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Tiivistelmä: The blog text is a journey report and a reflection on the Erasmus+ KA2 project, "Kilimanjaro VET". The text summarises the first months of the project using authentic progress log entries by the authors which are combined with reflection on the challenges and the learnings made so far.



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Shared horizons in Tanzania: Why We Need Each Other

10.6.2024 - Kuortti Kimmo, Happon liris

Vocational education and training (VET) and the pedagogical qualifications of VET teachers have gained in attention and prominence in the European Union's educational programmes since the Lisbon Convention at the beginning of the current millennium. Together with three European and three Tanzanian partners the School of Professional Teacher Education has stepped up to the forefront of international cooperation in VET teacher education.

At the heart of Kilimanjaro region, at Moshi Town, a transformative educational collaboration is underway, poised to shape the pedagogical landscape for vocational teachers in Tanzania. Educational Consortium OSAO, Luovi Vocational College and Oulu University of Applied Sciences (Oamk) from Finland and Kuressaare Ametikool Regional Training Centre from Estonia have joined forces with three vocational institutions in the Kilimanjaro region in Tanzania to work on vocational teachers' training (image 1). In the following, we describe the project so far focusing on our project's work package 2, which covers competence-based education, digital skills, and management perspectives.



IMAGE 1. Teachers visiting Moshi, Tanzania in March (image: Kimmo Kuortti).

The quotes are transcripts of the post-webinar discussions as well as the project progress log entries of the authors of this text.

October 21st & November 22nd, 2023

Finally we are ready to start! There are two almost mythical places which are involved in this project: Kilimanjaro and Saaremaa (Kuressaare)! A great opportunity to work with people living in the foothills of Kilimanjaro and the island every Finn (well, at least ones born before 90's or so) knows at least from the song "Saarenmaan valssi" by Georg Ots! Snow-capped Kilimanjaro means "glittering mountain" in Swahili. I guess it refers to the glittering snow, something we definitely know here in the high north. I wonder if the Moshians will climb that 5,895-metre-high glittering mountain? Perhaps not - not all Finns ski on the glittering spring hills either.

The work package 2 of our Erasmus+ capacity building project has brought together a core group of eight dedicated educators from Kilimanjaro region vocational colleges and two trainers from Oamk on a journey of professional growth and innovation, focusing on competence-based teaching, curriculum development, and harnessing digital tools for effective instruction. As the project is still in its first year, it's time to reflect on what we have learned and how we can ensure that we stay relevant throughout the project.

October 31st & November 8th, 2023

Meeting and getting to know each other online went well, despite some minor connection problems. It worked because we were all equally enthusiastic and committed to the process. We discussed the digital pedagogy self-evaluations of the participants.

The cornerstone of our part of the project is competence-based teaching. This approach emphasizes student-centered teaching and learning, recognition of prior skills and knowledge and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge directly applicable to real-world scenarios.

From November 2023 to February 2024, the core group of eight teachers have been working together in webinars designed to create a common understanding of the concept of "competence", what it means in practice and how it could be meaningfully interpreted and applied in the TVET contexts of the three participating educational institutions. Through interactive workshops and collaborative discussions, teachers delved into designing competence-based curricula that foster holistic student development.

These virtual sessions served as a place for exchanging ideas, exploring best practices, and learning the latest methodologies in vocational education. We aimed to create an atmosphere and a collaborative environment where participants could engage in meaningful discussions and gain invaluable insights into competence-based teaching strategies and curriculum development tailored to the needs of Tanzanian vocational education. In December, at the kick-off meeting of the project we had the first opportunity to discuss our common ideas in person.

December 13th, 2023

I (Iiris) have now met the eight Tanzanian teachers, who are the core group, the multipliers, with whom we can collaborate and reflect on competence-based curriculum and education - an exciting opportunity for all of us! We've been thinking about competence-based teacher education for so many years in Oulu that I feel we have become a little bit blind. Now we have a chance to air our ideas and broaden our views!

In addition to competence-based education, another of the key pillars of this project is the integration of digital tools into teaching practices. Through hands-on workshops and interactive tutorials, the participants are learning how to utilize various digital resources to enhance classroom instruction, engage students, and facilitate personalized learning experiences. From web-based platforms to educational apps, the teachers embraced these tools with enthusiasm, recognizing their potential to transform traditional teaching methods and unlock new opportunities for student success.

February 8th, 2024

The two webinars we've now had on competence-based education have been filled with discussion, reflection, laughter, and joy! On the first occasion, the time was only exceeded by half an hour, but on the next occasion, the shared flow continued for over an hour. We need to improve our time management!

February 20th, 2024

The use of digital tools in teaching and guidance is not an end in itself, but this project would be more difficult without them. We have now met several times via Teams and each time we have tried out a new digital tool. Mostly successfully. But we think the most important and necessary

thing, after all, is still to meet the teachers next month. It is going to be an intensive week together in Moshi! After the online meetings, it's great to meet each of them in person!

The first milestone of our work package came in March 2024 when the teachers stepped back into their classrooms, ready to put theory into practice. Armed with innovative teaching strategies and equipped with digital tools, they embarked on a journey of implementation, weaving elements of competence-based teaching and digital pedagogy into their lesson plans.

The impact was palpable as students became active participants in their own learning, empowered to explore, experiment, and discover knowledge. Most importantly, however, what we trainers witnessed was a devoted, brilliant, and warm learning environment which the teachers created and to which the participating teachers masterfully integrated the new skills and ideas.

March 9th, 2024

Wonderful, colourful, beautiful Tanzanian nature and above all friendly, bright, and knowledgeable teachers. Our training day with the whole group of eight at Hai VTC was great! At first, I (Kimmo) was a little worried about the noise, which came from the outside through the open windows, but we got used to it. There was really an atmosphere of positive anticipation in the air. On Monday we will also have Mari and Riina from Luovi to cover additional needs pedagogy and inclusion. We think it is really nice to integrate the different themes in this project, because that is what the reality of a teacher is like!

In classrooms in Hai VTC, VETA Moshi and Mawella VTC, across the Kilimanjaro region, students embraced the innovative approaches introduced by their teachers. From collaborative exercises to multimedia presentations, the already fruitful learning environment gained new dimensions.

The classes ranged from automotive and tailoring workshops to business studies. The use of digital tools also helped the integration of additional needs students to the activities. Even though we were predominantly in the schools' premises, the focus on competence-based teaching empowered students to develop practical skills that are not only relevant to their chosen vocations but also essential for success in today's rapidly evolving job market. This is one of the foci of the project and is especially focused on by the trainers from Kuressaari vocational school, one of the partners in this project.

March 15th, 2024

We were able to observe every teacher in our core group teaching in their own environment. Each proved to be a skilled, student-centred, and innovative teacher! It was a thrill to watch them work! We travelled to Moshi to train, but it turned out that we learned the most ourselves.

Competence-based learning is also about the freedom to use your own strengths in your work. It is recognising previously acquired competences and it is the freedom to acquire and demonstrate competences in a way that suits you. We will continue to study and reflect on the application of this freedom in the coming months. The goal is to reach the peak of freedom, Uhuru Peak.

The integration of the three Tanzanian participating schools' management is an important part of our Erasmus+ project. During the training days between 8th and 15th of March, we also wanted to promote the impact of the project to the wider community, sparking conversations about the future of vocational education in Tanzania.

By facilitating the work of teachers and the management with tools and knowledge needed to adapt to and to forge the changing landscape of education in their region and country, the project supports sustainable growth and development in the region. Through collaboration and shared learning, stakeholders have come together to envision a future where every student has access to quality vocational education that prepares them for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. The sentiment that everyone shared on the joint training day of the 11th of March at Mawella can be illustrated by the plans that Evod and Venance and Christowaja made for a continued collaboration between their schools.

March 21st, 2024

Development and change need all actors: students, teachers and policymakers.

We are privileged to be involved in a project to which all the actors in the partner schools are committed and enthusiastic. No one is questioning the common objectives. Where necessary, solutions are sought together and constructively.

As we reflect on the journey of our Erasmus+ capacity building project so far, it's clear that we need to further ensure that the impact goes far beyond the walls of the classroom. We know the power of education to transform lives, uplift communities, and drive positive change, but to sustain a meaningful change requires constant self-analysis, staying

attuned to local realities and a shared idea of the horizon we strive for. By investing in the professional development of teachers and embracing innovative pedagogical approaches we forge shared goals, the shared horizon of expectation, in Tanzania, in Finland and in Estonia.

As trainers, we have witnessed that in Moshi, Kilimanjaro region, the seeds of transformation have been planted long before our time. Together with our colleagues from Hai VTC, Mawella VTC and VETA Moshi we eagerly work to ensure a sustainable harvest.

April 2nd, 2024

We continue to develop together with the wonderful teachers who have become our friends. Meeting online is now even smoother and warmer than before, after getting to know each other in person. In autumn 2024 we will have our Tanzanian colleagues in Finland! Our thoughts are already turning to how we can make their visit as warm, friendly, memorable, and educational as our visit to Tanzania was in March.

Image Gallery: Teachers visiting Moshi, Tanzania in March 2024 (images: Kimmo Kuortti and Iiris Hoppo)









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[All the publications from the project in Oamk Journal](#)



Mawella VTC
Moshi RVTC



Subcontractor:

