



Context analysis report: Summary of findings

TDAR 2015

TDAR Work package 4. Evaluation

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1. Introduction

The TDAR project aims to contribute to the development of vocational learning in adult social care and other sectors across Europe by the transfer and further development of the ArbetSam approach in Belgium, England, Germany and Spain. Key features of the ArbetSam approach include

- Learning activities focus on employed staff, typically support workers with low educational attainment and/or limited Swedish
- Learning activities take place at work (not in a VET institution)
- Learning for individual staff is linked to collective learning and development (i.e. for the employer-organisation as a whole)
- Programmes are based on collaboration between employers and VET providers (including providers of language learning for adult migrants) and combine formal, non-formal and informal approaches to workplace learning
- Learning activities include a particular focus on (a) individual and organisational competence around language and communication; and (b) reflection
- Learning extends beyond staff enrolled on formal learning element of programme
- Programmes focus on creating sustainable culture of workplace learning, led by the employer and involving all staff; the role of the VET provider is to offer flexible support to the employer and to staff (this support includes advice and guidance to managers as well as formal teaching of staff)
- Care staff are trained to take on voluntary roles to support workplace learning, including the roles of workplace language advocate and workplace reflective discussion leader
- Care managers are actively involved in planning learning and monitoring progress

The ArbetSam approach evolved in response to a set of specific circumstances in the Stockholm region of Sweden (Berg and Hertin, 2013; Sjösvärd, 2013). Transfer and development of the ArbetSam approach to TDAR partner countries (i.e. Belgium, England, Germany and Spain) is likely to be affected by circumstances in those countries.

To support project evaluation (the subject of TDAR Work Package 4) each partner produced a brief, referenced analysis of similarities and differences between the Swedish context in which the ArbetSam approach evolved and the context in the partner's own country.

The analysis focused on aspects of adult social care and vocational education and training (VET), including language learning for adult migrants, relevant to the ArbetSam approach and its transfer and development.

This paper presents the findings of that analysis.

2. Findings of TDAR context analysis

2.1 Characteristics of adult social care systems in TDAR partner-countries

According to a recent analysis (Kraus et al, 2010:37-39), the adult social care systems of TDAR partner-countries can be described as follows:

Sweden: The nature of the system is generous, accessible and formalized; the system is characterised by high levels of spending, with low levels of private funding (i.e. fees charged to individuals); low use of informal care, but high levels of support for informal care; and modest cash benefits (i.e. to enable individuals to select and pay for services, extending choice).

Germany, Belgium: The nature of the system is oriented towards informal care, with low levels of private financing; the system is characterised by low (Germany) or medium (Belgium) levels of spending and low private funding; high use of – and high levels of support for – informal care; and modest cash benefits.

England, Spain: The nature of the system is oriented towards informal care, with high levels of private financing; the system is characterised by medium levels of spending, with high levels of private funding; high use of – and high levels of support for – informal care; and high cash benefits.

2.2 Contextual factors relevant to the development of the ArbetSam approach

As noted above, the ArbetSam approach evolved in response to a set of specific circumstances in the Stockholm region of Sweden (Berg and Hertin, 2013; Sjösvärd, 2013). These include the following:

1. **Growth in demand for adult social care**, due to (1) an aging population and (2) advances in medical science that mean more people (including people with physical and learning disabilities) are living longer with complex conditions
2. **Demand for higher level skills among support staff**, due to (1) greater prevalence of complex conditions and (2) rising public expectations for care services to address the preferences of people who use care and support services and (in particular) to respect the dignity of individuals
3. **Current labour and skills shortages**, likely to intensify as demand for care grows; the support workforce includes high numbers of (a) older workers with low educational attainment and out-of-date occupational skills and (b) migrant workers recruited over the past 10-15 years, many with limited language skills and little or no understanding of care standards
4. **Pressure on the sector to (a) recruit and train additional support staff; and (b) develop the occupational and communication/language skills of existing support staff**
5. **Declining numbers of young people are entering the labour market** (due to demographics), making it likely that employers will be obliged to continue recruiting untrained workers, including migrant workers with limited language skills
6. **A VET system geared to pre-employment training through classroom-based qualifications delivered in VET institutions with minimal links to employers**
7. **Operational constraints in care workplaces that severely limit the ability of care providers to release significant numbers of staff for significant amounts of learning**
8. **Evidence from a series of previous projects suggesting that workplace learning, when based on partnership working between care employers and VET providers, offers a practical way of upskilling support workers (including addressing the language needs of migrant workers)**

2.3 Comparison of contextual factors in TDAR partner countries*

**For detailed information on TDAR partner countries, see Context analysis Country profiles*

Factor 1: Rising demand for care This factor is present in Germany, England, Spain and the Basque Country and in Belgium.

Factor 2: Demand for higher level skills among support staff This factor is present in Germany, England, Spain and the Basque Country and in Belgium.

Factor 3: Current labour and skills shortages, likely to intensify as demand for care grows This factor is present in England and in Spain and the Basque Country. In Germany and in Belgium, support staff typically enter the sector through pre-employment qualification routes that ensure adequate levels of occupational and language skill.

Note: In Germany, at least 50% of employees must hold at least a three-year dual education qualification (EQF level 4). In Spain and the Basque Country, all employees will need to be qualified in care work at EQF level 4 by the end of 2015.

Factor 4: Pressure on the sector to (a) recruit and train additional support staff; and (b) develop the occupational and communication/language skills of existing support staff This factor is fully present in England and in Spain and the Basque Country, but in Germany and Belgium this factor applies only in regard to the recruitment and training of additional support staff; existing staff are deemed to have adequate occupational and communication/language skills.

Factor 5: Declining numbers of young people are entering the labour market (due to demographics), making it likely that employers will be obliged to continue recruiting untrained workers, including migrant workers with limited language skills This factor is fully present in England. In Germany, Spain and the Basque Country and in Belgium, it is partially present. Existing qualification requirements in Germany and Belgium, in Germany limit and in Belgium exclude the recruitment of untrained workers; in Spain and the Basque Country a similar qualification requirement at EQF level 4 is due to operate from the end of 2015. Migrant workers employed in Germany and Belgium are required to demonstrate language competence prior to employment as part of the qualification criteria for employment. In Spain, migrant workers are typically native Spanish speakers. The situation in the Basque Country is slightly different: commissioners of care services typically demand providers have Basque as well as Spanish language competence. In principle at least, while migrant workers may be recruited in Germany, Belgium, Spain and the Basque Country, they should not be able to gain employment without adequate language skills.

Factor 6: A VET system geared to pre-employment training through classroom-based qualifications delivered in VET institutions with minimal links to employers This factor is only partially present in Germany, England, Spain and the Basque Country and Belgium. In Germany and England there is a well-established system for the development and assessment of occupational skills in the workplace, ensuring close collaboration between VET institutions and employers; regarding language training for migrant workers, however, this is less the case. In Spain and the Basque Country and in Belgium qualifications delivered by VET institutions involve work placements, requiring VET providers to maintain relationships with employers.

Factor 7: Operational constraints in care workplaces that severely limit the ability of care providers to release significant numbers of staff for significant amounts of learning This factor is present in Germany, England, Spain and the Basque Country and in Belgium. It is only perceived as a problem, however, in circumstances where release is necessary. Thus it is not a concern in Belgium where recruitment to the sector is achieved through pre-employment training. It is only a concern in Germany in relation to the need to recruit more staff qualified through the three-year dual-education system (which requires employers to

take on trainees who are attending college for part of every week). It is a concern in Spain and the Basque Country primarily in relation to compliance with the requirement that all staff are qualified by 2015. In England, it presents a significant problem, since the sector relies on workplace learning to train support staff.

Factor 8: Evidence suggesting that workplace learning, when based on partnership working between care employers and VET providers, offers a practical way of upskilling support workers (including addressing the language needs of migrant workers)

As noted above (in relation to Factor 6), in Germany and England, the principle of partnership working between employers and VET providers to develop occupational skills through (formal) workplace learning is well-established; it is much less well-established regarding language skills and non-formal and informal workplace learning. In Spain and the Basque Country, there is some collaboration between employers and VET providers to support workplace learning (including workplace language learning) and organisational development; the focus however is on academic learning. In Belgium, there is also some collaboration between employers and VET providers to support workplace learning to develop existing staff, but not in relation to language learning (due to staff having to complete pre-employment qualifications that require language competence).

2.4 Relevance of the ArbetSam approach in TDAR partner countries

Germany: From now on, there is likely to be increasing reliance on recruitment of care workers from other countries. These migrant workers will need to (re)accredit their skills and adapt to German standards and approaches, including work-related language and culture. Their period of (re)accreditation and adaptation includes practical work experience as a care assistant or intern. The ArbetSam approach to language development and reflection in the workplace will aid that process of adaptation and language acquisition, as will additional resources on intercultural competence.

England: In England, training for support staff is through workplace learning, post-employment. Currently there are significant concerns over (a) the functional communication skills of both UK-born and migrant support workers; and (b) the application by support staff of behaviours consistent with the espoused values of the sector (which centre on person-centred care and promotion of independent living). Workplace learning is focused primarily on qualifications that often fail to adequately address these issues. The sector is currently developing a range of informal learning strategies to complement qualification-based learning. The ArbetSam approach will help to inform those strategies.

Spain and the Basque Country: In Spain and the Basque Country, the sector's current priority is to comply with the statutory requirement that by 2015 all care workers are qualified to at least EQF level 4. It is likely that this deadline will not be fully met and that compliance will remain a priority for some time. For employed staff, accreditation of prior learning is an efficient route to qualification – an element of the ArbetSam approach. However, it is likely to be ArbetSam's focus on collective workplace learning to support quality improvement that offers most value to the sector in Spain and the Basque Country, where skills development is conceptualised largely in academic terms. Additionally, in the Basque Country, policy on the use of the Basque language at work gives additional relevance to ArbetSam's focus on support for workplace language learning, in particular the language advocate role.

Belgium: In Belgium, the ArbetSam approach is relevant to quality improvement; it offers continuing skills development for occupationally qualified staff.

References

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