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# Training for Excellence in Textile: An Accomplished Cooperation Case with the Balkan Partners

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## Abstract

Recently cooperation among educational organizations has been a key for the internationalization of universities. This article aims to promote a cooperation to transfer a training tool developed in Greece to other Balkan countries under a Transfer of Innovation project. The training tool is a virtual environment set up to teach (1) how to construct basic garment blocks through an interactive step by step process using multimedia in one module, (2) how to manipulate basic blocks and construct all the designs in the CD, applying the same multimedia approach (3) to teach basic lay and cut principles and apply them to the garment styles, (4) to teach how to create new garment styles by applying the principles used in the garment styles. The transferred training tools in the textile training can be regarded as a sample case in an e-learning training material as an innovation transfer in Turkey and Romania since it combines ICT use and interactive training in vocational training organizations. The trainers and trainees can have access to this virtual environment, and this in turn leads to an innovative approach and methodology in the VET system in Turkey as a Balkan country. Thus, the project accomplished is a sample of cooperation between the Balkan countries and a sample of internationalisation with its multilanguage aspect.

**Keywords:** Vocational Education, Textile Training, Transfer of Innovation.

## Introduction

It is a fact that advanced computer and information network technology has revolutionized our teaching and learning approaches and methods and this also changed the learning environment. Thus, ICT strategy is very important and training organisations using ICT are significantly ahead in all respects. In addition, integration of ICT and e-learning is politically important in the EU in terms of internationalisation and globalisation of education, student demand and interest in increasing the quality of education through ICT (Sahin et al., 2009).

The ICT use in e-learning setting offers more opportunities for collaboration than the traditional large-enrollment lecture-based classes. The course instructors seem to be more intentional about fostering active learning experiences, such as asking questions or participating in discussions. A well-designed course should take the student through the entire learning cycle and engage several parts of the brain (Zull, 2002). This learning tool is more consistent with Knowles' (1975) andragogical model of learning that emphasizes the importance of student centered, self-directed, problem-solving-based learning (Neville & Heavin, 2004). Using the IC in e-learning, learners can interact directly with content (that they find in multiple formats) or can have their learning sequenced, directed and evaluated with the assistance of a teacher (Woods & Baker, 2004).

The aim of this paper is to promote a transfer event of a training module produced in advanced multimedia CD-ROM called TELESTIA AB: Fashion Express into Turkish and Romanian. The title of the project is "Excellence in Textile through "Fashion Express" (LLP-LdV-TOI-2007-TR-061). The transferred modules have great impact on the training methods in the Balkan countries using educational technology. This approach has used every possible high technology media to apply all the pedagogic theoretical principles. This way it manages to attract attention and interest, to engage involvement and to succeed in quick absorbing of basic principles, through interesting repetitions and attractive analytical presentations. The objectives to transfer Fashion Express are to meet the need for (a) adequate pattern construction skills training in colleges, (b) skilled pattern construction specialists

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in Clothing Companies, (c) a sound pattern construction knowledge base in Fashion Designers, (d) increased customisation in clothing styles and fit, (e) shorter lead times and minimising of costs (i.e. need to make pattern making quicker and cheaper). With Fashion Express, the users will have Pattern Construction basic skills: Figure Measurements, Simple Flat block construction for Women's, Men's and Children's wear, Simple Flat blocks for all garment parts (Bodice, sleeve, skirt, dress, trousers), Block manipulation for about 70 garment styles especially chosen for their pedagogic value. Direct beneficiaries of this transfer project are (1) trainers and trainees in Vocational Training, (2) technicians and apprentices working for Continuing Vocational Training, (3) designers who need pattern construction skills in order to design more effectively, or whose design skills can be enhanced with new approaches, (4) pattern construction specialists who need design skills in order to understand design ideas and in order to acquire improved pattern cutting skills. (5) Unemployed or disadvantaged people, women who can be trained at home and be able to work from home as freelance or external personnel, (6) The home market, amateur men and women who want to acquire simple pattern making skills for their personal use, for Life Long Learning. In short, the immediate target groups of Fashion Express are trainers, trainees, designers, apprentices involved in the textile manufacturing. Their main needs are (a) adequate pattern construction skills training in colleges, (b) skilled pattern construction specialists in Clothing Companies, (c) a sound pattern construction knowledge base in Fashion Designers, (d) increased customisation in clothing styles and fit, (e) shorter lead times and minimising of costs (i.e. need to make pattern making quicker and cheaper). This transfer is also of critical value to both managers and operators of enterprises in partner countries and EU. Additionally, it will assist intermediary bodies (chambers, training organisations, sectoral business support associations, universities, independent consultants, etc - with a remit to improve productivity in the textile sector) to themselves work with the company decision makers to help them effectively gain the knowledge to help survival and train personnel to assist with real global competitiveness.

## The Training Tool

The training tool on which the project is based is already in Greek, English, French and German. The first value is their translation and transformation into Turkish and Romanian in addition to other European languages. Thus, the products are available in more EU languages. There is one sites, one of which is used for the communication between the partners and the other is used for the introduction and promotion of the products. This website will contain the main characteristics of the products and some demos. It will also comprise a platform for feedback from the potential users. There will be more visibility efforts to make the products culturally publicized and adapted. The partner countries will check the legislation related to the training and the document will have national and international value. The modules will be updated and improved continually and commercialization will go on globally through the partnership and the Internet. The initial developer of the chosen product(s) is part of the current partnership (Sahin et al., 2008)..

The concept of the project was to transfer the successful results of the clothing and fashion training TELESTIA CDs into the Turkish and Romanian languages, and local and special needs of every country in training and for its industry. After the training, it was identified that although the background of the two sets of trainers was different, the needs for a more detailed training approach were the same, as the international situation of the industry dictated. The situation was analysed and the existing content was assessed and evaluated. The Telestia team assessed all the above and decided that the two CDs would be modified to reflect these conclusions as follows:

**Fashion Design**: To insert more detailed information about development of collections, the function and development of a story board, style details in shape and pattern. The module has a step-by-step simplified methodology that allows you to study Fashion Design and learn how to make your own fashion designs even if up to now you felt you didn't have the skills. For this distance learning course, no prior knowledge of Fashion Design is required, and by the time you complete the course, you will be able to design your own collections.

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The fashion drafting system has been available for over 30 years and has been tested and used by thousands all over the world. There is no limit on fashion design ideas! Learn how to create your own styles and how to bring your ideas to life.

The Fashion Design course provides training in six areas: (1) Basic Figure drawing and poses, (2) Drawing garment parts, (3) Drawing a dressed figure, (4) Technical drawing of garments with respect to pattern making principles, (5) Design principles to understand the theory behind creative design, (6) Illustration tips to enhance your drawing skills with shade, colour and a variety of illustration techniques.

The full programme for Fashion Design contains all these areas in two sections. You can study both or either depending on the level you want to reach in Fashion Design. The sections covered in this fashion design online course are: Fashion Design Technical, Fashion Design Creative.

The course is suitable for individuals wishing to develop these skills for a career in fashion, for those who would like to draft and design for their own personal use, and also for use by Colleges and Institutes of Further Education to supplement their curriculum and offer students alternative study media, facilitating the tutor's job.

**Pattern Making**: To remodel the styles with simple styles and include a number of variations on each one, to reflect the method of styling in the fashion world, give more detailed analyses in the body shapes and variations of body forms useful for mass customization, include more sewing and assembly details for the making up process that would enhance the description of each style and make comprehension easier.

It is an ideal solution for perfectly fitting patterns, no matter what your size. You can print out your patterns from your home PC on regular sheets of paper. Learn how to design and make your own clothes in no time.

The Pattern Making (Pattern Construction) course provides training in three areas: (1) Drafting: How to construct block patterns and pattern adaptation to develop your own styles ready for assembly, (2) Lay planning: How to lay out your pattern on your chosen fabrics, (3) Assembly: Basic sewing and assembly instructions.

The pattern cutting system has been available for over 30 years and has been tested and used by thousands all over the world. There is no limit to your design ideas! Learn how to create your own styles and how to bring your ideas to life. The full program for Pattern Making (Pattern Construction) contains three complete sections: (1) Womenswear Pattern Making, (2) Menswear Pattern Making, (3) Childrenswear Pattern Making.

All three sections may be studied separately and Womenswear can even be broken down further into smaller sub-sections: louses, Jackets & Coats, Skirts & Trousers.

You can study each sub-section as a separate complete course. In each section there are common parts, which is why if you choose to study only one section and then decide to study another section, you will benefit from a reduced price. It is more cost effective to register for the complete course rather than to purchase each section individually.

## The Training Methodology

The training approach and pedagogic methodology is based on the rules of applying manual skills after you see the process many times and at your pace. The interactive multimedia approach allows the user to understand the pattern making process before even starting to imitate it with the hands on approach. This helps a) to get better understanding both of skills and of the theory (the why and how), b) to imitate at a more early time than in the traditional teaching environment (saving time or progressing more in the same time), c) to make very few mistakes, d) to progress at the individual's pace even in a classroom situation (which helps even slower students acquire confidence

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by not being discouraged when left behind). This way the young people are attracted by the new visual-virtual approach and are lured into old technologies with the new ICT facilities (Erişen at al., 2008).

## Achievements

The project achieved much more than the objectives were stated initially, because it made a lot of adaptations that were very lengthy and more costly to address the needs realised in both the countries, after the initial trainings. It went into a lot of trials and deep analysis of the needs and adapted the material to the needs identified. This however was more than expected because it required much more work both on the part of the original project team and in relation to translation by the Romanian and Turkish partners.

In conclusion, the transfer of multimedia material into other languages and cultures is not an easy task. This becomes even more difficult when there is the issue of special terminology with terms and definitions. Especially in Fashion and Clothing, some of them may have been borrowed from other languages and may have mixed or unclear meanings in the new surrounding or sector jargon. All this requires great care so misunderstandings are avoided. At the same time, it is important that a new technological approach must consider the willingness of the new culture to comprehend and accept it. This makes all important more extensive use of multimedia and any other design and presentation technique that will make the material clearer and more appealing. In our case, a product that was already in five languages was transferred in two others and that was a gigantic task in relation to comprehension of detailed terminology. This was achieved after a lot of cooperation trying to make clear to the translators what each tem really meant for the specific sector.

With this project, two training modules were transferred and incorporated in the course structures of the transnational partners. They were tested in use to record skills being lost in pattern making and fashion design, and to find a way to use advanced multimedia IT to simplify the training procedure in a clear and appealing way for both the amateur and the professional. It was agreed that they could meet the need for an eLearning media that could integrate traditional much needed skills, rapidly becoming extinct, into innovative training methods using advanced technology and distance learning media, with a European accreditation option, in order to meet rapid changes in workforce requirements.

In terms of Strategic Impact, these modules were observed to have a very powerful impact on the target groups in the partner countries. The current driving forces in the sector are related to design rather than traditional factors, such as raw material prices or production efficiencies. These training tools helped to improve competitiveness and enhance the capability of meeting short lead times in production and design with effective, standardised and customised results and for lower budgets. In addition, they lead to increased consumer response to clothing products.

The partnership comprises of members both from the industry and the training sectors with strong support from the Governing bodies of each country. Therefore, there will be enough human and financial resources that will be necessary for the continuum and sustainability of the activities and results when the financial support from the LLP Programme is reduced or phased out completely. Furthermore, the transferred products are already commercialised. That means commercialisation will go on in the partner countries and globally. Thus, this will ensure the sustainability of the products. In addition, the training organisations that will transfer the products have enough financial capacity for the sustainability.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This project has transferred a training tool in the textile training which a virtual training tool is. The tool is an e-learning training material that can be regarded as an innovation in Turkey as it will combine ICT use and interactive training in vocational training organizations. The trainers and trainees can have access to this virtual environment, and this in turn will lead to an innovative approach and

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methodology in the VET system in Turkey. Since the interactive training tool is ICT based, it can encourage ICT use in VET organizations in the partner countries Turkey and Romania.

The trainers and other sector representatives who participated in the training sessions got knowledge about this new approach and method used in the training tool and thus we can say that the products in a way supported participants in training and further training activities in the acquisition and the use of knowledge, skills and qualifications to facilitate personal development, employability and participation in the European Labour Market. Finally, they noticed that the products transferred are to support improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices.

The participants of the training meetings were mainly the trainers who became aware that the products are to facilitate the development of innovative practices in the field of vocational education and training other than at tertiary level, and their transfer, including from one participating country to others. Thus, they found that the products can support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning.

Since the products transferred are based on distance learning methodology using the facilities of ICT use, they can help improve the quality of VET systems and practices. In addition, they can be used as basis for all the textile related training organisations. In this case, these VET organisations are forced to improve the training system according to the methods and approach presented here. This will lead to practice focusing on quality.

It must be considered that the clothing industry is one of the largest and most important industries in the partner countries involved in this project. There are over 3000 companies in Turkey and Romania. 99% of these companies are SMEs and account for about half the total employment in the sector. Traditionally, the industry employs a high proportion of women (about 70%) and it also makes a significant contribution to the employment of ethnic minority and inner city groups. The modules transferred can be used easily by anyone who wants to improve his or skill. Both men and women can benefit from them and they can be employed on equal term in industry with the skills acquired via these modules.

Since these products can be used by any one who wishes to learn about pattern construction and fashion design in textile, they can be a source for these individuals. Thus, they encourage "learning to learn" with its approach, content and design. The models transferred can serve self training.

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