MULTIPLIER EVENT OF THE TACCLE 4 CPD PROJECT IN GERMANY – Promoting digital competences of vocational trainers

Report on the face-to-face event in Bau-ABC Rostrup, 16th of October 2020

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Introduction

This document is an activity report on the Multiplier Event of the TACCLE4 CPD project that was organised by the German partner Institut Technik & Bildung (ITB). The event took place at the North-German training centre of construction industries, Bau-ABC Rostrup. Below the four sections report on the preparation of the event, on the input from ITB, on the discussions with the participants and on the TACCLE4 CPD Showcase that presented the digital contents produced in the project for the field of VET.

1. Preparation of the Multiplier Event

Originally ITB researchers had planned to organise a face-to-face event together at the campus of the University of Bremen in May or June 2020. According to the preliminary plan we envisaged to organise a bridging event that links the work of the TACCLE4 CPD project to parallel ITB activities. With guest inputs we wanted give a closer look at the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) in the field of *vocational education and training* (VET). Also, we wanted to share information on new developments on the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) in the field of VET.

However, the corona-crisis made it impossible to implement these plans and to keep the designed Schedule. Due to the lockdown and the subsequent restrictions it was not possible to organise any presence event at the university campus before the summer holidays. Neither had vocational teachers and trainers spare time to participate in such events when the schools and training centres were able to start anew at the end of May.

After the summer holidays it became apparent that there is no chance to organise any kind of face-to-face event with external participants at the university campus. From this perspective it seemed impossible to go further with plans that would include inputs from different projects and bring together participants from different organisations.

Later on, it became clear that we could organise a face-to-face event with the training centre Bau-ABC Rostrup with which ITB had had close collaboration in the EU-funded Learning Layers (LL) project. Also, in the context of the current project there had been several working meetings at Bau-ABC. The joint discussions with Bau-ABC trainers gave insights into challenges and perspectives for promoting digital competences in the context of vocational learning.

2. The input from ITB for the Multiplier Event

The event took place on Friday afternoon at the time when the apprentices had left the training centre and the trainers had a time slot of two hours for meetings of internal training. This time there were additional challenges due to the corona restrictions and due to the fact that some of trainers were tied up with examination duties.

The opening input by Pekka Kämäräinen described, how three aspects of fieldwork in Bau-ABC became vital threads of the work of the earlier Learning Layers project and its Construction pilot:

- Joint analyses of work processes ans work-realated learning in different trades of construction sector;
- Co-design of the digital toolset Learning Toolbox and different design events with trainers, apprentices and construction sector professionals who all gave their views, how a digital toolset could support them;
- Multimedia training and Theme Room training that paved the way for the introduction of the LTB as a toolset that is being used regularly in the apprentice training and vocational learning activities provided by Bau-ABC.
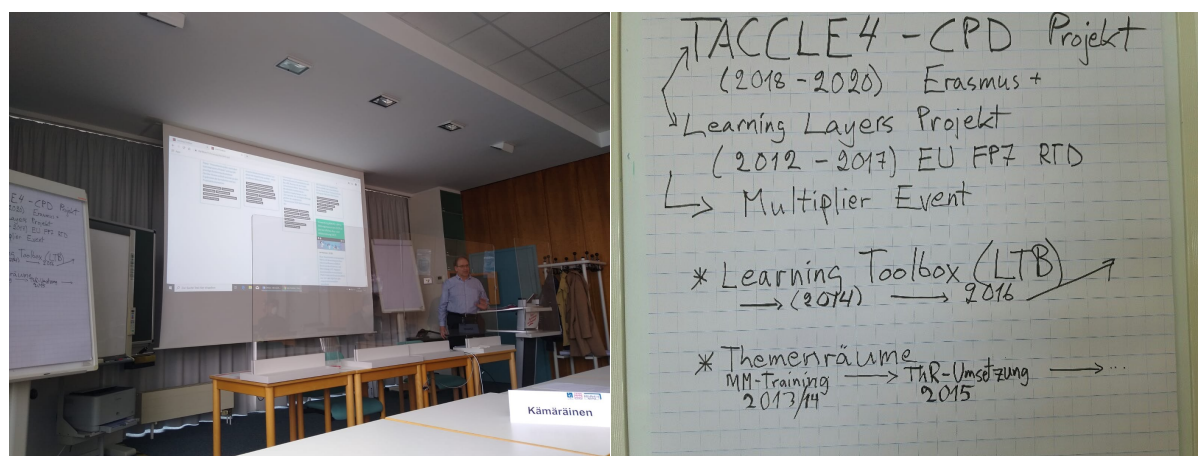
Photographs 1a and 1b: Presentation of Pekka Kämäräinen

Based on this prior experience, the special approach of TACCLE4 CPD to promoting digital competences in the field of *vocational education and training* (VET) raised specific accents that differed from other educational sectors:

- The VET-specific approach is not merely integrating the use of digital tools to teaching school subjects. Instead, the challenge is, how to link the use of tools to vocational learning *and* occupational work.

- The VET-specific approach is not merely about use of new educational technology to in educational settings. As a contrast, the challenge is, how to link the use of appropriate digital toolsets that contribute to *changes in working life and work-related learning*.

- The VET-specific approach is not merely focusing on digital competences of individual teachers (responsible of their subject matter). As a contrast, the holistic approach to vocational learning requires that teachers and trainers have a common approach to using digital tools.

In this respect it is essential to consider different **innovation paths** for introducing the use of digital tools. This was illustrated by different approaches in ITB projects:

- **The Kompetenzwerkstatt projects** have been (re)designing the curricula (as a whole) for different vocational learning contexts. Here, the use of digital tools has been built in into specific curriculum processes.

- **The Learning Toolbox** was developed in the Learning Layers project as a new integrative toolset to support apprentices' learning projects in initial vocational training. In the immediate follow-up phase it was promoted in further projects to support continuing training and knowledge sharing in the context of work processes[1].

- **The Brofessio project** had to deal with process industry cases in which the processes were sealed and could not be made transparent for learning in the context of work. As a contrast, it was necessary to introduce micro-learning units for off-the-job training to support work-related learning.

- **The use cases of introducing Open Educational Resources (OER**) were taken from specific vocational of pre-vocational learning contexts. Altogether they opened a perspective from relatively simple exercises to more complex uses of high-tech resources and to collaborative learning that involves learners from different trades.

This gave rise to discuss the Theme Room training of the year 2015 and to rethinking of the Theme Room approach for present date use. Firstly, the concept of training with Theme Rooms was a well-thought format but pilot implementation couldn't benefit of all the richness. Secondly, there is a need to make a new situation assessment on the digital challenges in the occupational fields and on the capability of trainers and learners to use of digital tools. Therefore, the Theme Room Training 2020 framework (that was drafted for the project) invites the users the design their own theme rooms with their own themes instead of following a ready-made guideline.

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[1] The statement on Learning Toolbox refers to the work in the Learning Layers project and to the immediate follow-up activities in which ITB worked together with the LTB-developers to launch new projects.

3. Key points that were raised in the common discussion

The discussion was opened by Melanie Campbell (coordinator of the continuing vocational training at Bau-ABC). She pointed to the importance of the Theme Room training in 2015 as a training campaign for all trainers of Bau-ABC. The aim was to bring the digital competences of trainers to an equal level - as much as this could be achieved. Since then the use of LTB in different trades has taken the main attention and the practical issues have come up as the main concerns.

Photos 2a, 2b and 2c: Melanie Campbell opens the discussion, partipants are preparing comments

Many trainers brought into picture practical problems that delimit the use of LTB at the training sites. Partly these are of infrastructural nature, partly there are difficulties in using the functions of LTB with given software solutions. Thus, the trainers have noticed that LTB is frequently used over the weekend. Melanie Campbell took note of these issues and suggested that similar Friday afternoon sessions should be used for troubleshooting and for sharing knowledge, how to overcome the difficulties.

Some of the trainers made the point that the Theme Rooms should be brought back to picture. Others commented that more emphasis should be given on overcoming the problems and getting more users at same level. Once this has been achieved, then it would be possible to take further steps in deepening the understanding on digital tools.

Altogether, the discussion reflected the situation in a training centre that had the experience of being early users of digital tools. In this respect it seemed that a period of "Theme Forums" would be needed to deal with the current problems before heading to new cycle of Theme Rooms. Yet, when looking back at the earlier phases of the Learning Layers project in 2014 and 2015, the ones of us who had shared experiences of that time could agree that we come a long way further. Indeed, much of what we discussed as something desirable, had become lived practice of present date.

4. Digital contents presented in the TACCLE4 CPD Showcase (powered by the Learning Toolbox)

In the blogs that Pekka Kämäräinen had prepared alongside other activities the project team had been informed of two main ways to use the Learning Toolbox (LTB) – as support for apprentice's training projects (as project-specific digital stacks) and as support for online conferences (in the form of ePosters). Quite recently the blogs had presented a further use – LTB-showcases that make transparent a wider range of stacks or ePosters under a common banner[2]. This gave rise to present the VET-related results as TACCLE4 CPD Showcase. Below, the main contents are presented as screenshots.

Screenshots 1a, 1b and 1c: Overview of the LTB-stacks in the TACCLE4 CPD Showcase

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[2] The use of LTB as support for ePosters and for Showcases has been developed and promoted on a wide scale by the start-up company Kubify that was founded by three former partners of the Learning Layers project. More information on the achievements of Kubify is provided in the Report 5 for the TACCLE4 CPD project.