workpackages, they are put into a sequence which governed the progress of the project although of course the actual research and development process had to combine the various steps. They can be summed up as follows.

1. To develop a <u>common</u> understanding for a multi-level exploration of the quality of learning processes and learning arrangements in re-integration programmes, at the same time refering to the socio-economic preconditions and the socio-cultural peculiarities in the participating countries.
This applies to the elaboration of the relation of the three levels (macro-level, meso-level, micro-level), including the <u>interaction</u> between them, that is socio-economic conditions, institutional arrangements and learning and teaching/training/educating processes. In addition, the respective research methodology had to be consented on.

2. To identify, by comprehensive qualitative field research, the general preconditions for successful situated learning processes of the participants where learning is understood in a broad sense (development of occupational, social and personal competences, leading to autobiographical action competence).
For this the concept of situated learning, as specified for the target group in the previous Socrates project "Re-Enter", is of central importance. Other dimensions like particularly collaborative networks and inclusive organisational structures have proved, during the course of the project, to be equally relevant.

3. To construct lists of criteria for the evaluation of adequate conditions for situated learning and training concepts and processes and their further development, with special regard to the three levels (macro, meso, micro).
These lists of criteria had to be generated in a self-reflective way, based again on extensive field research, employing the method of "Grounded Theory" (Glaser, Strauss). In this way, they are specific to the socio-economic and cultural peculiarities of the participating countries although exchange between the partners introduced new theoretical aspects by way of mutual learning.
The macro-level is especially important since not only the conditions for models and processes in the single schemes are of relevance. Rather the "landscape" of the programmes implemented in a country has to be analysed as a whole.

4. To assess and improve the validity of the lists of criteria developed according to objective 3 by applying them to different schemes, including in this way new criteria; to design on this basis sets of criteria which are systematically constructed so as not to leave out important features.

The main aim here was to assess the validity of the criteria by finding out if the respective list is comprehensive and to construct a theoretically founded set of dimensions to which they are to be related. In this way an analytical tool was developed which can be used for systematic evaluation

5. To research into the long term effects of participation in re-integration schemes which are based on situated learning and the other features detected as especially important, by investigating the autobiographical competences of former participants; to draw conclusions from that for improving the sets of criteria.

Obviously a causal dependency of the development of biographical competences with respect to the features of a re-integration course which someone has participated in before cannot be detected in a valid way. Nevertheless this touches an issue of extraordinary importance and should therefore be included in the reflection and evaluation of any re-integration scheme.

6. To design a transnational (European) tool for evaluation, allowing for critical reflection on it's principles; to elaborate it particularly for self-evaluation of the schemes in the various countries, thus representing the European dimension; to construct it in such a way as to make it adaptable, as easily as possible, to the respective specific cultural circumstances, thus taking into account the wide variety of cultural, regional and institutional conditions, in this way clinging to the European principle of subsidiarity in the field of (vocational) education and training.

This had to be done through combining the respective national sets of criteria, detecting commonalities and eliminating overlapping criteria.

In order to make the tool as easily adaptable as possible a truly interactive IT-tool on CD-ROM was developed. This feature – connecting directly the European dimension with stressing cultural specifities – has been emphasised much more than originally envisaged in the proposal because an innovative way of programming true interactivity into the IT-tool was invented during the progress of the project. In this manner a completely new approach towards this connection could be pursued while also taking into account attitudes critical to evaluation in principle.

7. To develop and disseminate recommendations for the improvement of re-integration programmes, based on a theoretical framework of innovative approaches towards re-integration measures in the participating countries and at the same time representing the European dimension.

This was based, on the one hand, on a systematic theoretical reflection of the historical and cultural contextualisation of integrative measures in Europe. On the other hand it was made use of the criteria of the (self-)evaluation tool for the structural, socio-economic and political level, but also for the meso- and micro-level, which had been developed in the course of its construction, following the principles of "Grounded Theory" (Glaser/Strauss).

Results of the Project

The results are ordered according to the sequence of the objectives which are in the following outlined in an abbreviated version.

Common understanding for a multi-level exploration of the quality of learning processes and learning arrangements.

This turned out to be rather difficult on the practical and on the theoretical level alike.

On the practical level the vast differences of the scope and the approaches of re-integration schemes in the various countries were the main obstacles. This becomes obvious through a cultural and historical contextualisation of systems of welfare provision and concomitant VET structures (chapter 3) which were classified in a typology of four main approaches in Europe. Re-integration e.g. into a school-based VET-system, typical for the Nordic countries, is obviously very different from measures advised by a career counsellor in a flexible, strongly market dominated system. That applies particularly to the high degree of inclusiveness which is aimed at in the former case, in contrast to the factual societal acceptance, although not approval, of a considerable degree of possibilities of social exclusion in the latter case. Other distinctions exist to the Central European "dual system of VET" and the non-formal provision of VET in much of Southern Europe.

But of course all over Europe schemes can be found which aim at supporting the most disadvantaged young people in "moving on" in their life, within VET, gainful employment and in their social relations and personal development.

On the theoretical level, the differences concern the justification of evaluation as such. In a strongly actor-based approach evaluation, even self-evaluation, is seen as an instrument of external control which introduces criteria that can not catch the peculiarities of a very specific course. In a strongly market-based society the question of "value for money" has of course a much higher esteem, and therefore external evaluation according to objectified, measurable indicators is viewed as self-evident. Even if the researchers from the different countries did not, of course, represent the respective dominating approaches it was still indispensable to take into account the opposition between these two approaches which are more or less in variance.

Nevertheless, a remarkably great area of commonalities could also be detected and consented on. First this concerns the importance of the three levels

➢ macro-level: structural conditions due to socio-economic factors, taking into account cultural diversities;
➢ meso-level: institutional features of the respective re-integration schemes;
➢ micro-level: the way practitioners and learners communicate and work together.

Second, six dimensions of criteria which are always of relevance could be commonly defined, even if a lot of the criteria themselves depend heavily on the particular scheme and the cultural setting. For that it was also decisive if the criteria were defined according to a nearly exclusively actor centred approach or following a more generalising method which let more overarching theoretical structures evolve like the one mainly employed in the project, according to the "Grounded Theory" of Glaser/Strauss. The six dimensions mentioned will be explained later, in connection with the tool for evaluation, mainly self-evaluation, called "Quality through Self-Evaluation and Development" (QSED), as described in chapter 6. In order to open up this approach to the highest possible degree of influence by the actors a "Transnational Reflection and Development Methodology" (TRDM) was developed at the same time which emphasises action research in the strict sense. It avoids the concepts of even self-evaluation and quality management and stresses even more than the QSED the relevance of reflection by the actors. In this way, it may be perceived as a methodology which can be employed for critical reflection on the first mentioned concepts, thus making the users of the QSED aware of the implicit assumptions underlying these concepts.

In this way the two basic approaches mentioned were not superficially reconciled but brought explicitly to the fore. Nevertheless, a very close mutual interaction of them is represented in the results.

The concomitant research methods, also sometimes in variance but at the same time directly related to each other, are outlined in the following sections.

General preconditions for successful situated learning processes

The partnership was also able to consent on a qualitative field research methodology, as envisaged in the proposal, for investigating this issue. If learning is understood in the broad sense of fostering occupational, social and personal competences, leading to autobiographical action competence, then obviously "hard" indicators which can be measured in an objectifiable way are not adequate. This is very important because funding agencies make the support of the schemes usually dependent on those hard outcomes, like transition rates to the labour market or to "normal" VET-courses, or at least achievements regarding (mostly occupational) competences which can be easily measured. But the development of social and particularly personal competences does not belong to these.

Consequently, the field research employed a host of different qualitative methods, like learning logs or accumulation of opinions of trainers etc., but mostly participative observation, including "shadowing" the learners at their work, and interviews. Because the participants have often difficulties with self-reflexive oral expression, the interviews were carried through in an informal way. Sharing the participants' work/training experience by co-working with them has proved to be an especially effective approach.

Apart from that it was clear from the beginning that no theoretical presuppositions should be forced upon the investigation of the research field. Therefore a combination of action research and more "observing" research was employed. Action research can be understood as a special version of the "interpretive approach" in the Humanities. It deliberately tries to reduce the distance between the researcher and the "object" because the latter, being a human being, is not objectifiable. "Observing" research, on the other hand, whilst also acknowledging the individual as a human actor, still tries to find out about regularities in human behaviour. This is, in its distinct form, called the "conventional approach". It is easy to see that the two approaches quoted in No. III. 1 are to be detected here. Accordingly, some partners were inclined more to the one or to the other. But because the conventional methods were applied in an attenuated version common results could be achieved. Although at the outset the focus was more on learning processes of the participants of the schemes the multi-level approach was also dominant from the beginning. Nevertheless, very soon, during the progress of the project, it became clear that the interaction between the three levels was of even higher

importance than envisaged. This resulted in applying the three-level approach always and for all inquiries, and laying particular stress on the *interaction* of the levels from the beginning.

That was in accordance with the research plan in the proposal which set out to investigate processes and only to a lesser degree "products" of situated learning, and that means here above all processes of interaction between the three levels. The progress of the project led in this way to a wider concept of adequate conditions for effective re-integration measures which was implemented in the methods for reflecting, evaluating and further developing the whole endeavour of re-integration of young people at risk. The criteria for appropriate prerequisites for situated learning in "Learning Communities Centred on Practice" (LCCP's), as defined in the former Socrates project "Re-Enter", have been expanded accordingly. They now include more explicitly the dimensions

➢ "Collaborative networks of actors" (internal and external);
➢ "Inclusiveness" (going beyond "re-integrative measures");
➢ "Recognition of skills" (thus avoiding to neglect the great influence of assessment).

In addition, the criteria for situated learning in the now more expanded understanding were designed so as to take more explicitly into account the furthering of the combination of occupational, social and personal competences which are supposed to support autobiographical action competence. For instance leisure activities as a main means for developing social and personal competences were now stronger emphasised. "Autobiographical action competence" means the capability of people on the one hand to reconstruct their lives as a sensible succession of stages even if difficult breaks have been experienced. On the other hand, this means that the next thresholds to be surmounted can be viewed as a sequence of challenges that can be met instead of only unsolved problems which linger on in the future.

Representing the important influence of external (political, economic, societal) conditions on the macro-level the dimension "Funding/Administrative Structures" was explicitly constructed, the mentioned influence being very determining also on the meso-level (institutional) and the micro-level (interaction of practitioners and learners). In addition, funding for the participants' individual surviving was stressed as an important criterion, including assistance for gaining the necessaries of life.

Finally, providing opportunities for situated learning in LCCP's was viewed even more than before as a development process for the whole learning community. This led to implementing "Self-evaluation and Reflection" as the foremost dimension of criteria for situated learning.

Construction of lists for criteria for the evaluation and further development of adequate conditions for situated learning and training/educating concepts and processes.

The indicators which had been gained through the extensive field research had to be assembled to construct lists which could fit in well with the respective cases. On the other hand, they had to be based on theoretical foundations which, however, should not impose assumptions made beforehand. The obvious choice was to employ the method of "Grounded Theory" which was developed by Glaser/Strauss for ethnographic research and has already for some time expanded it's field of application from ethnomethodology to areas like work research. Indeed similarities can be found between researching into the behaviour of an ethnic tribe and the rites prevailing in a working group or, for that matter, in a Learning Community Centred on Practice (LCCP). The theory is then built up from the bottom and generated through continuous loops of reflection on empirical evidence gained in the participative, collaborative, observing field research that has employed all the methods mentioned above.

Thus, however, it is not only inevitable but also desirable to arrive at lists of indicators which are specific for the case concerned. This is valid even if the indicators are "enriched" and transformed through theoretical deliberations. These transformed indicators were henceforth called "criteria". In addition, the partners laid different stress on the various indicators leading to a great variety of lists. Most important for that was the fact that it had turned out that from the outset the institutional conditions (meso-level) and the economic, societal and cultural framework (macro-level) needed the utmost attention, particularly the latter being very different for the participating countries.

To expand, from the start, the lists of indicators for evaluating the conditions of processes of situated learning so as to include all three levels at the same time led to the construction of a set of dimensions of criteria where each dimension is subdivided, although in a strongly interactive way, into the three levels.

As a further consequence, it appeared not to be adequate to judge the respective scheme mainly from outside by researchers applying the elaborated criteria. Instead it was seen most appropriate for this task to present the criteria as an instrument which allows all people concerned - practitioners, planners, researchers but also policy-makers and even in part the participants themselves, too – to assess the outer prerequisites and the quality of the processes and concepts for learning and teaching/training/educating themselves. This should be done according to the basic structure of the six theoretically grounded dimensions of criteria with the three levels each, but should be as adaptable as possible to the specifities of the case

concerned. That led to the construction of the interactive tool QSED (Quality through Self-Evaluation and Development) and its critical, although closely with it interwoven counterpart, the TRDM (Transnational Reflection and Development Methodology).

Assessment and improvement of the validity of the sets of criteria to be systematically constructed

The main method for pursuing this task was the construction of the six dimensions of criteria which have been mentioned already in connection with objective 2 and will be explained under the heading of objective 6. The lists of criteria developed for the individual schemes had to be matched with the dimensions so as to find out about missing criteria and to change and expand the scope of the dimensions. This included transnational comparisons, in this way considerably widening the content of the dimensions and revising, through going repeatedly through loops of reflection, their internal arrangements. In this way a *systematic structure of dimensions of criteria* for concepts of and appropriate preconditions for processes of situated learning in "Learning Communities Centred on Practice" (LSSP's), *focussing on the re-integration issue*, could be arrived at. This represents one of the main outcomes of the project and can be regarded as truly innovative. The structure of the six dimensions allows for the complexity of the transantional re-integration "landscape" as much as possible. This was achieved by bringing the connections between the dimensions to the fore ("horizontal" complexity). In addition the interaction of the macro-, meso- and micro-level for each dimension represents the "vertical" complexity.

The extensive field research has shown that it is more sensible to combine the tasks of evaluating the schemes and developing criteria for their improvement.

After all, besides the strong points it is particularly the weak points of a scheme which should be detected by evaluation and which at the same time should be the focus of improvement.

In addition, the professionals of the schemes themselves are the ones who have to carry through the improvements, in the first place, even if their influence on the overall framework is very limited. Those are determined, on the macro-level, above all by the specific features of welfare provision and the systems of vocational education and training.

Therefore the partnership decided to construct a method which supports particularly the practitioners in discovering the features of their scheme which may need improvements. That is, the method starts off from the institutional or meso-level. But this self-evaluation by the

practitioners themselves – always with the conscious aim of (self-)development – has of course to take into account the outer conditions into which the scheme is embedded (macro-level) as well as the situations, interests and wishes of the individual participants (micro-level). The three-level approach therefore makes sure that the method can also be used by planners and decision-makers. It could and should also lead to reflections about general improvements on the macro-level by policy-makers who, however, have so far often prefered external evaluation to self-evaluation. Obviously, however, this kind of self-evaluation can be combined also with external evaluation. Indeed, this is the method which is mainly employed in evaluation of social work, at least in countries where market forces are still restricted in this field.

There external evaluation which is not connected with self-evaluation of the institution, usually representing the centre of a quality management system, is not viewed as being in concordance with the state of the art. Similarly, methods of quality management which have been adapted for non-profit organisations in the field of social or personal services, like the one of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), always consider self-evaluation to be the basis of all forms of external evaluation which is supposed to take place every fourth year or so. Similar methods have been developed for (self-)evaluation of (also vocational) schools, like the Swiss model *"Qualität durch Evaluation und Entwicklung"* – Q2E. No similar method has been, however, devised so far for the field of the re-integration activities investigated by the project. Such a specific method, to be described in more detail under the heading of objective 6, is actually the main outcome of the project, thus representing a truly innovative result.

Long term effects of participating in re-integration schemes on autobiographical action competence

Although it proved very difficult to track participants after they had left the schemes a considerable number of cases in different countries could be analysed. Nevertheless, the sample was too small for arriving at conclusions which could have been generalised on the individual level. But anyway, it was clear from the outset that no valid causal connexions could have been achieved, due to the host of intervening variables. This does not mean, however, that this issue could not be included in the methods developed for the self-evaluation of the schemes.

The main outcome of this part of the research was exactly that in most cases no tracking mechanism was found to be installed by the planning bodies on the political/societal level. An exception is given by the career counselling service in the UK, but even there it does not function well in the long run. But to be able to track the former participants is the main precondition for supporting them after they have left the schemes. And the cases analysed showed that all young people who had not managed to return to the mainstream needed this support very urgently. Thus an important criterion for self-evaluation, here for the decision-markers, was established.

This support, called "after-care", needs however not to be left to the administrative level. Some schemes had constructed a support network on their own, thus representing examples of good practice. Even is these networks comprehend usually only rather loose connections they provide in incentives for other re-integration measures to reflect upon the possibilities found there in place and to try to develop similar initiatives. Among the "nodes" of such a network are not only labour agencies and career services etc. as well as institutions responsible for social care. Equally important are more informal partners like sports clubs or youth groups maintained by e.g. churches. In this way after-care is a very relevant criterion on the meso-level where the practitioners can, via self-evaluation and reflection, try to change things for themselves.

But also on the micro-level after-care is an important issue because it turned out that very often the participants did not feel enough support for getting into contact with the institutions providing social care, and even more so with the informal groups to which they might wish to belong.

Thus this part of the research gave important clues as how to include long term effects into a self-evaluation method. In addition, it provides an example of how the results of the field research were incorporated into the self-evaluation tool.

Design of a transnational (European) tool for self-evaluation, which is culturally adaptable and allows for critical reflection on the principles of evaluation.

The main outcome of the project is a self-evaluation tool, which is to be used, in the first place, by practitioners in re-integration schemes: *QSED – Quality through Self-Evaluation and Development*. It aims at supporting the practitioners in improving their scheme, relying on common discussion and reflection on features which should be changed. Obviously this

process of continuous quality improvement can also be used in connection with external evaluation in a way which was outlined above. In addition, because the tool employs the three-level approach described, it also relates to the structural level and contains statements which point out power relations in society that on their part strongly influence the setting of the whole "landscape" of re-integration schemes in a country, but also the conditions under which each single scheme has to operate. Therefore the tool can also be used by planners and policy-makers for reflecting about improving the framework conditions of the re-integration schemes in their region or their country. Because the tool has emerged from transnational research and has deliberately retained the different cultural roots it contributes strongly to transcultural mutual learning, thus representing a decisive European dimension. This is true for all three levels, the structural or macro-level, the institutional or meso-level and the individual or micro-level.

On all these levels practitioners, planners and policy-makers can get an overview of the different approaches in the various cultural settings or countries, respectively, and in this way they may get incentives to reflect on rather fundamental changes for their own schemes. This must not, of course mean just copying the solutions of other countries because the respective features are usually closely linked to the whole structure of the educational and particularly the VET system, representing different traditions especially of the pathways of school-to work-transition. Rather, mutual learning means to grasp the underlying ideas of the measures in another country and employing them for transforming the structures and practices in one's own country.

During this process of reflection it will turn out that some statements and questions do not fit in with the conditions of one's own country and have to be adapted or completely altered.

In order to allow for that the tool is presented as an interactive IT-tool on a CD to be used on a conventional PC. In contrast to the usual programmes which are also called interactive this tool makes it possible to change it nearly completely, by altering the questions themselves, not only selecting different answers. The only feature to be retained is the basic structure, that is the three levels (macro-, meso- and micro-level) and the six dimensions of the criteria employed. In this way, starting from a common European evaluation framework, representing the European dimension, a special tool for each country and indeed for each single institution can be created by the users themselves. That appears to be a very innovative feature of this result of the project.

The dimensions of the criteria were developed from the field research in a spiral of repeated interpretation of the issues detected, thus employing the methodology of "Grounded Theory" elaborated by Glaser and Strauss, as described in the chapter 5 and 6 about methodology.

The six dimensions are:

> Self-Evaluation and Reflection:
  Here the basic aims, possibilities and limitations of evaluation (self-evaluation, perhaps combined with external evaluation) should be reflected upon.

> Collaborative networks of actors:
  Here the importance of networking (internal, within the institutions, and external, among different institutions) should be discussed.

> Inclusiveness:
  At issue are here the opportunities and limitations of retaining the young people at risk of dropping out as close as possible to the mainstream (including assistance for gaining the necessaries of life).

> Funding/Administrative structures:
  This relates to the general funding and administrative rules for re-integration schemes as well as far each single measure; in addition, the question of how the individual participants can be supported through adequately organised funding should be dealt with.

> Situated learning:
  This has been elaborated as the main means for providing the most adequate learning opportunities for the disadvantaged clients; in particular the task is to design re-integration programmes in such a way as to promote vocationally oriented competences in close connection with furthering social and personal development.

> Recognition of skills/Assessment:
  This regards the possibilities and limitations of officially recognizing the often small steps of progression of the participants as well as the balance between the evaluation of progress in personal and social competences and the demands of the funding bodies for assessing objectifiable results.

How to use the tool is explained in the CD at the beginning. Also the main principles which led to it's construction are shortly outlined.

The content is reproduced in chapter 7 of this report. In order to experience the true value of the high interactivity and adaptability the readers are, however, strongly advised to try out the

tool on the CD directly for themselves. This outcome of the project transcends considerably the objectives which the partnership had announced in the proposal.

Nevertheless, as is described in the chapter about the critical reflection of the methodology (chapter 5.2) there exist also strong reservations against every form of even self-evaluation the methods of which are prescribed from outside.

Therefore the partnership developed, together with the QSED tool, a methodology which puts the practitioners' views even more into the centre and leaves the way how to deal with the situation of their scheme completely to them as the main actors. It is closely connected to the QSED in applying the same three-level approach where now, however, the individual and the structural level come into view nearly exclusively from the perspective of the practitioners while reflecting upon and further developing their respective re-integration scheme. This is called the "Transnational Reflection and Development Methodology" (TRDM), described in chapter 9. It is based on the above mentioned "interpretive approach" of evaluation and employs the action research methodology in the strictest sense with which this was originally developed. The TRDM can and should be understood as a methodology for critically reflecting upon a tool like the QSED which, although also strongly actor oriented, still retains the claim of having elaborated objective quality criteria based on scientific research.

But because the development of the QSED and the TRDM proceeded in parallel, at the same time and based on the same outcomes of the field research, the basic dimensions for reflection used in the TRDM are identical with the six dimensions for self-evaluation and development employed in the QSED as outlined above.

The TRDM stresses even more than the QSED the critical and emancipatory aspects of reflection and development; for instance with respect to the dimension inclusiveness practitioners often feel in a particular intense way that the mere existence of re-integration schemes which are separated from the mainstream education may lead to the stigmatisation of the participants as low achievers who are to be blamed individually for their failure.

Similarly, for further developing their scheme the practitioners often consider advice from outside as being inadequate for the extremely specific features of their situation. Therefore the role of researchers, even if they are committed to action research in the strict sense mentioned, is regarded as problematic and should be called in question, and an intensive continuous exchange of the views of the practitioners and the researchers should be established. In this sense the TRDM represents a methodology which stresses particularly the emancipation of the practitioners from influences of external power centres.

The second main feature of the TRDM is that it emphasises a phenomenological and hermeneutic approach also even more so than the QSED does. This means that any criteria, not to speak of indicators of quality, are supposed to be forced upon the real situation which is regarded as much too complex to be grasped through so called simplistic criteria. Rather the practitioners and the action researchers, in close co-operation, should try to gain a view of the situation which is as little distorted by suppositions made beforehand as possible. These undistorted perceptions should then be interpreted according to the tradition of hermeneutics, thus being equally as free as possible from assumptions usually accepted as obvious.

The third main factor, making use of methods developed in the tradition of deconstructivism, is linked to the other two but even more radical. Employing the ideas developed in connection with the critical reflection of the methodology the whole discourse about normality of a biographical pathway (here of young people) is called in question. This is embodied in the vocabulary (e.g. "low achievers") and in the "measures" (like re-integration) which aim at drawing back those young people to the mainstream. These discourses are formalized in sociological, psychological and last not least pedagogical theories which means that the whole issue of re-integration poses serious questions about power relations and democracy.

Of course, these deliberations have also influenced the construction of the QSED. Therefore the two approaches should be perceived as mutually complementary and not as standing in opposition to each other.

For practical purposes, it is recommended that particularly the practitioners, but also planners and decision makers may use the QSED for evaluation and development. But especially when external experts can be employed for assisting in this procedure they may introduce the critical aspects represented through the TRDM, even more so if they are researchers who follow the principles of action research. The tool QSED is available in English and German while Greek and Portuguese versions are in the making.

Transcultural recommendations for the improvement of the quality of re-integration programmes

In view of the great diversity of re-integration programmes within the individual countries, but particularly between them, recommendations must be of a more general characteristic which is valid for the more basic features. On the other hand, the transcultural diversity represents also a great advantage because it opens up, by way of mutual learning, the horizon

of the single cultural settings for approaches which differ completely from the ones one is acquainted with.

The recommendations are based on the typology of welfare regimes and their concomitant structures of VET and school-to-work transition. This is worked out in chapter 3 (Cultural and Historical Contextualisation of Integrative Approaches). In addition, they are strongly influenced by the results of the empirical field research for the cultural, societal and socio-economic (macro-)level which has been incorporated into the self-evaluation tool QSED. From the latter recommendations also for the meso- and micro-level are reconstructed.

In order to combine the European dimension with the requirement of valuing the cultural differences, a three-dimensional transcultural framework of recommendations has been developed in chapter 12.

The first dimension or direction of analysis is designed according to the typology of welfare regimes and structures of VET and school to work transitions. Four types have been defined:

➤ the Nordic universalistic welfare regime with a concomitant school based VET structure;
➤ the employment based welfare regime of Central Europe where VET-systems of alternance between companies and VET schools are prevailing;
➤ the liberal welfare state, mainly to be found in the UK, where VET provision and school-to-work transition are strongly based on market principles;
➤ the less institutionalised welfare regimes of the countries of Southern Europe where non-formal ways of school-to-work transition are dominant, at the same time supported by still strong family ties.

The second direction of analysis is identical with the six dimensions constructed for the QSED tool, apart from the fact that "Funding/Administrative Structures" and "Recognition of Skills/Assessment" are here integrated into the other four dimensions. Therefore the main dimensions of the recommendations are:

➤ Collaboration (of actors and institutions),
➤ Reflexivity (self-evaluation possibly combined with reflective external evaluation),
➤ Inclusiveness (as in variance with separating the disadvantaged young people from the mainstream),
➤ Situated Pedagogy (as defined before).

Thus the basic focus of the recommendations is abbreviated as CRIS – Collaboration, Reflexibility, Inclusiveness and Situated Pedagogy.

These four dimensions depict the most important concerns emphasised by the recommendations for the various cultural settings, but always retaining a transcultural perspective for these fundamental centres of interest. The third direction of analysis is given through the application of the three-level approach: recommendations

- on the macro-level, to be espoused by politics and planning,
- on the meso-level, to be enacted by institutes and programmes,
- on the micro-level, to be realised in educational practice.

Through the second and third direction of analysis 12 "building blocks" of European recommendations are defined. They are applied to the four cultural settings, always employing the transcultural perspective, resulting in altogether 48 areas of recommendations. The details are to be found in the respective chapter 12 of the report.

The Transcultural Recommendations are available as a separate booklet in English and German.