

Papers on

➤ **New trends in professional formation and updating in occupations associated with adult learning**

VOCB

New trends in professional training and updating training of adult learner trainers

In Flanders, adult learning trainers are employed in multiple organisations, instances, companies, work sites, adult learning institutes, etc.

According to the organisation for which they work, their job has a different name. Involved are educational staff, path guides, instructors, trainers, coaches, teachers, etc. There are, however, more different actions than labels: basic training, status, financial compensation, updating training is not the same for everyone. Some forms of adult training are subsidised by means of government funds. Various departments are involved: Education and Training, Employment, Culture, Economy and Agriculture. Next to them, a number of private initiatives exist.

In this first section, we try to depict a summary of the various forms of adult training in Flanders. For that purpose, we supply concise information about the professional staff. In the second section, we give a more detailed scope of professional training in adult education.

The third section mentions the new developments in Flanders relative to professional training and updating training of adult learner trainers.

1 Adult training in Flanders: description of the work area

1.1 Adult education

The purpose of adult education is to teach trainees knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary to function socially, to attend further education, to exercise a profession, and to command a language. Adult education is subsidised by the Education and Training Department.

1.1.1 *Social Promotion Education (SPE)*

Social Promotion Education is organised on secondary (vocational and technical) level and on the level of advanced education of the short type. The trainee is enabled to obtain a certified diploma or certificate. The offer of courses is very vast and diverse. Even adults, who still want to obtain a secondary school diploma, find an opportunity there (second chance education).

Social Promotion Education is organised within a network. Community education, as well as subsidised independent education and subsidised official education offer that tuition form.

Figures:

Adult education centres: 124

Trainees: 160.000

Teachers: 5700

Required diplomas: permit to teach in secondary schools or a diploma of higher education of the short or long type, in combination with evidence pedagogic skills

Updating training: see section 2.

1.1.2 *Basic training*

Basic training addresses low-educated adults. For the time being, the target is determined by the education degree: basic training is meant for persons who do not possess a lower

secondary school or a second-degree secondary school certificate. Immigrants may have attended a maximum of 10 years of education in their country of origin.

The basic training centres are professional organisations, each with a team of permanently employed education staff and a co-ordinator. The mission of the education staff concentrates on teaching and trainee coaching. The basic training centres are non-profit associations that, according to the labour legislation, belong to the private sector. They are subsidised by the Education Department by means of envelope financing.

Figures:

Basic training centres: 29

Trainees: 26 000

Teachers: 500

Required diploma: higher social or pedagogic education of the short type.

By decree, compulsory updating training of education staff has been provided for. In addition, the Flemish Basic Training Support Centre (VOCB) organises coaching and after-school training (see section 2).

1.1.3 Coached Individual Learning (BIS) – Distance Learning

Coached Individual Learning proceeds by means of written courses, attended by the trainee at home, according to his/her own pace and potential. At present, efforts are being made to integrate ICT in learning packages. This particular form of adult education will not be further examined in this survey.

1.2 Training according to profession and employment

1.2.1 VDAB Training (Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Organisation)

The objectives of the VDAB are detailed in the management contract that the VDAB has concluded with the Flemish Community. It describes the actions that the VDAB is allowed to take, the target figures, target groups, the way and channels of subsidising, etc. The central objective of VDAB training is employment on the regular labour market. The main part of that training is profession-aimed, while participants are guided to the labour market by means of path coaching. Other training courses concern path selection, application training, and personality training. Training can be attended by both job seekers and employees. The VDAB is subsidised by the Flemish Government through the Employment Department.

Figures

VDAB training centres:

Participants: 130 000

Trainers: 880

Required diploma: professional experience prevails to initial education.

The VDAB internal training office annually designs a training plan by questioning managers (organisation perspective), by analysing assessments after training, and by targeted questioning the trainers.

Structure of the training packages:

- Initial skills: training of all new staff members
- Offer of skill development: reflection frameworks that adapt to function requirements
- Tailored training: specific training on request of central or regional departments
- Free learning: specific trade training days, seminars, external training, etc.

1.2.2 VIZO (*Flemish Institute for Self-employed Entrepreneurship*)

The “Syntra training centres” address self-employed managers and SMEs. Three training levels can be distinguished: apprenticeship (vocational training for youngsters from the age of 15), manager training, and updating training. The centres are subsidised by the Economy Department of the Flemish Government.

Figures

Syntra training locations: 22

Participants in management training: 31 000

Updating training courses: 35 443 training hours

Teachers: persons fully professionally active who have shown evidence of their managerial skills.

1.2.3 *Private employment and training projects (Third Parties)*

In Flanders, there is a whole range of private training and employment initiatives whose main objective is often training and employment of groups that have problems on the labour market. Ever again, it is sub-regional, local initiatives that are often fostered by local authorities and/or private organisations. Many projects need a vast range of financing: European, federal, Flemish subsidies, etc. Within those initiatives, there are several umbrellas that pursue better project tuning and a co-ordinated supply. Due to the huge diversity, it is not easy to comprehend figures, required diplomas, etc.

1.2.4 *Other initiatives in relation with vocational training*

Apprentice sites, in-company vocational training, sector funds, etc.

1.3 Social and cultural adult action

Finally, we mention training institutions that are subdivided into four categories.

- Public colleges are pluralistic organisations that pursue the organisation, structuring, and co-ordination of the non-formal education supply in a delimited region. In addition to a cultural and socialising function, public colleges mainly have an educational mission and make use of social and cultural methods.
- Specialised training institutions organise a training supply within the framework of a given theme.
- Trade union training centres.
- Training institutions for disabled persons.

At the end of 2001, 41 training institutions on 92 locations were subsidised. Together they achieved over 160,202 training hours and reached at least 264,003 trainees.

1.4 Conclusion: tuning and co-operation

The supply for adults is vast. Regulations and financing are spread over various departments. The Flemish Government pursues enhanced co-operation among the various training initiatives. A more transparent supply, less competition and overlapping, more connections and completions are some of the main objectives.

We will revert to this while discussing new trends and developments. To begin with, we will examine training and after-school training in adult education more closely.

2 Training and after-school training in adult education

We will extensively examine training and after-school training of staff in basic training. In this section, we will also examine the report by inspectors of adult education, who investigated after-school training in the school year 2001 – 2002.

2.1 Basic training

In matters of basic training, the decree of July 12, 1990 urged all education staff to attend a specific updating training course (advanced teacher training) to teach low-educated adults. The organisation of after-school training for basic training is part of the mission decreed by the (VOCB). On this level, the VOCB operates according to the needs.

2.1.1 Advanced training

The decree provides compulsory updating training of education staff. From 1992 to 1995, this training was assigned to Flemish Basic Training Support Centre as an experiment. Since 1996, colleges (2 for the time being) have been supplying advanced basic training. The diploma of 'Education of low-educated adults in basic training' is required in case of employment in the Flemish basic training centres.

Example: training in Karel De Grote College

Compulsory updating training is organised as advanced teachers' training with 1,000 instruction hours. Training consists of contact modules, coached practice, and self-tuition. The teaching staff members are experts from the Belgian and Dutch field (basic training, support institutions, etc.) and from the scientific world (UIA, Ufsia, KUL, Steunpunt NT2).

The Advanced Teachers' Training Course contains five modules:

- Overall basic knowledge of Basic Training (ABK)

Trainees acquire better understanding of subjects beyond application area and of the overall operation by basic training centres. They also learn any didactic procedures to coach low-educated persons.

- Dutch as mother tongue (NT1)

Understanding of language learning by low-educated persons, the progress of the reading and writing process, and of occurring bottlenecks.

- Dutch as a second language (NT2 + NT2 for the analphabetic)

Acquisition of a second language, history of scientific research; explanation and elaboration of functional language training, application of various procedures and methods.

- Arithmetic

Existence and lack of arithmetic insight in Flanders. Educational psychological insight in matters of arithmetic education. Realistic arithmetic. The organisation of the arithmetic share in basic training. Insight in arithmetic skills: understanding of numbers, time calculation, currency conversion (introduction of the Euro). Survey of education software in Flanders / The Netherlands.

- Social Knowledge and Skills (SKV)

Training to work with communication, learning, and optional skills.

2.1.2 Coaching and after-school training in basic training

The purpose of coaching and after-school training is to innovate education and improve quality in the basic training centres. Both are complementary.

Coaching is in the first place considered as process and system coaching. In that sense, it is less directed towards specific subject-bound coaching or individual professionalism.

By means of after-school training, staff can increase their knowledge of their professional (learning) domain. The purpose of after-school training is to reinforce, keep up to date, or extend the professional skills of individual staff members. In after-school training, specialised subjects may be dealt with by external experts.

After-school training is directed towards realism and concentrates on staff members and teams in general, disregarding the realistic situation in the centre at that moment. Coaching concentrates on staff members and teams in their actual situation.

After-school training and coaching are tuned to one another as much as possible. The VOCB staff members who are involved in coaching are equally those who organise after-school training. Coaching has a signalling function in matters of after-school training needs and it can contribute to the implementation of subjects that are dealt with in after-school training.

Coaching

The VOCB is in charge of coaching the basic training centres *on their request and based on their own pedagogic and organisational objectives*. The field of coaching is the centre as a professional organisation and the centre in its active operation. Every six months, the VOCB globally plans coaching and after-school training, based on requests for support submitted. Coaching aims at a permanent process of *quality improvement* in the centres. Involved may be then: specific requests, urgency, needs, or lacks that have been detected by the centre (e.g. on occasion of internal assessment, new developments) or reported after an external audit. Coaching may also be requested while reconnoitring, becoming aware of, or specifying own needs and subjects in which quality improvement is necessary or desired.

Coaching does not consist of standard formulae, but is *tailored*. The purpose is to refine coaching as suitably as possible to the actual situation in the centre.

Issues that can possibly be coached are:

- vision training (support during the screening of education basic elements as a whole or for various learning domains);
- the policy of the centre (support during the elaboration of a policy plan, the target group policy, an expertise fostering plan, etc)
- analysis of centre operation, screening of priorities, making the planning for support on centre level;
- the creation of process quality care;
- the course supply and programs;
- expansion of a material stock.

After-school training

The purpose of after-school is to enhance the professional skills of individual professionals during basic training, to keep them up to date, or to expand them. After-school training further extends from skills that were acquired during initial and advanced training. After-school training addresses the individual staff members who have finalised the compulsory updating training and hence comply with certain skill requirements. Social and educational changes and innovation, modifications of the task package, require that this initial professional skill be continuously further developed.

The educational staff member is mainly considered as a person who enters after-school training with a huge amount of real life knowledge. An important part of after-school training consists of systemising insight already available and of putting it in new scopes. The trainer supplies support for systematic contemplation, and, as such, complementary information. Trainees may bring along and exchange their own experience, which may serve as a starting point for further development. After-school training aims at a growth process and professional *development*.

Individual professional development does not mean that after-school training takes place in a vacuum and has no links with the development of the centre team. Through after-school training policy on centre level, after-school training of the individual staff members must be embedded in centre policy. After-school training (also) occurs to achieve targets and options that a basic training centre puts forward as an organisation, and by means of coaching, it helps to launch or to keep running a kind of permanent process of *quality improvement*.

After-school training is mainly based on demands that originate from the centres or from the staff members in those centres.

In addition, a (smaller) part of after-school training is based on *supply*. The VOCB elaborates part of the supply on its own initiative according to new developments or in connection with other VOCB activities.

After-school training aims at realism. Realistic situations are inserted into the learning situation and explicit attention is paid to the translation of what has been learned into the work situation. Theoretical insight will always be linked to realistic practice situations.

Issues that will possibly be dealt with by after-school training are:

- general and learning domain determined training methods
- learning processes
- group process coaching
- target group characteristics
- substantial aspects
- organisational aspects
- *etc.*

The after-school training supply provides several activities on various levels.

Activities aiming at knowledge and insight

Concerned are rather brief after-school training activities by which new contents, procedures, approaches, etc. are supplied. Those after-school training activities aim at acquisition of knowledge and insight. Several formulae can be imagined: one-day or two-day after-school training, tutorials, biannual meetings, etc.

There is no supply of ready-to-use recipes that guarantee success, but thinking paths, ideas, opportunities, alternative procedures etc. to be used in a centre or that can further be elaborated.

Activities aiming at elaboration and training

Longer lasting after-school training paths further elaborate issues that have been dealt with already. Learning groups further elaborate a specific issue for a longer period and are coached by an external expert; then they try to translate the issue into own practice and to apply it there. Those elaboration activities aim at ability and skill acquisition; they can feature as exercise, training, feedback, coaching, development of tools with the trainees, etc. The groups count up to 15 participants.

Intervision

This is also a longer path in which an intensive personal learning process is initiated. It is a form of learning in which contemplation of one's own experience prevails. No contents are supplied, and there are no external experts who supply input or feedback. Attention is paid to one's own thoughts, procedures, and suppositions by elaborating and analysing the trainees' professional problems in a group. That group is, of course, smaller (from 6 to 10 trainees) and is not coached by a substantial expert, but by an intervision expert who facilitates and supports the trainees' learning process.

After-school training is organised to cover its own costs. That means that the cost of an after-school training activity (fees of external experts, rent of premises, coffee during the breaks, etc.) are put on the trainees' account. Hence, all trainees must pay a subscription fee.

Below, you will find the after-school training sessions that were organised by the VOCB in the spring of 2003.

Intervision for administrative employees

Promotion planning

Basic module for network management (repeated)

Interactive exercises created in PowerPoint

Simple writing. Operating with texts for and from low-educated persons

Grammar for NT2-learners

Supervision and intervision for co-ordinators

Motivating interviews with individual trainees

Solving arithmetic problems in daily life

Working at civic sense with new digital tools

Differentiation? Easy to say, hard to do

Working with particular trainees

2.2 Assessment of after-school training policy by the adult education inspection

2.2.1 Results based on teachers and school management queries

Adult Education Centres

Mainly management staff members attend *after-school training*. In almost 90% of the centres, it was they who attended after-school training. The share of administrative employees is 60%. Of the OSP secondary level teachers, 46% attended one or another form of after-school training.

Adult education teachers mostly attend professionally specific after-school training. In several centres, this training has an internal character, since it is given by a colleague.

General after-school training mainly concerns after-school training in computer sciences. 52% of the school managers declare that active, didactic after-school training should be available sufficiently. That is also considered necessary to language and NT2 teachers.

To *organise* after-school training, internal expertise is often used. Language and NT2 (Dutch as a second language) teachers make use of after-school training sessions supplied by universities. After-school training for companies are attended by teachers who have a specific assignment in specialised vocational training.

The *initiative* for (external forms of) after-school training in adult education mostly starts from individual teachers. A planned after-school training approach is rather exceptional.

The managers of about a quarter of the centres state that they have an *after-school training plan* available. In quite some centres, after-school training is encouraged and inventories of the supply are made.

Most of the times, external forms of after-school training are used (83%). Most centres pay supply expenses as well as transport costs, albeit with all kinds of restrictions.

In the teachers' opinion, the attended after-school training is generally *usable* to *very usable*. Nevertheless, a number of teachers think that it is too exclusively aiming at the full-time compulsory education system. Most school directors are moderately *satisfied* with after-school training.

Basic Training Centres

The (audited) basic training centres normally do not follow a specific policy on after-school training level.

The after-school training attended is mostly *professionally specific*. *General* after-school training relates to various issues that are connected with the current evolution of basic training. That after-school training is normally attended at the VOCB.

Initiation to attend after-school training is launched by teachers, by the school director, or sometimes by a group of teachers in a common learning domain.

In general, teachers consider after-school training attended *usable* in their own practice. All *costs* in connection with after-school training activities that are attended by teachers in basic training for professional purposes are paid for by the centre.

Some centres have an extended *after-school training plan*.

Internal after-school training in basic training is more often used than external *forms of after-school training*. For purposes of external after-school training, mainly the supply by the VOCB is used.

2.2.2 *Conclusions and confrontation*

Adult Education Centres

Adult Education Centres are not forced by decree to develop an after-school training policy. That means that centres do not receive means to attend after-school training, contrary to other adult training suppliers (Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Office – VDAB and the Flemish Institution for Self-Employed Entrepreneurship – VIZO). The financial means for after-school training are collected from the only form of income that an Adult Education Centre has, i.e. subscription fees paid by the trainees. Consequently, trainees do not accept that lessons are cancelled due their teacher's after-school training. In addition, adult education organises training that does not appear in the supply of regular education. For that kind of training, the supply of after-school training is very limited to inexistent.

In general, adult education is unknown or insufficiently known to after-school training suppliers.

There is quite a distance ahead. In centres where teachers mostly have a full-time job, organisation of an after-school training policy is more successful than in centres with part-time teachers. Adult Training Centres also attempt ever more to make use of their own expertise for after-school training of their own staff, staff from other education levels, and from other instances.

Basic Training Centres

Basic Training Centres have a long-time tradition in matters of after-school training. The budget is a global envelope provided for the centres; the VOCB approach, based on needs, guarantees that after-school training matches ten teachers' needs.

2.2.3 *Recommendations*

- There is an urgent need of implementation techniques to have new insight, principles, and contents penetrate as far as the work floor. Those aspects of innovative learning and acting deserve more attention within teacher training and after-school training, so that every new or expert teacher inserts those skills as obvious elements. Those skills are also to be translated to the level of the organisation: which organisational and managerial aspects of after-school training multiplication and assessment are most suitable?

- It is recommended to support schools and school communities when they formulate a demand for after-school training. Surveys and experience from audits reveal that in schools, in which that approach is used, the impact on effective implementation is much more positive.
It is recommended that the after-school training centres and the coaching instances develop initiatives.
It is also necessary that after-school training organisations acquire sufficient insight in the operation of a regular school. In other words, suitable updating training of the after-school training centre can be considered.

- After-school training should rather be seen in the wider framework of professional development of teachers. The value of internal after-school training must have sufficient attention in school teams.

- After-school training suppliers must describe the target group more clearly, so that schools and teams may organise better by means of task distribution and forms of internal after-school training.

- In the framework of self-assessment, school teams can pay more attention to the assessment of after-school training activities.

- The Education Department can handle a more powerful policy to stimulate adult education centres to work at the professionalism of the staff by means of an after-school training policy.

After-school training suppliers could pay more attention to adult education staff on the level of contents, activity, didactics, and policy. That is possible through differentiation of the supply or creation of a proper adult education supply.

After-school training suppliers should communicate their supply more directly to adult education centres.

3 New developments

The two most important developments in Flanders relate to

- 1) training of teachers in adult education. So far, hardly any attention was paid to the specific character of that training.
- 2) tuning of the various suppliers to each other.

For the rest, several existing tendencies are current in Flanders, e.g. in relation with a learning organisation.

In a first paragraph, we approach the concept of a learning organisation that also has its effect on after-school trainers. The Government ordered a survey of life-long learning. The resulting recommendations for the role of the trainer will be dealt with in the second paragraph. The Government took then concrete policy initiatives that you will find in paragraph three.

3.1 A learning organisation

A learning organisation can be depicted as an organisation that continuously pays attention to enabling learning processes from its entire staff and that uses the results of those learning processes to improve or renew its products or services. 'Learning in organisations' is part of the basic processes of the organisations, in particular of knowledge intensive and processing organisations. In a learning organisation, sometimes learning and working can hardly be distinguished, since the worksite is explicitly considered as a learning site and since learning is part of work.

In the 'learning organisation' concept, the word 'learning' has a much vaster meaning. Classical training methods in organisations do not conceive that there is learning without training. Within that concept it is important to formulate clear learning targets and that there is a clear program to achieve them. It is disregarded that people learn a lot from themselves and from others (who are not necessarily 'experts') and from own and others' experience.

In the 'learning organisation' concept, the word 'learning' has a much vaster meaning. It is not a matter of having experts tell less experienced persons how to proceed, but persons should be able to search together for necessary expertise and for the best solution of occurring professional problems. Learning in a learning organisation means taking the time to analyse, to ask questions, to screen mutual assumptions and values instead of giving immediate answers. Learning does not mean that one knows the answer already and discovers something that the others know already. Learning in a learning organisation also means that an employee must be confronted with work problems to be solved by him.

The main issue is learning to learn, supplying techniques to initiate one's learning and the necessary support for that purpose. It is a matter of continuous enabling learning processes.

For that purpose it is very important that learning be concentrated on personal thinking and working methods, assumptions, etc. i.e. *contemplation*. That cannot be done without the others. Contemplation needs a return link by an external person.

Survey has demonstrated that by means of meditation and contemplation both groups and individuals are able to make a sudden jump forward in their learning process. When employees are asked by which their skills were affected the most, only seldom they mention the formal training programs, but they do mention the usefulness of their own searching, observation of co-workers' activities, 'on-the-job' coaching, feedback, etc. One often learns more from the experience of peers.

That does not imply that we should bluntly abolish after-school training, survey meetings, all kinds of workshops, etc. when we notice that the most powerful learning processes do not originate in a classroom, but on the work floor, yet we should not conclude that after-school training is a waste of time and money. Training sessions will constitute a necessary completion of the skills that the staff members acquired previously. Experts can teach staff members a lot, and training may be the most efficient instruction process. However, one forgets too often that staff members learn a lot from daily life: during work meetings, while teaching, during informal talks, etc. Training is just one method to initiate learning processes. Training sessions are no longer the standard answer to signalled learning needs. Ever more, those training sessions play a completing and supporting role for other learning opportunities that are often created on the work floor. Training is one of those means to stimulate and structure learning. Employees, however, learn in far more situations, such as during preparation and execution of work, during deliberation with co-workers, by acquiring new experience elsewhere, or by self-tuition.

The ideas of the learning organisation teach us that training should not be reduced but should be changed. It is not training, but learning that prevails. That also changes the task and the mission of those who are in charge of after-school training. They are no longer only responsible for training, but also for learning. They must facilitate and support learning. They must assure the development of an environment in which individual and collective learning is stimulated as much as possible. They must create conditions to transform individual and staff learning experience into a learning experience for the entire organisation and sector. For that purpose, they must create learning areas that appreciate the need for learning, and enable and stimulate learning and development by giving the group a chance to define again objectives and tools.

The contribution by trainers to those learning processes consists of accelerating the learning process, not by giving all the answers, but by asking the right questions at the right time.

3.2 Recommendations for the new role of the trainer for life-long learning

On request by the Flemish Government, two universities mapped the starting stages and the framework of a sound life-long learning policy in Flanders. They also phrased recommendations for employment and for the educators' status and training. Moreover, they emphasised that not only adult training must be focused, but that the scope of life-long learning also plays an important role in training youngsters.

3.2.1 Core idea

The core idea in their recommendation is the emphasis on the **roles** that '**educators**' (teachers, trainers, training staff, instructors, coaches, supervisors, tutors, VTO consultants, social and cultural animators, etc.) are to play to facilitate life-long learning.

Those roles consist among others of: to guide youngsters and adults to set out learning paths, to help to phrase education needs and tuition requests, the design and appropriate adjustment of education programs, the maintenance of those programs, the assurance of the development of learning tools and teaching software, the assessment of learning experience and performance, the assignment of certificates and diplomas, and handling proper quality control.

All this requires appropriate **expert development and fostering**, tuned to the scope of life-long learning and to adult learning styles and methods. The creation of opportunities for that expert development and fostering, rather than imposing requirements and inspections, should be the prime reflex of Government policy in matters of life-long learning. As a matter of fact, much of that learning takes place in open or in so-called murky learning environments, through co-workers teams, or supplied by means of programs commercial organisations or sites on the Internet.

The above-mentioned expertise fostering is needed by a full-time educator, as well as by a part-time or extra-professional operator. The latter must not be hindered to make efforts for life-long learning. As a matter of fact, properly embedded life-long learning is important to society, together with relying on the generous contribution by professional and non-professional educators from all kinds of social sectors.

3.2.2 *Making means operational*

It is recommended to establish one or several **skill profiles** with which 'educators' must comply if they want to play their role in life-long learning adequately and efficiently. Those skill profiles may be useful tools while publishing vacancies, while selecting applicants, and during self-assessment to know who will or wants to assume a mission in life-long learning areas. When programs and provisions financed with Government funds are involved, those skill profiles may constitute the basis for regulating the job requirements and the certification of an 'educator'.

In matters of **pedagogic higher education and academic teacher training**, the scope of life-long learning and its appropriate methods must be systematically introduced in training programs. In addition, **after-school training** of teachers must be adjusted accordingly. That does not only count for future starting trainers. Also, those who graduated longer ago as teachers should receive after-school training by means of a refresher course. Assessment of teacher training as announced must always pay attention to the presence of the life-long learning dimension.

Specific for adult education in its various features – in-company training, distance learning, adult training, and social and cultural training – **specific and 'certified' initial training** and also updating training must be used to facilitate life-long learning. That 'certified' training must be a supply that allows spontaneous access. Successfully attending it must not lead to a generalised requirement for pedagogic skill, except perhaps for the programs and provisions financed with Government funds. Both universities and pedagogic higher education must be given the means necessary to organise such specific and 'certified' training.

For raining and updating training mentioned above, also the **expertise in matters of participation in various networks and partnerships** should be encouraged, since they are important for social embedding of life-long learning. That expertise should also address assistance to create powerful learning areas in all kinds of social situations and in organisations, and to act as a mediator between education facilities and social and labour organisations.

The elaboration of a **flexible and socially approved status** for educators is seen as a necessity to make and keep them available in various contexts, organisations, or institutions (with decent salary and labour conditions, transfer of their salary schedule, seniority, retirement privileges, etc.). That gives them opportunities for a dynamic career and enables suppliers to proceed more flexibly according to the demand.

Together with efforts for expertise fostering of educators, efforts must be made to employ sufficient and motivated educators and to value them as **fully professional or extra-professional staff or as experts with another prime mission**, who (can) contribute to life-long learning. Here could be considered some form of certification of educational skills acquired, a record of successful performances as an educator, facilities such as a credit or a scholarship to attend expertise fostering sessions free of charge or at a reduced price.

3.3 The Flemish Government: The Vilvorde Treaty, Interface, and ICT

3.3.1 *The Vilvorde Treaty*

The Flemish Government and the social partner phrased in the Vilvorde Treaty 21 objectives for the 21st century. A number of objectives concern Flanders as a learning society. The treaty stipulates that 10% of the Flemish between 25 and 65 must have attended continuous training by 2010. Ten years ago, hardly 2% of the adult Flemish attended further training. In 2000, it was 6.9%. At present, about 8% attend continuous training. In Flanders, life-long learning increases, but remains below the European average of 8.3%. moreover, there is a considerable gap between low-, medium-, and highly educated persons.

In relation with 'Flanders as a learning meeting spot', the Flemish Government and the social partners also phrased a strategic objective *to provide sufficient professional educators*. We summarise them below.

The mission of those who must shape the learning systems in real life, considerably changes due to overall social evolution and to altered learning systems. Educators who are active in both formal and informal learning areas should have attended more polyvalent training, learn how to hand over new knowledge and skills, efficiently and tuned to any kind of learning. That implies that having highly educated educators available is not enough. They must also acquire and have a strong intrinsic motivation to create such a labour-intensive task package. Orientation towards life-long learning requires effective expertise development and fostering. Both 'educators' expertise, fostering, and general social appreciation of their tasks need strong positive stimulation.

3.3.2 *The Interface*

In 2001, the Flemish Government created a new deliberation body in which the various departments that deal with adult education are represented.

That Interface addresses the actors in the field of life-long and life-wide learning: teachers, public and private training suppliers, researchers, and policy makers.

The Interface has the following missions:

- To support the Government during preparation and execution of policy in matters of life-long and life-wide learning;
- To stimulate research;
- To detect learning and training needs and to tune supply to that demand;
- To develop an educational orientation plan;
- To assure tuning of common projects, structural initiatives, and back-offices of institutional training suppliers
- To be a platform for training suppliers to enhance the efficiency of the training supply;
- To make the training supply transparent and to organise first-rate advice through the learning shop;
- To develop for training suppliers a system of mutually transferable and approved certification and quality control.

To achieve those objectives, every year activities are developed in a number of workgroups. One interface project concentrates on "Trainers for adults".

Objective of the project

To develop a (modular) training concept for "trainers for adults", inclusive of its certification. In addition, experiments may be made.

Targets for 2003:

The draft of a profession profile for “skilled trainers for adults”.

The draft of basic and initial skills.

The description of modules for which an appropriate learning path may be followed.

The reaching of a validated profile, final terms, and modules in this domain.

The organisation of a survey meeting-day.

The supply of a typical module to experiment.

3.3.3 *ICT*

The Government also phrased objectives in matters of ICT and provides (partially temporary) budgets to employ ICT co-ordinators, to purchase educational software, etc.

4 Conclusion

4.1.1 Tuning and transparency

Survey confirms that there is no lack of training opportunities in Flanders. The quality of education supplied is high and Flanders has known a long tradition of adult education. Those strong points are counterbalanced by a number of weak points. There is a lack of transparency and supply is not sufficiently tuned to the client’s need. The Government makes efforts to find a remedy. Of course, that will take years and require co-operation from all training suppliers.

It is also a process in which training suppliers must beware of undesired developments.

Flanders pursues further integration of basic training in adult education, both on educational and organisational level. The sector is much concerned by the consequences:

- Abandoning the pluralistic organisation structure;
- Abandoning administration and programming autonomy;
What are the guarantees that certain parts of the supply (e.g. reading and writing groups, alphabetisation, foreign speakers, decentralised supply, etc.) and certain target groups (hardly reachable target groups, the socially and economically weak, etc.) will be served sufficiently? Will the supply and the target groups not come under pressure and be dismantled after some time?
- The loss of one’s own pedagogic concept.
Low-educated adults need their own educational approach that takes their learning pace, potential, and limitations into account.

4.1.2 Financing

According to a survey by the Flemish Economy Association, the Government appears to spend fewer means to training and education than it is the case in most other European countries. The core mission of the Government on the training market is not clearly delimited.

Moreover, training suppliers receive different means and subsidies.

There is a need for more supervising.

New developments and expansion generate new missions for training institutions. Those missions are now being added to the task package of the education staff member, despite the fact that he has not attended necessary training or updating training.

Some examples:

- **A middle staff**

A training centre must have a middle staff that is adapted to the size of the centre. On the one hand, the co-coordinator/director may delegate missions and competencies to that middle staff, which is certainly indispensable in larger centres. In quite a number of centres, we notice team co-ordinators who are active in teams (departments) or run, co-ordinate, and support administration, and who are in charge together with the co-coordinator/director of strategic policy in the centre, and of tuning and communication with the various teams. That requires that the competencies, the missions, and the profile of the middle staff be clarified.

- **Support jobs (executive jobs)**

Those are used to co-ordinate training and education of convicts, to co-ordinate the use of ICT in centres, for trainee coaching, for the development of a solid tool stock, for promotion, etc.

4.1.3 *Updating training: recommendations from basic training*

A new decree must make explicitly clear for which categories of (education) staff updating training is compulsory. The present regulations are too vague and its application can often not be achieved by the centre for financial reasons. Compulsory updating training cannot have the same volume, amplitude, and fullness for full-time and for temporary staff. The sector opts for proposing less compulsory updating training, expressed by the quantity of updating training hours and related with the duration of the temporary employment. That may be achieved by removing one or several modules from compulsory updating training and/or one or several activities from the after-school training supply (given by the VOCB or by others), depending on the mission, experience, and background of the staff member involved.

There must be guarantees for quality by means of a profession and training profile with which an advanced basic training must comply. This way, discrepancies and competition on unrealistic grounds (e.g. price and duration) could be avoided.

In the scope of further co-operation between basic training and adult education, it is desirable that opportunities are examined to broaden advanced basic training towards other adult education segments, so that a larger group of trainers can be engaged in the various segments of adult education.

Compulsory updating training of co-ordinators must also be made realistic. They must be given a specific route that leads towards managerial skills. That will best be translated into a certain volume of hours of updating training that must be attended, and by which co-ordinators can propose their own path, tuned to specific experience and updating training needs.