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GUIDE ON EFFECTIVE WORK-BASED LEARNING IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING





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FOREWORD

This guide shall highlight obstacles seen from different types of stakeholders, strategies to overcome them and will contribute to creating a common language and ground for constructive discussion. It shall also serve as a tool for inspiration and transfer to successful proven practices and strategies.

This guide is aimed at stakeholders involved in the provision and promotion of work-based learning. The guide highlights success factors, obstacles and successful strategies and approaches to effective work-based learning and includes different perspectives from consulted stakeholders.

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT

Promote WBL is a pan-European project which aims to equip professionals who work in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, and other professionals involved in developing young people's skills and career advice, with a greater insight into best practice in creating an environment for high quality work-based learning (WBL) to take place.

An experienced and diverse partnership has been established to deliver this project. These seven organisations are based across Europe and have invaluable expertise in VET policy, delivery and engagement:

- West Midlands Creative Alliance, UK (Lead partner)
- Materahub, Italy
- Cognita, Croatia
- SEGE, Greece
- Syntea, Poland
- European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EFVET), Belgium
- Innogate, Spain

Promote WBL will:

- generate a deeper understanding of the challenges and good practice that exists within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) arena across Europe
- create new, targeted tools of learning for VET and other professionals involved in the education and development of young people. This will be primarily through the creation of a dedicated online learning platform
- support the development of a community of VET professionals to share vocational knowledge and generate new ideas



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- generate a clear narrative of further development needs to help steer strategic decisions and how the project's objectives and outputs can align with macro-level needs
- involve VET tutors, teachers and trainers in the production process to ensure fit for purpose and ensuring impact and quality of products. Not only will they be crucial in informing the scope of the tools but also significantly aid the development of the content

The partnership, led by West Midlands Creative Alliance (UK), will engage with individuals, organisations and social partners from across the continent to test, develop, implement and evaluate the online learning products created via the project. The community of VET teachers and trainers will reach across Europe and beyond to help generate new ideas to create high quality WBL partnerships and opportunities for young people.

To help develop this guidance, the project has conducted a variety of research activities to aid assessment of the current landscape of WBL across Europe. This invaluable insight has been gathered as follows:

An open call for VET institutions, teachers, students and intermediary organisations was distributed in December 2016 to complete targeted surveys to support the gathering of intelligence and insight about the challenges of WBL around the themes of quality, promotion, perception and continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities. These were quantitative based queries that were supplemented by qualitative surveys conducted by partners.

In response we gathered feedback from 140 VET Institutions, VET Teachers and students, and 26 from intermediary organisations to our surveys. The breakdown of qualitative surveys were 1 VET provider, 9 VET teachers, 4 students, 8 intermediary organisations, and 1 business.

Desk-based Research was also conducted looking at VET programmes and provision across 14 EU countries. The review of 23 reports in total were summarised and captured in short reports; the findings from these research reports were consolidated to support the report.

Common themes identified as well as the results of the quantitative surveys conducted have aided the scope of this guidance and will directly contribute to the scope of content for the project's online learning resource due to be developed.

WORK-BASED LEARNING IN VET: WIN-WIN SITUATION

Work-based learning (WBL) is a recognised approach to developing a workforce for the present and for the future; structured means of increasing the knowledge, understanding and competences of existing and future employees which will aid with productivity, retention and longer-term growth of sectors and industry. These structured learning programmes, in the best examples, are often co-



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designed with employers - such as with formal delivery of apprenticeships - to ensure maximum benefits are generated for the business and have a clear set of outcomes.

The value of WBL for businesses is significant, however to generate this value there must be a strong involvement from employer organisations from the outset, so a good working relationship with schools and other educational institutions is essential.

Developing a skilled workforce does not just benefit businesses of all sizes, and in-turn the potential of the wider economy, but for the learners themselves, their personal opportunities and value increases significantly also.

WORK-BASED LEARNING: apprenticeships and WBL stimulating entrepreneurship

- Apprenticeships are learning programmes primarily designed for young people looking to enter the workforce and gain qualifications whilst they complete job roles within the workplace and tend to have a significant proportion of 'on-the-job' training and are associated with entry-level positions within an organisation
- Apprenticeships do not have a universal structure and approaches can differ from country to country, however the primary objectives remain
- Entrepreneurial skills are a fundamental set of capabilities and a mindset that allow both employer and employees to grow and develop their organisation(s) collectively. Using WBL in VET, there is a significant opportunity for these skills to be developed and allows for greater cross-sector working

QUALITY IN WBL

Elements that affect the quality of work-based learning (WBL) range from:

- systemic frameworks and appropriate legislation which govern the sector being in situ
- continuous professional development for VET teachers and tutors
- support mechanisms being in place for both employers and young VET learners
- having an informed and well-educated VET sector that shares knowledge and is up-to-date with quality practice in teaching and learning

Success factors

High quality WBL has definable characteristics:

- The learning emphasis is on development of job-related skills as well as transferable skills



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- There is a close working relationship between the educational institution and the business organisation
- Careful planning takes place, with learning and on-the-job activities being explicit and understood by all parties
- A clear 'matching' process between the work-based learning opportunity and the young person's interests and development needs
- Work-based learning is delivered by well-trained, qualified VET teachers and tutors who understand how to plan and adapt learning needs based upon the business and learner circumstances
- VET institutions and its leaders are not only informed and knowledgeable of quality practices but also take a lead in sharing and implementing reforms at a strategic level
- Policy makers engage with industry and VET leaders in designing high impact learning that is diverse and responsive, with a focus on quality outcomes for young people, including clear progression routes into, or leading on from, apprenticeships

Obstacles

Primary obstacles include:

- A lack of cooperation and partnership at a strategic level for quality improvement with many reforms being 'top down'
- An inconsistent, and sometimes incoherent, approach to continuous professional development for VET teachers and tutors
- Significant changes in policies and
- How VET institutions feature in the educational system; they are quite often not positively promoted and do not reward their staff sufficiently to encourage high-quality deliverers into the sector
- How VET delivery and system is viewed by stakeholders, including employers, young people themselves and their parents, guardians and friends, is often low and as a poor relation to other means of education and learning

Successful strategies and approaches



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Successful strategies and approaches identified include:

Area	Description	Link
Industry-Policy Maker partnerships	Policies and legislation is created with VET institutions, their learners, and importantly, employers at the forefront. Engagement with employers of all sizes take place at development and implementation phases of policy reviews and place the quality of provision and experience for young people at its core.	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education
Continuous Professional Development (CPD)	Clear CPD programmes are in place for existing VET teachers and tutors that helps develop their practice and share knowledge and experiences. This includes both certified and accredited courses. Clear progression pathways and minimum expectations associated with job roles for VET staff should be visible and well-communicated.	https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/categories/teaching-courses
Minimum standards for teaching and learning	Through policy, legislation and strategic leadership, a minimum standard of teaching and learning quality can drive improvements in the sector how it is viewed amongst wider stakeholders. Examples include all deliverers of apprenticeships and work-based learning programmes should hold, or be working towards, a teaching qualification.	https://www.cityandguilds.com/qualifications-and-apprenticeships/learning/teaching/1106-teaching-training-and-assessing-learning#tab=information
Support for young people	Skills being acquired through their work-based learning experience should be tied to their own development needs and well-supported by both VET teachers and tutors as well as the employer organisation. Matching interests and needs of the young person to the opportunity leads to better retention and achievement.	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/employing-an-apprentice-technical-guide-for-employers



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<p>Promotion of WBL and greater coordination of marketing</p>	<p>To challenge the wider perceptions of VET and work-based learning, coordination of quality marketing and communication which helps employers, young people and their parents and guardians to better understand the benefits of work-based learning should be in place.</p>	<p>https://www.fenews.co.uk/</p>
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SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

School partnerships with employer organisations is the fundamental relationship in creating high quality Work-based Learning (WBL) opportunities for young people. Unfortunately, the landscape across Europe shows a somewhat fractured system of educational institutions and industries working in close partnership, however there are significant examples of where relationships are strong and learning is tailored and creates successful impact for young learners and businesses.

Success factors

Identifiable characteristics of successful school-business partnerships include:

- Qualification and curriculum design being developed in conjunction with both parties
- Conducting analyses on business needs to
- Schools and VET institutions helping businesses to embed WBL in the organisation at all levels
- There is a focus on skills, careers and job progression in the WBL opportunity being created

Obstacles

The obstacles to a close working relationship between schools and businesses are varied:

- The poor perceptions of VET and WBL by some employers and sectors
- Leadership within VET institutions placing insufficient emphasis on developing and extending meaningful relationships with businesses



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- VET institutions not equipping teachers and tutors with sufficient knowledge and tools to create a partnership approach to designing WBL opportunities that create impact for both employer and learner
- School and business partnerships do not sufficiently support the development of VET teachers and tutors to improve their own knowledge and practice (a *genuine* two-way partnership being created)

Successful strategies and approaches

Area	Description	Link
Support for employers	Aside from financial incentives for employers to provide quality positions for young people in work-based learning, where employers are strongly supported through advice, guidance and quality information provided by VET institution partners, they are able to align the opportunities they can create with the needs of both their business and the young person.	https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/employers
Strong leadership in VET institutions	Leaders within VET institutions can drive both the quality and diversity of work-based learning opportunities through close working with local businesses and growth sectors in their respective economies. Instilling a culture of partnership and implementing dedicated improvement plans at an institutional level also contributes to shifting mindsets of VET teachers, tutors and learners into viewing work-based learning as a well-valued and high quality means of education and personal career development	European Commission
Targeted funding	Encourages greater diversity of employers, including Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs) to get involved in creating structured WBL opportunities for young people at entry-level positions. This funding may take the form of subsidising wages for new apprentices, or providing free training and professional	http://www.euse.org/



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	development opportunities for their existing and new staff (including young people).	
Planning and progression routes for young people	Within the structure of work-based learning provision, which includes apprenticeships, a clear progression leading out of the programme should be identified. The role of the employer in the planning is seen as a crucial aspect to this.	http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/apprenticeships-work-based-learning

TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE WBL

There are a variety of tools available for VET teachers, tutors and other professionals to support the growth and delivery of effective work-based learning and apprenticeships. Below are examples of related projects* that are producing, or have produced, tools that demonstrate quality practice in the effective delivery and assessment of work-based learning:

Tool	Description	Link/Location
Work-based Learning Toolkit	A repository of links to projects that contain various resources, reports and other materials which have been produced from a wide range of European projects relating to work-based learning. Themes include evaluation and quality assurance practice, partnership approaches, and capacity-building among teachers and trainers. There are also sector-specific resources available, ranging from information on maritime industry-related training to retail apprenticeships.	http://www.wbl-toolkit.eu/
TrainCom	An information and learning platform for VET teachers and tutors who are 'engaged in developing or redesigning programmes with a view to (a stronger) competency orientation'. A 5-module learning tool that provide practical	http://train-com.de/ <i>(Site can be translated into Spanish, English, German, Italian and Czech)</i>



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	examples of how to plan, support and assess WBL effectively	
Tune-in Project	A knowledge-share and good practice project focused on developing strategies and approaches to reducing dropout rates, with a particular attention on Southern and South-Eastern Europe. A 'Train the Trainer' package is available for download and usage.	https://www.tune-in-project.eu/ <i>(Site can be translated into Danish, Spanish, English, German, Italian, Portuguese and Slovakian)</i>
Take Tech	Developing close partnerships between educators and industry, specifically in the science and technology sectors, this project produces quality guidance on how effective match-making between the needs of businesses and the needs of learners can produce sustainable results. Whilst there is a focus on specific sector areas, the methodology and practice is transferable.	http://www.take-tech.eu/ <i>(Site can be translated into Italian, English, Greek, Hungarian, Estonian and Bulgarian)</i>

**Please note that development activity of some of these projects may have now ceased, however useful resources, information and reflections for those looking to improve their practice*

The Promote WBL project will develop a dedicated online learning tool that will support VET teachers and tutors in developing knowledge and skills in how to:

- best promote the benefits of work-based learning to employers and learners alike
- build effective partnerships with employers and plan for effective learning in a work-based context
- recognise the value of entrepreneurial skills in work-based learning
- identify, encourage and enhance entrepreneurial skills in others



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PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING GROUP ON WBL

Promote WBL will develop an online community of professionals from across Europe which will enable VET teachers, tutors, trainers and others to discuss the following themes:

- Partnership working between schools and business
- Encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset within businesses and learners
- Quality delivery of WBL and how to maximise benefits to business and learners
- Policy changes and how to develop implementation strategies within an institution

Using the universally available platform of LinkedIn, we aim to bring together people from a range of countries to share practice, knowledge and available resources. The 7 project partners will promote, engage and widely share the findings and insight from this community via our networks and encourage all to participate in discussions.

Join our 'Promote WBL' group via the link below:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8583272>

CONCLUSIONS

A common finding from the work undertaken for this guide is that the view of VET is secondary and a far less preferable route for young people to learn, develop and enter the workplace. It is not clear why this occurs - whether it is cultural, systemic, or economically driven - however there is a consistency of findings that within the educational structures and within the learners' families, they discourage their young people in entering work-based learning until it becomes the only realistic alternative to 'mainstream' educational routes.

There has been a significant trend, evident across the country-based reports, in governments and national educational bodies in addressing the quality of VET offer for their students and employers. This ranges from placing more rigorous quality assurance processes in place around qualifications, to developing professional standards for VET teachers and tutors.

Various strategic and national policies, to drive improvement in quality, have mostly been implemented during the last 5-7 years and, from the reports reviewed, there has not been a clear measure of the impact of these changes, although there is some anecdotal examples of large companies getting more involved in developing standards and sharing knowledge and expertise, as well as growth of qualification offers in VET schools/colleges.



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Research has found a clear focus on the structure and positioning of VET within the educational system and reviewed of the quality of provision, there is not a clear and consistent picture of the role of employers in developing this provision. In most cases employers are only referenced as a ‘customer’ of VET or a more passive stakeholder in WBL delivery. It appears that there is more work required to ascertain how employers can develop the promotion, and the quality, of VET by playing a more active role and generating sufficient demand for the qualifications and VET in place.

Despite there being a general consensus to move towards a greater professionalisation of the VET delivery sector, the approaches and what those minimum standards consist of does vary. This seemingly comes from whatever ‘starting point’ exists within the specific country; so whilst there is a move towards improving the quality of delivery, the journey and the position in which different countries are at in implementing those improvements do vary significantly.

The systems for developing this professionalisation however are certainly seen as providing an opportunity for the partnership to be able to test and introduce the tools being developed through Promote WBL.

Completed Research Report Reviews

#	Partner	Report Title	Report Origin
1	Creative Alliance	GETTING READY FOR WORK	UK
2	Creative Alliance	APPRENTICESHIP-TYPE SCHEMES AND STRUCTURED WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMMES	UK
3	Materahub	Innovation in VET	Italy
4	Materahub	Supporting Teachers and Trainers for successful reforms and quality of VET	Italy
5	Materahub	Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes	Italy
6	Materahub	Italian Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan	Italy
7	Materahub	Supporting teachers and trainers for succesful reforms and quality of VET	Germany
8	Syntea	Supporting Teachers and Trainers For Successful Reforms and Quality of Vet Thematic Perspectives. Mapping their professional development in the EU	Poland



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9	SEGE	Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes	Slovakia
10	Cognita	Network Work Based Learning and Apprenticeships (NetWBL)	Croatia
11	Innogate	Dual professional studies: evolution and obstacles (FP Dual: evolución y obstáculos)	Spain
12	Innogate	Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes	France
13	Innogate	Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes	Spain
14	Cognita	Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured WBL programmes Finland', Finish National Board of Education, 2014	FINLAND
15	Cognita	Survey on Appropriateness of VET for Craft Occupations Quality and Employability', Croatian Chamber of Crafts, 2010 (Croatian, sector-based)	CROATIA
16	Syntea	Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes.	Poland
17	Creative Alliance	Supporting teachers and trainers for successful reforms and quality of VET	Denmark
18	Syntea	Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes.	Slovakia
19	SEGE	From School to Work – How are Vocational Education, Training and Employment Related?	GREECE
20	SEGE	Vocational education and training in Greece	GREECE
21	EfVET	The Cost Effectiveness of Apprenticeship Schemes - The business case for Apprenticeships	15 Countries
22	EfVET	Connect in VET- Connecting Vocational Education and Training with Higher Education and rural businesses	5 EU Countries
23	EfVET	High performance Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning - 20 guiding principles	EU Member States



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Project Partner Organisations

	<p>Creative Alliance</p>	<p>www.creativealliance.org.uk</p>
	<p>Cognita</p>	<p>www.cognita.hr/en</p>
	<p>Materahub</p>	<p>www.materahub.com</p>
	<p>SYNTEA</p>	<p>www.syntea.pl</p>
	<p>EfVet</p>	<p>www.efvet.org</p>
	<p>Innagate to Europe</p>	<p>www.innogatetoEurope.eu/en</p>
	<p>SEGE</p>	<p>www.sege.gr</p>