

WBLQUAL

An Approach to Qualifications through Negotiated Work Based Learning for the EU

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WP5 REPORT

UNIVERSITY CULTURE AND ACADEMIC ISSUES

Based on research
conducted by the WBLQUAL Consortium
in United Kingdom, Italy, Latvia, Poland, and Denmark



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Thank you

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the project

WBLQUAL “An Approach to Qualifications through Negotiated Work Based Learning for the EU” is a European, Erasmus-funded (DG EACAC, LLP) project working across five countries looking to refine a method of providing qualifications for work based learning that will also produce benefits for employers in performance, behaviour and attitude of learners.

The aim of WBLQUAL is to produce a more effective way of improving professional skills and behaviours of work based employees, through the use of academic work-based learning (WBL) programmes.

By conducting extensive research into each of the three contributing target groups (HEI, Employer, Learner), the project aim is to gain a deep understanding of the issues, incentives and barriers held by these three partners, and to use this understanding to formulate a tri-partite approach to WBL qualifications.

WBLQUAL’s aim is to contribute developing a skilled workforce meeting to labour market needs, and promoting lifelong learning.

1.2 Aim of the research

The aim is to build on our work with employers to develop a deeper and Europe-wide understanding of their needs and contextual issues in workforce development. This will provide the basis for understanding the needs and aspirations of employers and how Work Based Learning can match these needs. These programmes are often formal, usually with direction from the HR department, but they can also be informal, and undocumented. In either case, it is essential that employers can observe the performance of their employees, and can measure the effectiveness of performance improvement programmes. If educational programmes are to align with employer needs, it is essential that they understand the employer perspective regarding workforce development. The Consortium has been working with different types of employers (Corporate and SMEs), across national boundaries (UK, Italy, Poland, Latvia, Denmark) and within different business areas (i.e. business, computing, technical) and with topical EU drivers (economic, demographic, political).

1.3 About Work Package 5

Work Package 5 (WP5) focuses on the way in which WBL is perceived within the academia, i.e. the universities which offer WBL to employers to fulfil their employees’ professional development needs. WP5 provides input to WP6.

1.4 The methodology adopted

This report presents an analysis of the findings of research conducted by the project partners. All the partners carried out a desk research on national educational systems in their respective countries, based on a template attached to this report as Annex 8.1. Then, the partners representing universities in the UK (Staffordshire University), Denmark (University of South Denmark), Latvia (Riga Technical University) and Poland (University of Lodz) collected data through face-to-face interviews (all university partners) and focus group discussions (UK) made with a range of participants working within the university at different levels of HEI management: strategic (interviews with senior university managers including rectors, faculty deans, chancellors), tactical (faculty managers, quality directors, finance managers) and operational (academics, programme leaders, administration). Additionally, in the UK also the perspective of employers was grasped. Some telephone interviews were also carried out in the UK with participants who were unavailable for face-to-face contact.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

2.1 Main indicators

Based on available Eurostat data higher education systems in the five analysed countries are below compared by means of two basic indicators, namely total public expenditure on education as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) and the proportion of the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training.

In 2009 Denmark was the EU leader as regards public expenditure spent on education in relation to GDP (Fig. 4). Denmark's public spending on all levels of education was almost twice as much as in Italy. UK and Latvia were slightly above the EU-27 average, while Poland and Italy were below this average.

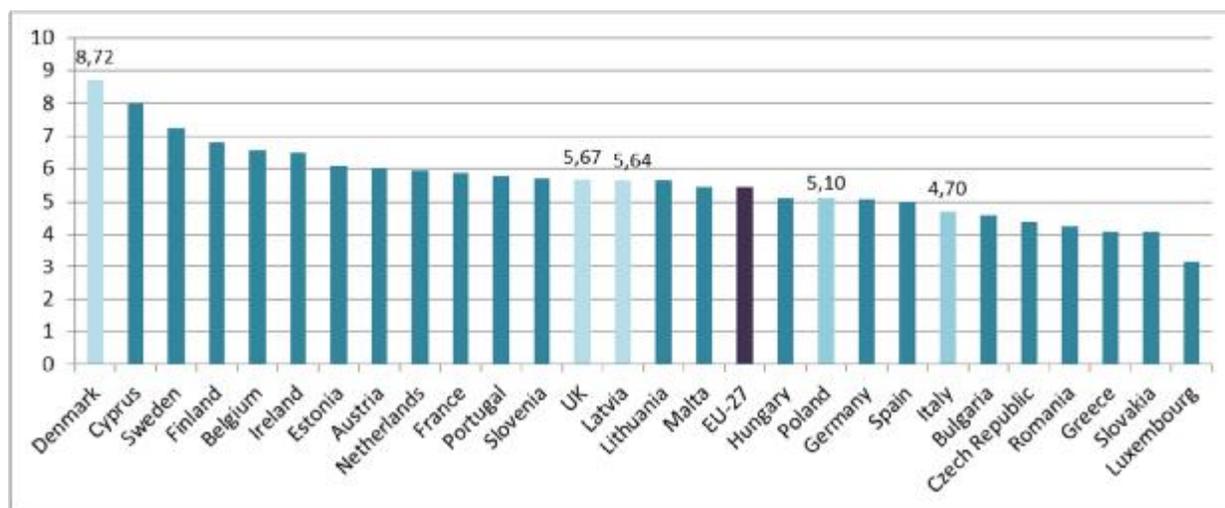


Figure 1. Total public expenditure on education as % of GDP, for all levels of education combined, 2009

Source: based on Eurostat data

Much deeper variations among the analysed countries can be seen as regards the percentage of the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training. As the Eurostat data of 2011 reveal, Denmark and UK were well ahead of the remaining countries under analysis with 32.2% and 15.8% of adults involved in education and training respectively (Fig. 5). The figures also mark considerable differences compared to the EU-27 average of 8.9%. On the other extreme we find Poland (4.5%), Latvia (5%) and Italy (5.7%).

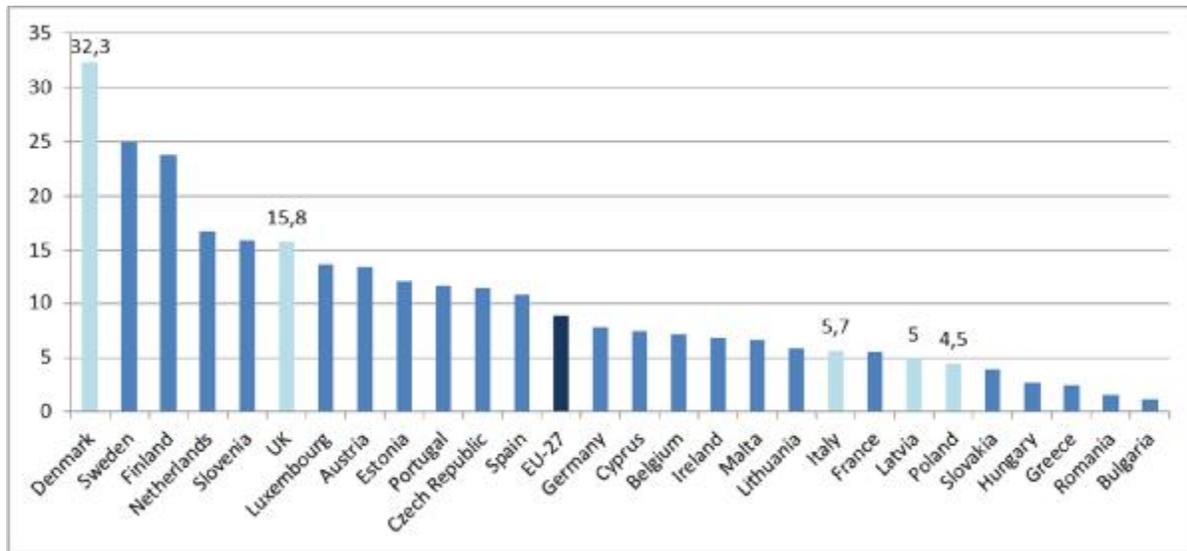


Figure 2. Percentage of the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training, 2011

Source: based on Eurostat data

Making comparisons based on these indicators one can clearly see that education institutions in the analysed countries operate in different milieus with regard to their revenue base relying on availability of State funds and propensity of people to participate in education and training. The best conditions for work-based learning seem to be created in the UK where in view of the shortage of State funds spent for education HEIs need to look for alternative sources of revenue, and the adult population is inclined to engage in enhancing their competences through education and training.

2.2 Specific features of national HE systems in analysed countries

2.2.1 Denmark

Accessibility

Danish students are entitled to public support for his or her further education - regardless of social standing. Tuition at Danish public and most private educational institutions is free for Danish students and for EU/EEA students and Switzerland as well as for students participating in an exchange programme. Similarly, if they are participating in an exchange programme their studies in Denmark are free. They also do not pay for tuition if they have a:

- permanent residence permit ('permanent opholdstilladelse')
- temporary residence permit that can be upgraded to a permanent one ('midlertidig opholdstilladelse mmf varigt ophold')
- parent from a non-EU/EEA country who is already working in Denmark

From 2006 all other students have to pay a tuition fee. Annual tuition fees for full-time degree students range from 6,000 to 16,000 Euro.

Society lends students a helping hand in covering living costs for a great variety of courses and studies. Support for students' living costs is awarded by the State Educational Grant and Loan Scheme (Danish acronym: SU), a system managed by the Danish Educational Support Agency (Styrelsen for Videregående Uddannelser og Uddannelsesstøtte) in collaboration with the educational institutions and under the auspices of the Danish Ministry of Education.

Although there are no tuition fees at Danish educational institutions, social factors do play a role in determining who completes a higher education. Free education means that the Danish system is less discriminating than other countries, but it doesn't necessarily mean discrimination doesn't exist in the educational system. For example, in 2010 Region Hovedstaden (Capitol Region) published a report about young peoples' success rates in education, regionally and nationally. The report concludes, along with similar studies, that factors such as ethnicity, gender, parents' educational level and other social factors are very important in determining which students take a professional qualifying education. Link to report: (<http://www.regionsjaelland.dk/publikationer/Documents/uddannelse/undersogelse-af-unges-veje-gennem-uddannelsessystemet.pdf>).

The Danish State Educational Support (SU) is generally only awarded to Danish citizens. The student support is granted by the State (in the form of State education grants and loans), and it is the only source of support of any importance. Student support is available from the quarter after the students' 18th birthday. Grants and State loans are given to educations recognized by the Ministry of Education. Support is given in the form of grants and government subsidized State loans. The maximum amounts awarded in 2011 are as follows: Students living with their parents: DKK 2.728 per month and students living on their own: DKK 5.486 per month.

Both categories of students can obtain State loans of DKK 2.807 per month (in 2011). The students that are taking a higher education programme and have used up all their study grant portions, you can get a completion loan. They can receive a completion loan in the last year of their studies. Interest is paid on the completion loan and it is paid back on the same terms as the regular State Loan. They can receive a completion loan for a maximum of 12 months. In 2011 the completion loan is DKK 7.240 per month.

On completion of their studies, students must start paying back the State loans. The repayment must begin one year after the end of the year, in which they have completed their studies. The duration of the period of repayment must not exceed 15 years.

During the period of study, the State loans will carry a 4% annual interest rate. On completion of the studies, the annual interest rate is the discount rate of the Danish Central Bank plus an adjustment which can be negative or positive, but at most plus 1 percentage point (further information about SU: <http://www.su.dk/English/Sider/default.aspx>)

International students, however, may apply for equal status in so far as the state educational support is concerned. They may be granted equal status according to Danish rules and EU law.

Most Danish institutions have bilateral agreements with foreign institutions of higher education. These agreements are usually designed for the mutual exchange of students, researchers and teachers. National and European programmes offer scholarships for international students wishing to study in Denmark through an institutional agreement, as guest students or as a part of an international double or joint degree.

Quality assurance

The quality of Danish education is assured by accreditation (higher education) or ministerial approval of new programmes, the use of external examiners and other quality assurance procedures.

Although public institutions have institutional autonomy, publicly financed institutions must follow general regulations concerning teacher qualifications, award structures, study programmes and quality assurance. Within higher education, new study programmes have to be accredited by an accreditation agency (see Evaluation and accreditation below). At the other levels of education, the relevant ministries decide which institutions can offer which programmes. All decisions are based on considerations concerning the institution's ability to deliver a programme meeting certain quality requirements. When an institution is given the right to offer a certain programme, the institution must design the programme within a framework laid down by ministerial order.

Private institutions can operate without any approval. They must, however, abide by an accreditation procedure if their students are to be eligible for State study grants. The State Educational Grant and Loan Scheme Agency (SUstyrelsen) under the Ministry of Education administrates this procedure. Programmes with State study grant approval are listed online at SUstyrelsen's website (in Danish).

Accreditation and evaluation

For all higher education programmes accreditation is mandatory and a precondition for attaining public funding. The accreditation system is based on the 2007 Act on the Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, and the responsibility of implementing the Act lies with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. The Act aims to create a system with a view to ensuring and documenting the quality and

relevance of higher education in the Danish educational institutions. The Danish Qualifications Framework has been incorporated into the quality criteria of the accreditation system.

According to the Accreditation Act, the Accreditation Council is the specific unit which makes the decisions regarding accreditation of all higher education study programmes. The Council has the authority to award, conditionally award, or deny the accreditation of all higher education programmes. Decisions are made on the basis of accreditation reports prepared by accreditation operators:

- For university study programmes under the Ministry of Science, ACE Denmark prepares the accreditation reports.
- For higher education study programmes within the fields covered by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) prepares the accreditation reports.

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) is an independent national agency formed under the auspices of the Danish Ministry of Education. It was established in 1999 under national legislation, succeeding the Evaluation Centre which existed from 1992-1999. EVA is a founder member of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

In addition to accreditation, EVA carries out systematic evaluations of programmes, teaching and learning at all levels from early childhood education to professional bachelor programmes and adult education. Evaluations take place on EVA's own initiative as well as on request from ministries, local authorities and educational institutions among others. All evaluation reports are published.

Institutions evaluated by EVA are responsible for follow ups. Evaluated institutions must prepare a follow up plan that has to take into consideration the recommendations of the evaluation report. Public announcement of the follow-up plan must be made not later than six months after publication of the report.

Institutions are required to set up their own internal quality assurance procedures. The Universities Act specifies the role of deans, heads of department and study boards, respectively, in assuring and developing the quality of education and teaching. Self-evaluation, in which students normally participate, is an integral mandatory part of any evaluation.

National Qualifications Framework

The Danish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning is a comprehensive, systematic overview, divided by levels, of qualifications that can be acquired within the Danish education system – from primary and lower secondary to university level and within the area of adult and continuing education and training. The Qualifications Framework has eight levels. Degrees and certificates are placed at one of these eight levels on the basis of learning outcomes. The level descriptors express the learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Matching the labour market needs

The higher education programmes are organised according to a binary division between research-based and professionally oriented programmes. The purpose of the research-based programmes is to educate students to the highest international level within and across the scientific disciplines, whereas the purpose of the professionally oriented programmes is to ensure education closely based on practice and at an international level to meet the need for well qualified professionals in the private and public sectors.

Within higher education there are also two systems that mirror each other: Degrees in the mainstream system are reflected within the adult and continuing education system. The qualification levels correspond to each other, but the programmes within the adult and continuing educational system are distinct in terms of their content, profiles, etc.

Alignment with industry

The Danish policy goals regarding innovation have been operationalised in an 'Innovation Action Plan' published in 2007 by the Danish Council for Technology and Innovation. The main objectives of the Plan are to make all Danish enterprises, including SMEs, more innovative. The action plan intends to turn 5,000 SMEs into innovative enterprises and to encourage an additional 2,000 SMEs to employ workers with higher educational qualifications.

Knowledge transfer and collaboration between research and private enterprises are intended to be strengthened. Key targets are the doubling of the number of industrial PhDs to 500 a year and to establish 500 new knowledge transfer projects between private enterprises and knowledge institutions.

The Danish university sector receives a much higher share of the public national R&D expenditures than the universities in many comparable countries. Yet, when it comes to financing university research by business enterprises, Danish universities are situated at the lowest end of comparable countries. The share of private companies in financing public research is very low and amounts to only 2.3%.

The low share is confirmed by a recently published report of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. According to this report, around 2.3% of university research is funded by private companies. This figure implies that Danish universities are ranked at the 27th position among a total of 34 OECD, EU and BRIC countries when it comes to the proportion of university research that is funded by private sector. Regarding this issue, Danish university research is thus far away from those countries where universities have the highest level of external research funds from the private sector. Among the most research intensive OECD countries, South Korea and Germany are ranked highest with about 14 % of university research funded by the private sector. A comparison among Nordic countries shows that Danish

universities, with 2.3 % of their research funded by private companies, are below the level of Sweden and Norway (resp. 5 % and 4 %), Finland (7 %) and Iceland (11 %).

The quantitative implication of private financing to universities is underlined by the following scenario: If Denmark had a situation comparable to Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland or Finland (around 10% of university research financed by the private sector, instead of the present 2.3-2.5%), universities in Denmark could raise an amount of up to € 100 million per year from the private sector as a financial contribution to their research.

A first possible explanation for the low ratio of private financing of Danish university research could be that Danish university research is rather irrelevant to private companies. It may be too academic for business or concentrated in areas with low business interest. However, another and probably more likely explanation, is the tradition in Denmark for a high ratio of public funding of university research combined with the high level of Danish taxes. This tradition would imply that university research is regarded to be the responsibility of the State and that publicly financed university research is considered to be a public good, from which the Danish enterprises may benefit.

The expectation of high public financing of university research is underlined by the particular Danish industry structure, which is dominated by small and medium sized enterprises with only a few large companies. The Danish SMEs have less tradition and much less means for financing university research than the large companies.

Furthermore, the low business financing percentage only shows the direct industry financing to universities. It does not include the financing to university research from large independent foundations established by large Danish companies.

Changes in the pattern of the higher education system over the recent years

In line with international reform trends in higher education, the Danish university sector has undergone substantial changes and reforms during the last years. These are aimed at further strengthening the university sector's global competitiveness.

A reference point is the Danish Globalisation Strategy, which follows the global trends and the increasing demands in supporting the knowledge structure in society. The Globalisation Strategy, among other things, focuses on increased access to higher education, creating more PhD positions, stimulating a further intensification of the internationalisation of higher education as well as a more effective innovation relationship between universities and the private sector. For achieving the intended outcomes of the different reforms, the Danish Parliament has substantially increased the public funding of research.

More autonomy of the universities has been achieved and the decision-making capacity of universities has been improved. However, this development has been accompanied by a dense set of rules and regulations,

many of them too detailed. An actual increase in the overall responsibilities of the university level has therefore been less evident, compared to the responsibilities of the central administration. Accountability is legitimate – the universities must account for the substantial public funding invested in them. Some of the present rules and regulations, however, are hampering autonomy, entailing unnecessary administration and interfering with strategic university processes. The present intertwined responsibility, especially with respect to certain education issues and specific features of the leadership structure, makes the expected effects of the strengthened university autonomy less obvious. At the same time the universities have not fully materialized their tasks and responsibilities as accountable autonomous institutions. To address the underlying contradictions the Panel recommends a high-trust strategy: the politicians and the implementing authorities should be expected to stick to overall strategic targets and leave to the universities to decide how to reach the targets. Such a division of responsibilities is in line with the intentions behind the 2003 University Act.

2.2.2 Italy

System of higher education institutions

The Ministry of Education and Research (MIUR) currently recognizes 95 universities, 11 of which carry the designation "Telematic University" counting a total of 642 faculties. The universities are distributed in 59 different municipalities. The city hosting more campuses is Rome (15 universities), followed by Milan (7 universities) and Naples (5).

The University with the highest number of faculties is the University of Bologna (24), followed by the University of Rome "La Sapienza" with 23 different faculties. While, there are 12 universities that have established a single faculty: the University of Rome "Foro Italico" Telematics University "Italian University Line" of Florence, the Italian Institute of Human Science of Florence, IMT School - institutions, Markets, Technologies - Advanced Studies Lucca, the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Bra, Università Commerciale "Luigi Bocconi" Milan, the University for Foreigners Perugia, University for Foreigners "Dante Alighieri" Reggio Calabria, the University for Foreigners of Siena, Università Telematica "Giustino Fortunato" of Benevento, the Università Telematica "Universitas Mercatorum" of Rome and the International School for Advanced Studies in Trieste.

The Ministry is represented at regional level by school 'superintendencies' (sovrintendenze scolastiche). Italy is divided into scholastic districts (distretti) administered by provincial local education offices. In theory, this centralised system should ensure the same standard of education throughout the country, although in practice there's a considerable disparity between the quality of education in northern and southern schools, the former being regarded as far superior. (The adult illiteracy rate is officially around 1.5 per cent, although unofficially it's much higher and almost exclusively limited to the south.)

Students

A 20.2% of Italians aged between 25 and 34 has a qualification at university level twice with respect to the 55-64 age group (10.3%). This gap is due to the process that sees constantly increasing the level of education of the youth classes, and especially that of women who, in the age groups considered, show an increase in the percentage of graduates from 9.5% to 24.6 % in favor of younger ones.¹ Despite the increase observed in the period 2004-2010 (+4.2 percentage points) the share is still very low compared to the 40% target set by Strategy "Europe 2020", and young people who are not placed in a schooling / training or engaged in employment are more than two million, 22.1% among people of 15-29 years old (2010), the highest value at European level². The education performance of enrolled students is noticeable within two respects. First, most young Italians do not reach graduation. As the table 3 shows, almost two thirds of students drop out without completing a degree. The average statistic for Oecd countries is one third. Second, young Italian students are stuck in university for a remarkably long period. The average age at the time of finishing university is 27.7 years, which means that graduates studies extends well beyond the normal completion time. In fact, among those who get their degree, 64% obtain it fuori corso).³

Perceived quality of the educational service by society

Italy is usually perceived as a non-competitive system. Incentives for the system to be open are minimal. Universities are relatively autonomous but have few resources. Successful candidates to academic positions are usually internal with no guarantee that they are the best candidates.

As educational courses at school and university are largely determined by the Ministry of Education, they aren't tailored to the needs of individual students. At university a certain amount of choice can be exercised through a student's individual study plan, but a frequent criticism is that the structure of courses does little to encourage self-expression and personal development. Teaching methods at all levels are perceived criticised as old-fashioned, with over-emphasis on learning by rote.⁴

Italy's unemployment rate reached 8.9 percent in December 2011⁵, while youth unemployment shot up to a record high of 30.1 per cent in 2012, with one out of three youth out of work; seeing 60% of those aged 18-34 to say they would leave the country if given the opportunity, according to the social research group Eurispes⁶.

¹ http://statistica.miur.it/Data/uic2009_2010/capitolo_2.pdf

² <http://saperi.forumpa.it/story/64672/listat-presenta-ledizione-2012-di-noi-italia-tutti-i-numeri-del-nostro-paese>

³ <http://www.aiel.it/bacheca/NAPOLI/D/oppedisano.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.justlanded.com/english/Italy/Italy-Guide/Education/Introduction>

⁵ National Statistics Agency ISTAT.

⁶ Italy Report 2012, European Institute of Political, Economic, and Social Studies.

Only 65% of Italians perceive their city to be a good place for starting a business, reflected by the high start-up costs of 18.5% of GNI. However, Italians are sceptical of the level of meritocracy in society: only 70%* of Italians feel they can get ahead by working hard, placing Italy 90th on the variable.⁷

Quality assurance

The Ministry of Education uses performance evaluation of each university as a means of governance, measured by three main variables:

- (i) the demand for education (i.e. features of the matriculated students),
- (ii) results of the educational processes (i.e. number of credits obtained),
- (iii) results of staff research.

The institutional evaluation of the Italian tertiary education system relies on two consultant bodies of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR):

(i) CNVSU which is the National Committee for the Evaluation of Universities. The CNVSU, established in 1999, is responsible for the yearly evaluation of quality of the whole tertiary education system and with reference to single Universities. Other tasks of the committee include the accreditation procedure of new tertiary institutions and the definition of accreditation criteria of education programmes.

(ii) the CIVR, which is the Committee for the evaluation of scientific research (Comitato di indirizzo per la valutazione della ricerca).

(iii) INVALSI the National service for the evaluation of the education and training system was instituted in 2004. Its task is to improve the quality of the education system, through the evaluation of its efficiency also in relation with the international context. The National institute for the evaluation of the education and training system (Istituto nazionale di valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e formazione) is entrusted with the national service.

(iv) ANVUR. Universities have gradually gained administrative, financial and accounting autonomy. The Ministry is responsible for the allocation of funds, for monitoring and the evaluation of the system. This latter is carried out by the National agency for the evaluation of the university and research system (Agenzia nazionale per la valutazione del sistema universitario e della ricerca – Anvur), which has been set up in 2008.

⁷ <http://www.prosperity.com/country.aspx?id=IT>

According to university autonomy (Regulation no. 509 of 3 November 1999), each university establishes its courses organisation in the respect of the qualifying formative objectives of the courses. Each university decides the teaching organisation and structure of its degree courses in the teaching regulations which are approved by the Ministry. The law 240 is dedicated to quality assurance of higher educational system and the possible establishment of a joint committee in the department of teacher-students, whose duties will be: (a) monitoring of training and quality of teaching, (b) monitoring of service to students by professors and researchers, (c) identification of indicators for the evaluation of their results, (d) the expression of opinion activation and the suppression of courses of study. So quality assurance is ensured by didactic, structural and organizational requirements, and furthermore by quality of teachers and research activities, financial economic sustainability results.⁸

Although the above valuable proposals, up to date there is not initiated any activity measuring the output of universities and scientific merit, in 2009, was allocated a share of less than 10% of funding sources based on regular assessments dating back to 2003.

Validation of learning competences

Universities are autonomous for the planning of study courses, for which each university establishes the title, the objectives, the general framework of learning activities, credits attributed to each activity and the assessment procedures. Common objectives and general criteria are, however, defined at central level for all courses.

The quality of training is ensured by transparency requirements of the compulsory courses of study by the universities, for which there is a penalty if they do not meet the standard. Furthermore it is necessary the quality of human resources and infrastructure, which depend by characteristics of each discipline. So, efficiency of educational processes can be articulated in three different components:

- (i) Efficiency guidance and mentoring (input)
- (ii) Regularity of training, and
- (iii) Evaluation of teaching by students (customer satisfaction).

In fact, it was proposed to use an indicator that rewards universities that have made the evaluation and have a reduced presence of negative evaluation. Regarding the effectiveness, we can also use the indicators identified, for the employability of graduates detected by each university, as ISTAT says in a statistical survey in professional insertion of graduated⁹.

⁸ http://users.unimi.it/newdepartment/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52&Itemid=50

⁹ <http://www.cnvsu.it/library/downloadfile.asp?id=11656>

Matching with the labour market requirements

Professionally oriented courses designed for post-secondary school diploma and post-graduate degrees are provided in order to ease the match of labor supply and demand. In addition to that, Italian Universities provide advanced update courses lasting few months which are addressed to graduate people. The recognition of informal training activities is regulated by Universities' regulations, on the base of general principle set into the MIUR decree 270/2004. According to the decree, education activities include each kind of organised activity having the aim of providing cultural and professional education to students, with reference to post-secondary education courses, seminars, workshops, practical and laboratory classes, internships, individual research and study activities. In this perspective, Universities can recognise the participation to workshops, summer schools, professional competitions, the attainment of advanced-level computer skills certified by the Faculty or other public bodies, as well as the publishing of research articles.

The recognition is only given to those activities which are related with the selected degree programme, but so far there is no official recognition when/if related to any experiential work programme.

Related to this issue, one of the two main characteristics of the youth unemployment rate in Italy are (i) an extraordinary regional variability, and (ii) a high percentage of first job seekers among young unemployed, particularly in the Southern regions. Together with the regional mismatch and the lack of geographical mobility, also the skill mismatch plays a role in determining high youth unemployment rates in Italy. Despite the higher educational attainments of the new entrants into the labor market, the educational mix does not match well the trends in labor demand.

"Italy is in the unique position where it is harder to get a job if you have finished higher education than if you have only got a college education. There are more with jobs among those with a secondary education than among those with a college education. There are also fewer people who take further education, fewer who finish their higher education and you won't get paid more if you have a degree. Young educated people expect a steady job and might therefore not accept temporary jobs. That can result in a longer period between education and finding work."¹⁰

The expected employment of university graduates after the reform of the Italian University system¹¹ has caused an increase in tertiary education attendance and a reduction in dropout rates, modifying the length of degrees and course contents. In a survey of employers' hiring intentions which elicits information about occupations open to university graduates, it finds that employers mainly substituted less educated workers with more educated ones within clerical and technical occupations.

Universities have been improving arrangements to ease the link with labour market of students, by creating specific offices devoted to job counselling and internships. In the a.y. 2007-08 about 96 per cent of

¹⁰ Mr. Stefano Scarpetta, Head of Employment Analysis and Policy Division, OECD

¹¹ http://international.polito.it/courses/italian_university_system

University declared to offer internships to students, while about 39 per cent of University declared to offer students specific arrangements to ease the transition from the tertiary education system to firms. Most of these arrangements are organised by bigger Universities having more than 40, 000 enrolled students.

Financing

Public funding: As a general consideration, the Italian funding model of tertiary education system is characterized by a prevailing public framework with a relevant central planning, low enrolment fee and high freedom to access. Central government funding is provided to State Universities and Non-State Universities. The State financing to non-State Universities, which is far less than the one in favour of State Universities greatly refers to the historical principle, still ignoring any reference to quality evaluation.

Private funding: Tuition fees and/or households. According to the 2009 CNSVU Report on the Italian University system, in 2007 student fees amounted to a share of 13 per cent over total revenues of Universities. The average fee per student was equal to about euro 947, but the distribution of tuition fees across geographic areas shows that student fees paid in Northern Regions were about two times those paid in Southern Regions and about 40 per cent higher than fees paid in Central areas. As a general rule, higher student fees are required for attending first and second-level Master courses as well as specialization courses offered to graduates.

Non-State Universities do not rely very much on State financing, being tuition fees the fundamental part of their revenues. As a general rule, they are more tied to businesses and local authorities, therefore private and local government funding are also more relevant in these institutions. Most of them offer highly-qualified post-graduate courses as well post experience education, such as specialization courses, Master in Business Administration, Executive courses which are very valuable in the labour market.

The comparison based on the funding of the tertiary system places Italy, in structural terms, as one of the countries having the least expenditure on tertiary education institutions: total resources were equal to 0.93 percent of GDP against an EU average of 1.23 in 2005. According to EUROSTAT data⁵, total public spending in tertiary education was about 0.76 per of GDP in 2005 (1.15 in EU27). More recently, public resources reached a share of 0.80 per cent of GDP in 2006 (1.13 in EU27).

In 2009 the final accounts of state universities show that approximately 70% of revenue is from public sources, while taxes and contributions of students represent just under 13% of total revenue. Public funding comes mainly from the State (63.6%) and, to a lesser extent, by public bodies (6.1%) and international bodies (2%), in particular by the European Union.

Budget expenditures for the higher education system

According to Art. 33 of the Italian Constitution, the principle of University autonomy consists in the right for Universities to set their autonomous organisation within the respect of State law. In line with this basic orientation, both organisational and financial aspects are regulated by University statutes and regulations.

Each State University receives resources according to a baseline share and an additional balancing share. The baseline share is allocated by the MIUR proportionally to the amount of payments made by universities in the previous year (historical principle). The balancing share is the tool according to which the MIUR can differentiate public funding to Universities, allocating resources according to standard costs per students and, since 2004, also on the base of quality of research activities.

In 2004 a new allocation procedure was introduced for the three-year financial planning,¹² envisaging that a part of the balancing share of the Fund for the Ordinary Financing was to be allocated to Universities according to their level of performance.

Two thirds of the balancing share are allocated to State Universities on the basis of the adjusted number of regular students for each study programme. One third of resources is allocated on the basis of the potential research staff.

So that the Italian budgetary funds for higher education are not spent in regards to specific sectors/areas, but the allocation of a part of public funding to State Universities is on the basis of efficiency of the institutions, which was assessed according to the standard cost for student (balancing share).

Alignment with industry

The public private partnership has been recognized as one of the powerful tools to boost innovation.¹³ This policy instrument has been recognized as one of the best ones to fill the knowledge gap in innovation systems as it is a rather flexible one and can take specific forms to adapt to local, sectorial, and field requirements. Therefore, there are two main areas in which universities ought to concentrate their efforts:

(1) The improvement of quality of teaching and not teaching services, in order to promptly respond to the target, ever more formed by adults and workers who require space, services, etc.

(2) A stronger relationship with local economies and productive systems, in order to respond to the demand for training and competence.

¹² Law No. 43/2005.

¹³ Curriculum Development Guidelines, 'New ICT curricula for the 21st century: designing tomorrow's education, Luxembourg', Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2001, ISBN 92-896-0074-8, © ICE Ltd, 2001

The Italian university system is trying to adopt an entrepreneurial approach in order to better serve their customers.¹⁴ In terms of policy for R&D co-operation, a coherent set of tools to support co-operation and joint ventures among firms and between public research centers and firms has not been set up yet.

The educational offer is moving from a standardised service to a localised one which considers territorial needs of specialised workers and/or professionals (Barnabè, 2003). Consequently, in order to support and facilitate this process managerial and market mechanisms have been introduced. New structures, organisational models and roles, and higher responsibilities, have nowadays to be satisfied by the university system. This consequently determines the need for managerial skills in all subjects involved. Moreover, the modification of the funding system of the universities at ministerial level, linked to the costs and quality of the services provided, have shifted the attention to the high quality of education and its related services and on its financial management, given the progressive decrease of the transfers from central institutions (Rebora, 2003).¹⁵

An example is the Region Emilia Romagna, which is trying to organize the regional technology transfer through the creation of institutional channels acting as a mediator between academia and industry through its policies (and financings). The universities of the region, for their part, not only acceded to the “High Tech Network” project, but have also tried to improve the effectiveness of their technology transfer by setting up inner structures responsible for its organization and management. For example, the University of Bologna (UniBo) has set up a spin-offs incubator (AlmaCube) and a Knowledge Transfer Office in charge of intellectual property protection and exploitation. However, studies like Cohen et al. (2002) suggest to look more carefully at the people who actually transfer knowledge from university to industry (and vice versa). In fact, there is a variety of channels through which the knowledge exchange takes place, and the “informal channels” (e.g. publications, conferences, students’ training and employment in companies) seem to be more effective than the institutional ones (e.g. patents, licenses, joint ventures).¹⁶

Even if moving from different starting points, as working methods and ethos may differ considerably, a common ground can be found in view of a shared interest in knowledge production, diffusion and appropriation. In Italy the experiences of cooperation between universities and firms date back to the first half of last Century. At the beginning of the cooperation process the initiatives were taken mainly by individual professors and/or entrepreneurs and only afterwards there was a commitment of their organizations. A coordinated action in a common science policy framework though is defined much later and still needs further improvements.

At present cooperation schemes between university and industry are supported in Italy by a network of formal agreements that link directly the different partners or create a common framework programme managed by various actors. The main one are managed by the Italian Industrials association (Confindustria)

¹⁴ Baccarani, 1999

¹⁵ http://www.ftsm.ukm.my/aishah/paper%20pdf_2nd%20education/Luca_Student%20satisfaction%20and%20quality%20of%20service%20in%20italian%20universities.pdf

¹⁶ http://www.circle.lu.se/upload/CIRCLE/RIP-Seminar/Papers/RIP2011_Serafini.pdf

and the Conference of Italian rectors (CRUI) that are at present the main institutional bodies acting as facilitators and promoters of cooperation.¹⁷

In Italy university-industry cooperation is increasingly taking place through the institution of new universities courses and degrees with the aim of creating professional profiles needed in a specific local environment or in a specialised field. Another important form of collaboration is represented by organisation of training in industries during universities courses, these carried out in enterprises, seminars carried out both by entrepreneurs and university teachers, etc.

The agreements, which make these initiatives possible, are closely linked with the new roles of universities in offering students services, which can facilitate their entrance in the labour market. This trend is confirmed by the analysis of data taken from the Confindustria report¹⁸. From 47 universities, which represent 61% of Italian public universities, 31 have organised services, which aim to integrate theoretical with the practical education, facilitating training and apprenticeship in enterprises. These services have different names (generally Stage and Job placement) and offer a variety of facilities. Sometimes they give information on the procedures necessary to organise training activities both for students and interested industries, in other cases they provide students with lists of available opportunities. These services are often carrying out activities aiming to facilitate students' university choices, visits to enterprises, etc.

Consequence is that several weaknesses persist and prevent the Italian industry to become more competitive in high technological sectors: lack of advanced and original technological capabilities, a fragile technological infrastructure supporting innovation processes and unstable links between universities and industry.¹⁹

2.2.3 Latvia

System of higher education institutions

Higher education in Latvia can be acquired both in state and private (established by juridical persons) HEIs. In Latvia there are 36 state HEIs (6 state universities, 13 state non-university type HEIs, 17 state colleges), 23 HEIs established by legal persons (15 non-university type HEIs, 8 colleges) and 3 branches of foreign HEIs.

¹⁷ Sveva Avveduto & Daniela Luzi, Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies, National Research Council, Rome, Italy

¹⁸ Curriculum Development Guidelines, 'New ICT curricula for the 21st century: designing tomorrow's education, Luxembourg', Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2001, ISBN 92-896-0074-8, ICE Ltd, 2001

¹⁹ Italian Policy towards Cooperation in R&D, Maria Rosa Battaglion and Patrizia Bussoli

Accessibility

In state-owned HEIs there are students who are financed from the state budget and students who pay tuition fee. The latter ones are those who passed the entrance exams, but were not successful in competition for state-financed study places²⁰. A foreign person pays for education in accordance with an agreement concluded with the relevant educational institution. For citizens of EU countries and their children who acquire education in Latvia, fee for education is determined and covered in the same way as for Latvian citizens and permanent residents²¹.

The state determines number of study places in HEIs and colleges which are financed from the state budget, but procedure how HEIs and colleges are financed is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers. The number of budget study places is determined by the Minister of Education and Science on the basis of proposal of Council of the Higher Education. Admission to study places financed from the state budget is subject to competition. Number of study places in juridical persons established HEIs is determined by founders of the corresponding institution. Tuition fee for study places which are not financed from the state budget is covered by students, legal or physical person by concluding the agreement with the HEI or college²². In the academic year 2010/2011, around 66 % of students paid for their studies [6].

Scholarship can be received by students of HE programmes who are admitted on the basis of competition and studying on state-financed study places; such a student receives a scholarship from fund of the educational institution²³. The mentioned fund is created using state funds. The scholarship is the subject of competition and it can be received by a student who:

- successfully within the prescribed time period passes the necessary tests and exams;
- acquires all necessary credit points in the corresponding semester.

Funding

HEIs are financed by their founders. Financial resources of state-owned HEIs include²⁴:

- state budget funds;

²⁰ Organisation of the education system in Latvia, 2009/2010, Eurybase, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/LV_EN.pdf.

²¹ Izglītības sistēma Latvijā, Nacionālā izglītības iespēju datubāze, <http://www.niid.lv/node/9>.

²² Augstskolu likums, <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>.

²³ Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.740 Rīgā 2004.gada 24.augustā (prot. Nr.50 27.§) "Noteikumi par stipendijām", <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=93004>.

²⁴ Augstskolu likums, <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>.

- others incomes received by HEIs through operation for achievement of goals defined in their constitutions. These incomes are manipulated taking into account terms and conditions that pertain to non-profit organizations.

State-owned HEIs receive the following financing:

- from state budget to education;
- from tuition fees which are covered by the state or which are received in the form of returnable or refundable credits under the regulatory act of Cabinet of Ministers on study crediting²⁵;
- from funds intended for implementation of certain goals.

State HEIs can receive additional financing from other financing sources of science.

Quality assurance

HE quality assurance system has been developed in Latvia since 1995 when Law on Institutions of Higher Education was accepted and necessity to perform regular accreditation of study programmes was recognized²⁶. In 1994, a non-profit foundation "Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre" (HEQEC) was established in accordance with recommendations of the Council of Rectors as well as in compliance with the requirements of the EU and in accordance with the recommendations of the respective institutions of the EU.

According to the Statutes the HEQEC has following objectives²⁷:

- to work out and co-ordinate the procedures aimed at quality assessment of HEIs and study programmes as well as preparing peer visits in compliance with the Law on Education of the Republic of Latvia and the Law on Institutions of Higher Education;
- to organize the quality assessment of IHEs and study programmes on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Science;
- to set up commissions and working groups responsible for solving problems related to quality assessment and accreditation;
- to invite foreign experts for peer visits to HEIs;

²⁵ Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.219 Rīgā 2001.gada 29.maijā (prot. Nr.25 5.§) "Kārtība, kādā tiek piešķirts, atmaksāts un dzēsts studiju kredīts no valsts budžeta līdzekļiem", <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=25576>.

²⁶ Juris Dzelme, Augstākā izglītība krustcelēs, 18.10.2009, <http://www.lvportals.lv/index.php?menu=doc&id=199709>.

²⁷ About HEQEC, <http://www.aiknc.lv/en/about.php>.

- to sum up and to make public the experience obtained as the system of HEI and study programme quality assessment is being set up and implemented.

HEQEC joined the European HE quality assurance system and in 2002 became a full member of the European quality assurance agencies' Association (ENQA).

Perception by society

According to EU University modernisation agenda, the modernisation of HE in Latvia is in progress²⁸. In 2009, reforms affected HEI management and the status of a derived public person was assigned to state HEIs. In order to strengthen the autonomy of HEIs, significant changes happened in financing system of HEIs, ensuring the financing of HE in "one sum" manner, thus giving more flexibility for usage of funds. In order to increase the competitiveness of Latvian HE, the Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with national authorities and partners have developed and launched the "Action Plan for the necessary reforms in higher education and science 2010-2012".

Politicians are talking about a big number of HEIs for such small country as Latvia²⁹, fragmentation and uncompetitiveness of HE and necessity to make fundamental changes in financing of HEIs³⁰. At the same time, the data collected on the best indicators of the economic competitiveness shows that for Latvia evaluating specific criteria the best assessment is in the field of HE, where Latvia takes 34th place in the world³¹. Moreover, people with HE are more often working in the acquired speciality³². Evaluating the importance of education for successful activity in the labour market, one-third of the population, who have acquired HE, and in approximately the same number of basic education graduates are slightly more optimistic than respondents with secondary education. 27% of respondents with HE, and 28% of respondents who acquired basic education, recognize that education is the most important factor for successful activity in the labour market.

Regardless these facts, in May 9 of 2011 the State Education Development Agency signed an agreement with the Council of Higher Education on funding for European Social Fund activity "Improvement of study program content and implementation and development of academic competence". During the project

²⁸ Faktu lapa: augstākā izglītība, izglītības un Zinātnes ministrija,

http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/faktu_lapas/IZM%20faktu%20lapas_augstaka-izglitiba.pdf

²⁹ Katrīna Slišāne, Saeimas deputāti: Latvijā jāsamazina augstāko izglītības iestāžu skaits, 19.01.2010,

<http://nra.lv/latvija/izglitiba-karjera/14187-saeimas-deputati-latvija-jasamazina-augstako-izglitibas-iestazu-skaits.htm>

³⁰ Vjačeslavs Dombrovskis, Par IZM piedāvāto augstākās izglītības reformu,

<http://reformupartija.lv/2011/08/24/vjaceslavs-dombrovskis-par-izm-piedavato-augstakas-izglitibas-reformu/>

³¹ Latvijā vislabākais ekonomiskās konkurētspējas rādītājs ir augstākajai izglītībai, 16.09.2011, <http://nra.lv/latvija/izglitiba-karjera/55886-latvija-vislabakais-ekonomiskas-konkuretspejas-raditajs-ir-augstakajai-izglitibai.htm>

³² Ar ESF atbalstu izvērtēs augstākās izglītības studiju programmas Latvijā, VIAA, 09.05.2011, http://www.viaa.gov.lv/lat/strukturfondi/jaunumi/?text_id=7444.

which is two years long experts will conduct detailed evaluation of study programmes in 40 HEIs in Latvia in order to improve the quality of HE, efficiency, international competitiveness and to verify compliance of study programmes with the needs of the state economy.

Alignment with industry

Collaboration between Latvian IHEs and industry takes different forms. The most common of them are:

- joint research projects;
- collaboration on the basis of agreement;
- guest lectures given by representatives of industry;
- career centres established in IHEs and Career days organized by them;
- student internship in enterprises during study period.
- participation of industry's representatives in some structural formations of IHEs such as Convent of Counsellor;
- different events when industry's representatives are invited as guests.

Considering collaboration on the basis of agreement, as an example a tripartite agreement between pharmacy stock-company "Olainfarm", Riga Stradins University Alumni Association and the Riga Stradins University (RSU) can be mentioned. It was signed in March 30 of 2011 and provides a scholarship for students of the RSU Faculty of Pharmacy students and internship. "Olainfarm" excellence grant will allow four most outstanding students of the faculty to receive scholarships (70 LVL) during ten study months³³. Other example is cooperation between Latvian Geospatial Information Agency and several HEIs: Riga Technical University, Latvia University of Agriculture, University of Latvia, Daugavpils University, and Rezekne Higher School. The agency provides internship for students, gives information about standards used and innovations in the branch and allows to use data and materials available in the agency³⁴.

Career centers established in HEIs usually establish and maintain contacts with potential employers, organize workshops related to career-building and inform students on last trends in the labor market and possibilities to get job.

³³ "Olainfarm" noslēdz ilgtermiņa sadarbību ar Rīgas Stradiņa universitāti, Olainfarm, 30.03.2011, <http://www.olainfarm.lv/jaunakas-zinas/%E2%80%9Ccolainfarm%E2%80%9D-nosledz-ilgtermina-sadarbibu-ar-rigas-stradina-universitati>.

³⁴ Latvijas Ģeotelpiskās informācijas aģentūras sadarbība ar augstskolām, http://www.lgia.gov.lv/lv/Sadarbiba/Sadarbiba_ar_augstskolam.aspx.

2.2.4 Poland

Students

According to the In the 2010/2011 academic year there were 1 841.3 thousand students in higher education institutions, i.e. by 3.1% less than in the previous academic year. It was the fifth successive year when a decline in the number of students was recorded, which was influenced by demographic changes (year by year the population aged 19-24 has been decreasing).

71,3% of all higher schools are non-public. However, public schools record higher number of students – 1.26 m (68.5% of all students). Women accounted for 58.8% of all students.

The number of graduates in the 2009/2010 academic year amounted to 478.9 thous. and was higher by nearly 39.2 thous. (i.e. by 8.9%) in comparison with the 2008/2009 academic year.

In the 2010/2011 academic year the number of students attending Ph.D. studies conducted by tertiary education institutions, such as research institutes, scientific units of Polish Academy of Sciences and the Medical Centre of Post-graduate Education amounted to 37.5 thous., 1,8 thous. more than a year before.

In higher schools, as of December 2010 there were 103.5 thous. of academic teachers employed (counted as full-time equivalent), of which 1,914 were foreigners. There were 17.8 students per one academic teacher.

Financial situation of Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions total revenues amounted to 19,726.0 m PLN (of which 16,552.8 m PLN achieved by public higher education institutions and 3,173.2 m PLN by non-public higher education institutions), total costs added up to 19,078.4 m PLN (of which 16,054.3 m PLN of public higher education institutions).

Educational cost per student, which includes own costs of operational activity and material assistance fund for students together with own scholarship fund was 12,321 PLN (ca. 3,000 Euro).

Quality assurance

In 2001, the government established the State Accreditation Committee (SAC [in Polish, PKA]), which continues today as the central body for quality assurance of tertiary education in Poland. The Committee has independent authority, initially under the 2001 amendments to the 1990 Law and recently reaffirmed under the Higher Education Law of 2005, and is charged with two major roles:

- to assess the quality of education in individual areas of study, and
- to provide advice to the minister responsible for higher education on applications to establish new tertiary education institutions, to establish new external organizational units, or to establish new study areas.

Under accreditation procedures in effect from 2002, tertiary institutions are required to submit proposals for new study areas to the State Accreditation Committee.

Matching with the labour market

As far as graduate labour is concerned, it is noteworthy that although the “massification” of the system has sharply increased the number of new graduates each year, their employment prospects are still relatively favourable.

There are three main ways in which attempts have been made to improve the articulation between the tertiary education system and the labour market.

First, efforts have been made to diversify the supply of tertiary programmes, in particular through the expansion of the vocational sector and the creation of tertiary education institutions in non-urban areas.

Second, some partnerships are in place between institutions and employers, especially in vocational HEIs. These include enabling professionals from industry to contribute to the delivery of programmes in vocational institutions, the creation of offices in some institutions to promote and administer liaison with employers and, in the few institutions which have taken the opportunity granted by the 2005 legislation, the establishment of an advisory council which includes external stakeholders such as local authorities and business representatives. Finally, there is a National Network of Careers Offices, encompassing the careers offices which have been established in most institutions. These provide guidance and counselling to students and graduates upon entry into the labour market. They provide information to students on career options, links to potential employers, and often also some training in skills.

National Qualifications Framework

Poland began work on its national qualifications framework in 2008, as part of a systemic project “Stocktaking of competences and qualifications for the Polish labour market and the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) model” carried out by the Ministry of National Education.

The main aim of the project was to develop expert proposal of the Polish NQF (national qualifications framework) model and the scenario for its implementation. The works were carried out by the team of experts representing different sectors of education - general, vocational and higher education - and draw on earlier milestones, i.e.:

- national vocational qualifications standards (2006 – 2007),
- principles underlying the national qualifications framework for higher education (2006 – 2008),
- new core curricula for general education (2008)

But preparing and implementing the Polish Qualification Framework still faces some hurdles. Many arise from the varied terminology used in Polish and in European documentation concerning the European Qualification Framework and the NQFs. For example, the term “qualifications” in Polish means knowledge and skills necessary to perform a given profession, while in EQF documents “qualifications” are understood as formal confirmation that a person has achieved learning outcomes to a given standard. The Polish term “competence” is also used variously to mean “qualification”, “skill” or even “authority”.

One thing seems certain: the traditionally understood “profession” or “occupation” corresponds less and less to labour market dynamics, particularly in hi-tech sectors. Currently, the term may be defined rather as a set of all professional and generic qualifications useful in a given field/sector/branch. With such an approach, we may define a basic set of qualifications required in a given profession or occupation, while specialisation can define the set of professional qualifications required to perform a given type of work. Such an approach would certainly make the validation process simpler. Learning outcomes would be equally validated for generic and professional qualifications, independently of the way in which learning was acquired - guaranteeing equal status between comparable outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

In the practices used so far, however, the language of qualifications has not been used to describe learning outcomes, with the sole exception of vocational qualifications standards (253) developed under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Yet these standards currently lack any legal basis. Standardisation is possible in the sphere of vocational qualifications, provided cooperation is established with the competent ministries and/or sectoral institutions.

Bringing a new order into the most broadly conceived sphere of education through the implementation of the Polish Qualifications Framework will not be possible unless there is agreement on the terms used, including the terminology in use for legal documents and legislation. If the Polish NQF is to respond practically to the needs and potential of the country, the terminology must be very well thought out. Introducing the term “qualifications”, as defined for qualifications frameworks, into the language of education and the labour market in Poland will be particularly important in this respect.

Developing terminology that is common to all those involved in the development and implementation of the framework, compatible with the terms adopted in European documents, in line with the Polish tradition and user- friendly, is a challenge which must be taken up by a team broader than the NQF Expert Team. It is necessary to appoint an inter-sector and “inter-project” team which will develop and adopt a glossary while taking into account surveys and consultations. Moreover, to promote the idea of the qualifications framework, there should be a decision as to which terminology will apply. Such decisions could be made by a National Co-ordination Point (NCP).

Responsiveness

The Polish higher education system is subject to a number of complex and rather intractable challenges. Foremost among these is the remarkable extent to which the system, and not only the 'academic' institutions, can be said to be academically driven, and hence insufficiently responsive to the diverse needs of the present-day economy and society. It is not overstating the case to characterise the system as a whole as inward-looking and backward-looking: the processes by which it is governed, and the values and culture from which these processes are derived, are primarily internal and (in the broader sense) institutional rather than those of societal needs.

There does not appear to exist, either in legislation or in policy statements at the national level, a clear vision of vocational education. Instead, the term seems to be interpreted in 'common sense' ways, leaving each 'vocational' institution to define its own mission. Given both the symbolic and the practical and financial advantages that accrue to academic institutions, it is not surprising that academic drift is widespread.

The consequence is that from a labour market perspective the balance of supply of qualified people appears to be driven by academic producers rather than by student or employer consumers.

Funding

The funding of tertiary education in Poland presents a number of positive developments. To begin with, the allocation of public funds to individual institutions is on the whole transparent – the criteria and procedures for how funds are distributed are generally clear to those involved. Core public funds for teaching activities are distributed to public institutions on the basis of a formula, and most of the research funding is allocated through competitive processes. Other things being equal, this makes the allocation of public resources more equitable across institutions.

A related positive development is that private institutions are given access to some public funding: money for research and funds for student financial aid. However, what is less clear is the rationale for providing public subsidies for teaching activities to two specific private institutions, while excluding the remaining private institutions from accessing such funds.

One concern is that current mechanisms to allocate public funds to institutions do little to steer institutions towards a better alignment with national economic and social goals. First, there is a lack of strategic components among the resource streams used to fund institutions. More specifically, no funds are allocated on a targeted basis to achieve explicit objectives such as the improvement of the quality of educational programmes, the introduction of innovative curricula, the improvement of management practices, or the development of partnerships with the region where the institution is located. Second, the basic public subsidy received by institutions bears little or no relation to indicators of the quality of the services provided. As a result, the basic subsidy, which constitutes the largest share of the public funding received by institutions, provides little incentive for strengthening quality. Finally, linking the funding with

the qualifications and titles of the academic staff introduces some perverse effects when the main rationale for keeping it, ensuring the quality of the academic body, has been largely achieved in Poland.

Another concern is that institutions do not seem very dynamic in seeking external sources of funding. There is a growing but still incipient tradition of providing services such as industrial training or service as consultants to businesses or public authorities. However, resources raised externally by institutions (other than student fees) typically represent less than ten percent of their budgets. In other words, most institutions interpret the advice to become more entrepreneurial as an invitation to sell their core educational service to as many students as the law permits, and do not see the need to look for new sources of revenue.

Accessibility

There has also been progress in the student finance system. Funds for non-repayable types of student support have expanded. The proportion of the student population receiving some form of publicly-subsidised grant reached 25% in 2008-9 compared with 14% in 2001. Another development to be applauded has been the decision to make all students in the tertiary system eligible for public student support. Before 2004 only regular students attending public institutions could access the non-repayable forms of the student support system. Currently, students who attend private institutions benefit, under the same conditions, from the same basic financial support to cover living costs and tuition fees. This clearly facilitates students' freedom of choice and enables the development of institutions with distinct approaches and purposes. Particularly important is the existence of means-tested programmes to promote access to tertiary education by more vulnerable groups, in particular those with greater financial need.

Another important feature of the student support system is the existence of a publicly-subsidised loan scheme. It constitutes a major element to further facilitate access to tertiary education by reducing liquidity constraints faced by students. It rightly makes all students eligible to borrow. However, given that in practice budget constraints allow for only a limited number of loans, it is appropriate that the selection is made on the basis of financial need. It is also right to limit the number of years a student can benefit from a (subsidised) loan as well as to defer or forgive repayments if the graduate faces difficult circumstances after leaving the tertiary system.

Clearly, some benefit more from the system than others. Some graduates are receiving a higher private financial benefit from their tertiary degree, namely those who access non-fee-paying places. What is more, some individuals will be deterred from undertaking, or even aspiring to, tertiary studies as a result of a disadvantaged background (e.g. financial poverty, lack of information about the benefits of tertiary education, poor school education) since they may not be able to access non-fee-paying places and the student support system may not eliminate their financial constraints.

Another main area for concern, despite significant recent efforts, is the narrow scale of the student support system. Only one in four students received (not necessarily need-based) grants and 11% took out a loan. The grants currently offered are not sufficient to cover realistic costs of living, and loans are not offered on

favourable terms. This suggests that there is only a limited capacity in the system to facilitate the participation of academically qualified students who do not have the financial means to access tertiary education. When non-fee-paying places are awarded on the basis of 'merit', disadvantaged students who face paying their living expenses and giving up a salary are bound to be deterred from attending tertiary education.

This situation is exacerbated by the fact that a large proportion of public grants are awarded on the basis of merit only. There are a number of merit-based schemes which reward the academic work and/or the sports careers of tertiary students. Such a use of public funds is questionable, since no social purpose seems to be achieved: on the face of it, it is quite unlikely that any academically gifted students who are not in financial need would decide not to attend tertiary education without a merit-based grant. Thus these public funds would achieve better social results if they were only used to facilitate the access to tertiary education of academically talented and financially needy students. We also note that such grants as are conferred on a needs basis seem to be unnecessarily complex, being dispersed into many different components: maintenance grants, meals grants, accommodation grants, and aid payments.

2.3 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Recent years have seen increased emphasis on the relevance of learning that takes place outside formal education and training institutions and on systems and strategies to validate such learning. Large numbers of employees will change their job, sector and even country of residence during their lifetime. This requires a parallel transfer of qualifications and competences from one setting to another, to a new job, sector or country. Validation of non-formal and informal learning supports such transfer. Validation of non-formal and informal learning enables the achievement of qualifications independent of the context in which the learning takes place (formal, non-formal, informal). This is particularly relevant for adults who have gained a range of competences at work, through participation in non-formal training, in the community and in their everyday life.

The European Commission's White Paper Teaching and Learning (1995) proposed a common European approach to the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Since then, validation of non-formal and informal learning has been identified as a European priority on many occasions.

A significant development for the validation of non-formal and informal learning has been the emergence of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), a common reference framework based on learning outcomes and competences to enable and promote transparency, transfer and recognition of qualifications and competences in Europe.

The analysed countries fall into four distinctive categories with respect to validation of non-formal and informal learning:

- 1) Countries such as the UK with well-developed systems of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In the UK higher education establishments are bound by law to design and deliver awards in line with quality assurance codes of practice. The process of validation gives credibility to qualifications and sets the parameters for HEIs in terms of what they can or cannot do. It determines whether the programme or award meets University requirements for academic standards, for quality of the available learning opportunities, and for programme validity and relevance.

For many authors the term 'validation' is used interchangeably with the term 'accreditation' (Wall, 2010: 41). Both are forms of approval or agreement that quality and standards will be adhered to. Formal recognition for skills and knowledge already possessed is possible through either APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) or APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning). APL and APEL improve access to education and training and the awarding of academic, vocational and professional qualifications and are crucial to WBL success.

- 2) Countries such as Denmark that have established arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and have moved from the introduction of validation policies to the implementation of validation practices.

In Denmark the law sets down principles but not standards for the validation process which is decentralised. Educational institutions have to work out for themselves how to work with the principles. The National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning (NVR) supports validation practitioners in relation to standards, approaches and methods.

- 3) Countries such as Italy that have either recently set up a legal or policy framework for validation and are currently in the process of starting implementation, or have had experience of piloting a variety of different methodologies on the basis of which they are currently developing a national approach.

In Italy there is not yet a formalized or regulated national validation system. For many years there have been many either regional or local policies and operational strategies developed for validation of non-formal and informal learning and recognition of training credits in specific pathways (formal learning) or for the acquisition of certificates. Particularly important on the road to a national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning is the National Committee (Tavolo nazionale) - promoted by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies – aimed at building the national standards system, with particular reference to the evaluation and value-allocation of competences held and acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.

- 4) Countries such as Latvia and Poland show a relatively low degree of acceptance of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning. In these countries the benefits of having a scheme to identify, assess and recognise learning gained outside formal education and training may be acknowledged by the stakeholders involved but, as yet, there is little in terms of policy or practice which actually facilitates the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The process of validation of non-formal and informal learning in both Latvia and Poland has not yet implemented. In Latvia there is a proposal to turn higher education system into programme modules' system. In case person already has number of modules acquired in or outside of school,

studies get shorter. Higher education institutions would be made responsible for evaluation knowledge, skills and competences of the students.

3. WORK-BASED LEARNING – WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

3.1 Definition

Over recent years, work-based learning have become a buzzword in the United Kingdom to describe an effective, valuable and developmental learning for people in work that occurs through the work. It has been widely acknowledged that work-based learning constitutes a vital part in the ongoing and future development of the existing workforce. As a result of this, some higher education institutions have moved towards enhancing and accrediting work-based learning with programmes being developed between HEI and employer or other stakeholders. It is tempting for learners to engage in work-based learning as it allows access to higher education qualifications for those adults currently in employment, particularly through accreditation of prior and experiential learning. And for industry it offers various benefits as it explicitly links learning to the practicalities of real-life work enhancing competences of workforce. Although being quite popular in the UK, work-based learning is a completely unknown concept in all other countries participating in the project. E.g. a Google search did not give a single hit in the Polish language.

The notion is not that easy to define. This is because it is multifaceted and refers to its various aspects. A classical definition by Boud and Solomon (2001) says 'work-based learning is the term being used to describe a class of university programmes that bring together universities and work organizations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces.' Lester and Costley (2010: 562) refer to the term 'work-based learning' as logically referring to 'all and any learning that is situated in the workplace or arises directly out of workplace concerns'. They go on to say that the greater majority of this learning is not accredited or formally recognised and much of it is unplanned, informal and retrospective. Sodiechowska and Maisch (2006) put the learning needs of the employees and the aims of the organisation at the centre of this notion. Chapman and Howkins (2003) see it as a learning process rather than a teaching process – it develops skills and attitudes towards lifelong learning and encourages learners to take responsibility for their own learning. Flanagan et al. (2000) view WBL as a way to integrate higher level university learning, self-knowledge and formal knowledge, and workplace learning, experience and expertise. Boud and Middleton (2003) and McKee and Burton (2005) concentrate on the practical aspects of WBL and define it as being both part of an academically accredited programme of study and part of a structured workplace learning programme, as well as being an individual and/or collective responsibility within the workplace.

3.2 Advantages of work-based learning in view of literature

Work-based learning can clearly offer advantages for all parties in the tripartite relationship.

The benefits for employers enhance:

- an increase in the competences of employees appropriate to the context of their work
- tailoring the educational pathway of employees to the needs of the employer

- increased employees' motivation thereby reducing staff turnover in the company
- reducing the cost of staff training

For employees the main gains are the following:

- reducing skills shortages of employees
- tailoring the educational pathway of employees to their real needs and possibilities
- higher satisfaction of employees with professional development

The main advantages for academia include:

- competitive educational offer that suits better the needs of local employers and employees
- a source of additional income
- making the foundations for a more sustainable cooperation with employers in local labor market (enterprises, institutions)
- improvement of the image in the local labour market as the initiator of positive changes

As Brennan (2005) suggests there are three main advantages for HEIs engaging with WBL:

1. Higher education is more likely to have continuing relevance if it responds to economic imperatives for the supply of appropriately skilled and knowledgeable workers and aims to better equip them for the changing nature of work. Of specific importance here are:

- a. Changes in the organisation of work and changing employment patterns, particularly how HE responds to the growth of graduate employment and the range of employment sectors to which this applies.
- b. Changing skill requirements, as higher level skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, communication and teamwork, are particularly important here, and technical skills alone are not considered to be sufficient.
- c. The rise of the 'knowledge economy' where learning is seen as an integral and on-going feature of working, as more workers are now expected to use generic and technical knowledge and skills to contribute to new knowledge production in the workplace.

2. Employers value the attributes and qualities that graduate employees can bring to the workforce.

3. WBL allows HE to play to its strengths in assessing and accrediting learning outcomes and this has the potential to be an important source of additional income.

3.3 Work-based learning delivery

Kewin, et al. (2011) argue that a lack of flexibility around delivery mode and timings is a factor limiting HEIs' ability to respond to employers' requirements in a timely way. They suggest that HEIs should streamline

internal processes and reduce timescales required for course development. Delivery capacity was identified as a key factor inhibiting the ability of HEIs to respond in a timely manner.

Figure 3 shows the continuum of ways in which WBL can be delivered:

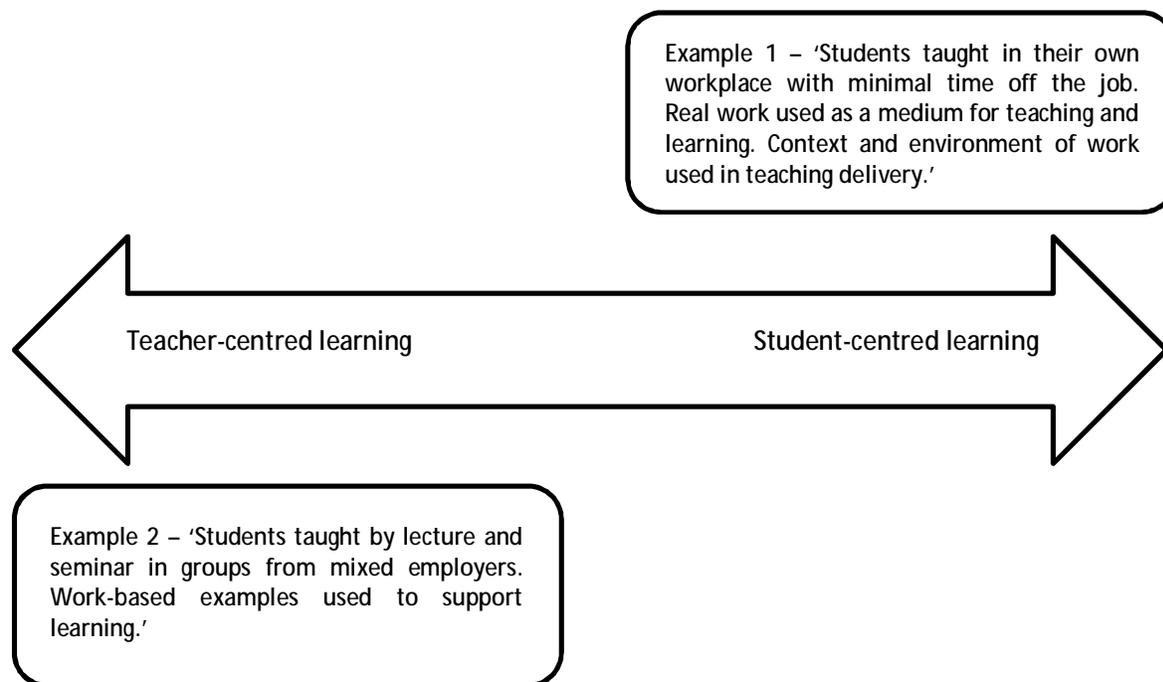


Figure 3. The continuum outlining the two extremities of work-based learning.

Source: Williams, A. and Thurairajah, N. (2009) 'Work-based Learning: Working the Curriculum: Approval, Delivery & Assessment', University of Salford.

Examples 1 and 2 show two variations in the work-based theme, with the emphasis changing from teacher-centred learning (example 2) to student centred-learning (example 1).

Most literature on the subject advocates an individualised approach for the learner whilst maintaining contact between academy and employer to assist in development of the learning plan and also satisfying the requirements of the employer; the employer involved should have a lot more input into the design and outcomes of their learners' course structures.

Penn et al. (2005) identify a tripartite workplace learning relationship to how the needs and interests of stakeholders in the process are influenced:

- The needs of the individual learner are influenced by their *life plan* (personal and career aspirations, skills, knowledge);
- Those of the employer are influenced by their *business plan* (productivity, innovation, workforce development);

- Those of the provider (e.g. HEI) are influenced by their *corporate plan* (marketing, recruitment, access, curriculum offer, research and innovation).

This forms the basis for the learning contract. Nixon et al. (2006) maintain that the nature of the relationship between individual students and their employer also has a strong influence on the type of WBL that is accessed or designed. They identify four types of WBL which derive from the motivations of the individual/employer. These can be seen in Figure 4.

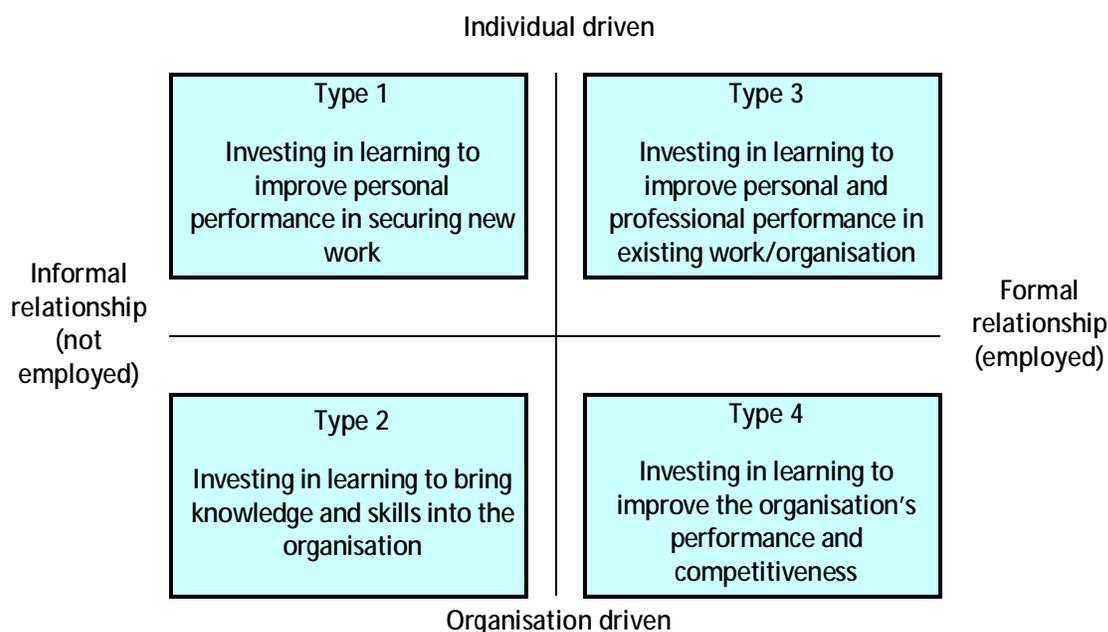


Figure 4. Work-based learning typology

Source: reproduced from Nixon et al., 2006, p. 38.

Whilst WBL curriculum development is predominantly derived from the context of the workplace, the different WBL typologies have an impact on curriculum development in different ways. Type 3 and 4 learning is characterised by a negotiated curriculum which is determined by workplace goals and objectives; these tend to be closely aligned to the up-skilling, multiskilling and reskilling of employees. Type 1 WBL learning is less likely to be employer supported as learners are typically looking to advance their career or make a career change. This type of curriculum is characterised by programmes that allow learners to achieve credits for work-based experience and 'top-up' these credits to higher-level awards. Within Type 2 learning, the employer builds a direct relationship with the HEI to support the design or delivery of a programme. There is no formal relationship between the student and organisation; consequently the curriculum is determined by the HEI/employer and tends to be more prescribed.

3.4 The conceptual model of work-based learning analysis in higher education institutions

Given the complexity of WBL issues on the side of HEIs, the approach to analyse the work-based learning related issues across higher education institutions and then formulate usable messages (recommendations) cannot be universal, but instead customised to the expectations of and communicated to the various target groups at different levels of HEI management. With this in mind, a conceptual model was developed that distinguishes between three various levels of HEI management: strategic, tactical and operational (see Figure 2). Any higher education institution wishing to support work-based learning must align their institutional strategies, policies, resources, structures, systems and processes accordingly.

The approaches toward work-based learning must in addition give consideration to cross-cutting issues of costs, impact and benefits.

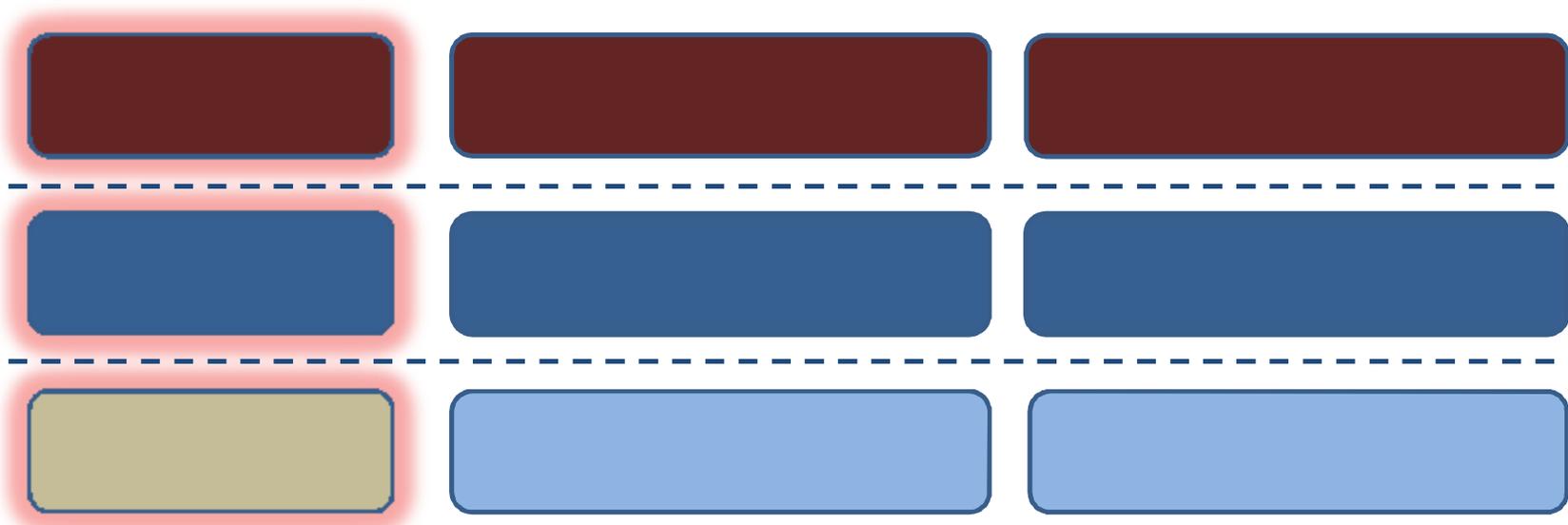


Figure 5. Levels of HEI management whose specific expectations should be addressed

Source: own concept derived from discussions with the project partners

4. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CONDUCTED RESEARCH

The findings from the primary (qualitative research done with use of IDIs) and secondary (literature) research are structured according to the different levels of HEI management, i.e. strategic, tactical and operational.

4.1 Strategic level

4.1.1 WBL as a new mode of higher education

Although HEIs tend to be more and more exposed to market demand, especially in Latvia and in Poland they still perform traditional tasks of teaching in a scholarly way which makes the competences acquired not tailored to real labour market needs. As pointed out by the interviewees:

“the universities tend to offer education in what they are already good at rather than concerning themselves about market demands” [Denmark]

“...employers, they criticize the university that we teach fundamental things and sometimes they are not practical...” [Latvia]

“...actually both our faculty and all other IT faculties in Latvia basically are oriented towards preparation, if it is possible to say in such a manner, of broad profile specialists which are not specialized in any specific tasks, in achievement of specific goals...” [Latvia]

With implementation of WBL in the academic institution, the mode of higher education would change with learners and employers staying at the heart and being the drivers of the learning process. In case of some UK universities, the role of HEI tends to be rather a facilitator and the safeguard of the academic integrity of the learning process rather than its controller and content creator. Also thinking of some Danish interviewees tends to more WBL-oriented as expressed in the statement below:

“...the transformation of the university towards more WBL generally is very important...the students’ motivation will increase significantly if they can use what they learn immediately in relation to their work” [Denmark]

In case of Poland and Latvia the way to start even WBL thinking is however quite distant which is well illustrated by the following citations:

“an answer on my counterquestion ‘How many such specialists do you need?’ is approximately ‘You know, 2-3 in 2 next years’. Yes?! That means that for the university is it not economically cost effective to prepare in such a way...” [Latvia]

“I see a lot of barriers because the traditional way undertaken by our academic staff is the following: acquisition of doctoral degree after master’s degree and job in the university, OK, in projects, of course, it is very good if these projects are related to industry, but it is not always the case, but this is only touch with real world and here may be the right way would be by using this concept from systems theory – synergy, when a person from industry and university’s teacher put together their knowledge and skills in order to provide such learning, because the former knows real needs, practice and the latter – theory, how to do things in ideal cases what not always can be really applied in practice.” [Poland]

Successful implementation of WBL requires a profound shift in appreciation of the nature of commonly accepted teaching and learning practices. Paramount challenges to HEI connected with the incorporation of WBL in the educational practice include primarily ensuring that:

- the learner determines the nature of the curriculum through changes made to the traditional power relationship between teacher and learner by placing the responsibility for identifying the contents of the ‘curriculum’ and manner of assessment in the hands of the learner;
- the curriculum is placed in the learner’s workplace context;
- the learner determines the order and pace of the learning process;
- the method of assessment is negotiated and clearly communicated to the learner;
- the learning must demonstrate evidence of and be aligned to the graduate attributes as stipulated in the qualification’s graduate profile.

Unlike in classroom-based, taught programmes, the locus of learning for WBL is in the workplace as the workplace provides the context and experiential opportunity for new learning. The academic tutor’s role in WBL is to safeguard the academic rigour of the learning outputs and to provide guidance and direction to the learner.

This new educational paradigm may meet with resistance from traditional, Humboldtian universities which may remain suspicious of WBL pedagogies. As stressed in some interviews such institutional resistance may be displayed mainly by discipline based academics, who guard their modes of knowledge creation and study and claiming that WBL may dilute the knowledge creating functions of academia.

Also the perception of business on the benefits HEIs may bring in terms of educational service changes. WBL can lead to a change in practice as expressed by top-level management staff at one faculty:

“Sometimes people come up with the most creative solutions to things that end up saving the company money. Not that they veer away from the learning outcomes; just that the way that

they go towards answering those learning outcomes gives new ways of looking at a piece of work, a new working practice.” [UK]

WBL is unambiguously considered to be advantageous for all involved. As stressed by UK interviewees, individuals working in the workplace can have the crucial combination of the intellectual and the vocational capabilities. They gain the intellectual capabilities to deal with decision making as well as the vocational, caring, people-focused attributes. It has clear educational outcomes, including mixing with other students from a similar or different workplace, a sense of achievement, and competence in the workplace. Employers benefit, as new ideas are brought by employees; there is further development and discussion in the workplace, which results in assessing the educational needs of the rest of the workforce.

It improves employees' skills, positioning them better in the market place, and provide direct benefit in their current role. Sometimes, due to government policy to professionalise an area of work and make it a graduate career, WBL gives those learners an edge within the market place so that they can then transfer those qualifications and use them for promotion and so on. From this point of view, WBL diversifies their market area.

WBL is about developing skills and professionalising staff, since engaging with practical project work can make a difference inside the organisation. WBL was viewed as advantageous not just for the participants, but also their colleagues, and even the teachers:

“It is not like teaching some 18 year old who just fell out of bed...It is about going out and helping people to do their job better. That has a knock on effect on their colleagues, and you get people you would never expect to go to university just getting stuck in with it. It is much more fulfilling really.” [UK]

4.1.2 Strategic priority

It is widely accepted that academic institutions lost their dominance over knowledge production as it now takes place in various non-university locations, such as research centres, industrial laboratories, consultancies and think-tanks. This leads to an important conclusion that higher education institutions need to undergo transformational change if they want to stay competitive on this market.

For HEIs strategic reorientation involves responsiveness to employers' needs and broader employer engagement. There is some evidence provided by the WBLQUAL project partners that such commitment has been embedded in institutional strategic missions and high-level strategies and at least partly reflected in their operations.

To communicate high importance of this strategic move it should be given strategic priority and hence provide the strategic guidelines which set the desired direction of the institutional development for the entire academic institution and its lower-level structures. One of the areas of strategic change of universities can and obviously should be university education promoting high quality, flexibility and cost-effective responsiveness to the changing needs of the economy and the labour market in general and

employers and individuals specifically. If this strategic move is going to actually occur employers and learners should be given a possibility to determine the content of educational programmes and work-based learning can prove to be a handful tool in realizing that. What is meaningful, such changes would be welcome by industry and therefore give the institution better recognition in the society enhancing its competitive position on the market, as evidence suggests.

4.1.3 Revenue

The strategic change is not only a matter of higher prestige for universities, but can also serve as a yet unexploited source of additional income which is of particular importance in turbulent times of economic crisis. Another argument for that is the diminishing role of state budget subsidies to educational institutions as the statistical data show. As put by one of the UK interviewees:

"I think, it is more an industrial problem, and yes, it is a nightmare because we need to move into the private sector with work-based learning in order to not be at the mercy of whatever the Government says every year." [UK]

4.2 Tactical level

Even if there is a "political will" to implement work-based learning into educational practices of the institution, there must be a balance between being responsive to employer needs and ensuring that appropriate support structures, administrative systems and staff capacities and capabilities are adequate to cope with that new challenge. All these issues need to be dealt with at the tactical level of HEI management.

4.2.1 Employer engagement

As put quite clearly by interviewees, it is necessary to ensure adequate and appropriate understanding by all parties of both the benefits of WBL and the type and extent of support required by the WBL learner to achieve their learning goals.

What sets a real challenge to WBL success is the need to recontextualise existing HE pedagogy into the workplace. As WBL mirrors the business context of the learning situation, it frequently crisscrosses the disciplinary boundaries and those of the work situation and therefore calls for broad involvement of business practitioners.

As evidence shows, practitioners should perform an essential role in designing and delivering WBL curricula. At the centre of academia-learner-business relationship should also remain assessment processes

negotiated collectively to be put in place so that varied interests of all parties in the learning process are met.

As put by one of the UK interviewees, engagement with the employers can be a two-way process. There are employers that contact the university, and the faculty staff talk them through the different kinds of WBL and collaborative arrangements that they have had with other employers, and use that as a way of trying to find out what the new contact would prefer, and that would be the norm. Sometimes they contact faculty already having a firm idea of what exactly they're looking for, but often they don't, and they just know they want something that meets their needs. It was felt that the process of assessing employer need is time consuming, and initial pump priming is needed to release staff for this activity. From the faculty's perspective it is an opportunity to work more closely with employers, and thus make the courses more appropriate for employers, hopefully leading to better employment prospects for the graduates. Such closer working relationships with the employer offer opportunities for other areas of activity, for example, research. A range of approaches are used for marketing purposes: tenders, response to a request from employer, and targeting employers. It was felt that employers and learners don't want too much flexibility, but want to have a clear structure and sense of where they are going.

A real challenge is to find out exactly what employers need. This involves a process of discussion which may require one or two people: someone who knows the field and someone to do the liaison work and who is able to discuss costings and what they might do in terms of provision. However, in some instances they may just have a specialist going in who wouldn't discuss the things they were uncomfortable with, e.g. costings, and what the programme might look like. It is also a time consuming process which can be difficult in terms of resources.

Passive attitude towards the need recognition may pose a barrier to successful WBL implementation as reported in Latvia:

"very often we do not know needs at all, because enterprises have not formulated their needs"
[Latvia]

Sometimes a discourse can be about changing employers' perceptions of what an accredited programme is:

"The accreditation is more about individuals' own personal gain, so how that accreditation relates to what they're learning is fairly loose, as long as we're comfortable that anybody who achieves that award has covered the learning territory that we want them to, we're happy, and as long as the employer feels that those individuals are learning territory that they need to for their work, they're happy. Because, I think, sometimes employers come to us and think that an accredited programme is a very rigid programme, we're going to dictate what they're going to be told, and a lot of it won't be much use to them. And actually that's not really the case." [UK]

4.2.2 Change management process

As introducing WBL represents a disruptive change in educational practices, it requires adequate change management processes. Academic institutions do not tend to have a flexible and open learning culture that will readily embrace innovation and changes triggered by WBL practices. By many interviewees who have even not yet experienced WBL it was intuitively perceived to have an effect in an increase in workload and disruptive organisational changes such as a radical departure from traditional roles performed by teachers and learners. Such a negative attitude may bring resistance to WBL introduction. Successful incorporation of WBL into education will surely require good leadership and communication by people acting as WBL facilitators. As envisaged by one of the Danish interviewees:

“there will be two problems with the WBL: one is to provide individualized instruction for the students and another is giving credit to the students for the learning activities” [Denmark]

There is, however, no one size fits all approach, and they tend to be flexible within the boundaries of what they can do in terms of an HE qualification. All the key stakeholders from the employer and award leaders need to engage in meaningful dialogue about what they think the award will look like (e.g. curriculum, delivery methods, learning location). This should result in a firm proposal to take to validation.

One of the interviewees pointed to attempts made to develop a core portfolio of flexible products which, in the majority of cases, allow them to map whatever the client wants against an existing award structure. Content of the modules is supposed to be fairly flexible and less formal than the negotiated framework because most of their work is around leadership and management which gives them more leeway on what is covered within this. They also try to understand where the employer is coming from before they meet by doing background research which facilitates the process of building confidence in their ability to deliver the programme:

“You shouldn’t go into these sorts of conversations having all the answers, but you should have the sensible questions. So, you know, I want to sit down with a potential client for the first time and be able to ask questions that make them confident that I know the context in which they operate, even though I’m searching for information about the detail, so that we can then take that and reflect that in a way a programme is put together.” [UK]

4.2.3 Resources and staffing capability

A true challenge for successful implementation of WBL is posed by resources that need to be in place at HEIs. In case of the Danish university:

“the University is not ready to respond to such inquiries, primarily because resources are not present” [Denmark]

The most important resource is institutional staff being able to act as facilitators and advisers, as opposed to working in a more traditional academic role as discipline-bounded academics. There was a doubt raised

whether academic staff be able to support the development of certain knowledge and skills in the workplace. A primary challenge for HEIs from this perspective is to find a balance between being responsive to employer needs and ensuring that staff is capable to cope with this challenge.

As raised by a Danish interviewee:

"it would be necessary to focus on educating interdisciplinary researchers. As it is now the University educates specialists and this is a barrier to WBL...There is neither money nor recognition in being an interdisciplinary scientist." [Denmark]

In Latvia the issue of staffing capability was not resolved clearly as the citation below shows:

"Purely theoretically, I do not see barriers, because at our faculty we have enough young people, which actually do not have a big load in the learning process and they have these potential reserves to respond if only they have such desire. But do they have such desire? I cannot answer." [Latvia]

"additional funds must flow and the person must receive additional salary" [Latvia]

Designing and delivering WBL may require different skills, i.e. the ability to 'flex', to change, and respond to needs. While for some staff the different cultures of employment and HE may not be 'miles apart' some staff may need support and opportunities for development to support working in this context:

"Going out to employers requires different skills; it requires staff to know how to open up conversations with people out there in industry, to be sensitive to what they might think of HE staff, so it does require perhaps a different skills set to what some have. I mean a very good example of this, and it might sound quite trite, but we did some staff development just for our own staff on personal branding about how you looked to go out into different audiences, and how you shook hands at the first meeting, and when, we were just doing this with our own staff, just as a different activity on away day, but it did strike me that actually that's very important for when we send staff out into different contexts that they might not be comfortable, they might not know that it's not appropriate to go out looking casual, for example. They might not know how to create a business image in themselves, how they present themselves at that meeting, what they take with them. I know it does sound very basic, but actually I think it's quite often overlooked." [UK]

It was recognised that people deeply grounded in academic processes and practices may find difficulty in appreciating the workplace environment and freeing up their attitudes about traditional roles of academics. However, they cannot be freely replaced for WBL purposes by people with a purely business background as these in turn often have difficulty in understanding and appreciating the rigours and requirements of academic study. The real challenge for WBL facilitators is to have a full appreciation and understanding of both business and academia worlds. As a consequence launching WBL calls for a delivery model for staff professional development.

4.2.4 WBL location within the academic institution

The nature of WBL is such that it needs to be able to work across all institutional disciplines. Therefore WBL location within the academic institution is not that obvious. It can be either located in its own centre attracting highly motivated facilitators and academic advisors or be establishing in various faculties serving the needs of this sub-structure.

The need for this dual approach was emphasised. It was felt that a true centralised approach would not necessarily work because each Faculty is very specific. A key factor is recognising which leads are going somewhere and it was felt a centralised sales approach would be less able to pick up on this because they would not have the specialised knowledge that the faculties have.

Employers need to be clearly advised about whom to approach at HEI to start the process of WBL negotiation. Otherwise they get confused.

“There was no identifiable person or office responsible for taking these kinds of links and potential business opportunities to. The first natural reaction was to go to who I felt would be keen to help, as opposed to knowing the first point of contact. So I think I perhaps started on the wrong foot from the very beginning. [...] it was difficult to identify exactly which people would need to be around the table for the initial meetings. I think throughout the process I perhaps exposed the partner to lots of things that were too premature that needed to be unpicked later on. This was a result of not having a process in place. [...] I was trying to mirror other procedures that were taking place with other partners that had a completely different set of requirements. So I was doing a lot of unnecessary work in this case and asking the partner to do a lot of unnecessary work. I was asking them to do things that would never be of any use to what we were doing.” [UK]

4.3 Operational level

4.3.1 Change process

Other institutional issues posing a challenge to WBL implementation can be noticed at the operational level and relate to a flexible curriculum structure, the multiplicity of boards for accreditation purposes and the added strains put on university administrations because of the requirements of the ‘non-standard’ programmes and adult learners usually located in workplaces. The perspective of one of the Danish interviewees is that:

“the biggest obstacle/challenge in relation to implementing WBL is that the existing teachers are not at all change-oriented” [Denmark]

WBL systems are seen from the administration point of view as being very complicated and demanding since many courses designed for mature students call for more support for the learner's autonomous learning rather than the traditional didactic model of teaching as knowledge transmission.

"the University structure where the teachers are specialists in a particular area means that there are barriers to WBL. Interestingly, Niels suggests that the first step towards WBL would be that the universities should change the teaching from being textbook-oriented into being case-oriented. He says that he believes that there will be a problem in relation to the role of teachers. WBL would require that the teachers should not only be able to teach from a textbook but rather to function as process consultants." [Denmark]

Furthermore, it can be argued that the individualised nature of WBL studies can make its delivery by advisers more expensive than the cohort approach adopted to deal with the massification of HE although, more recently, e-learning technologies have tended to mitigate this issue.

As clearly expressed by a Danish interviewee:

"it will be much more expensive and that this is a problem." [Denmark]

and

"individualized instruction targeting each student will require far more teaching resources and will be much more expensive than the current teaching of many students at once. But he mentions that it would be possible to create initiatives targeted at individual companies/students for the companies who are willing to pay for this consulting service." [Denmark]

The philosophical underpinning to contemporary WBL theory posits that a critical feature of learning agreements is that the learner has control over the curriculum and determines how the learning is to be undertaken, the context in which it is to be learned, the identification of appropriate learning outcomes and the manner and criteria which the learning will be measured and assessed.

In other words the learner determines how the learning outcomes required to meet the terminal qualification will be met, rather than the institution determining the prescription for meeting the learning outcomes.

Also awarding routines need to change dramatically as they do not fit into standard ones (e.g. division into semesters, etc).

"They have to be innovative and think about the administration because the processes that you have at the moment don't necessarily fit in with how the new students [work based learners] will need to be administered. For instance, [...] a student management system [...] used to track the on-campus students [...] doesn't fit in very well with the work based learning because of the delayed start dates and modules not fitting in with the normal academic calendar." [UK]

4.3.2 Learning outcome and curriculum development

The WBL framework is an adaptable framework which has at its core a set of learning outcomes which, if successfully achieved, demonstrate a range of competences/ capabilities/skills which are evidenced through various activities and recorded in some form, the milestones and timeframes to be met and method by which the outputs will be assessed.

The learning agreement needs to clearly link to the “academic” dimensions of the qualification. The learning agreement approval process must involve development of an assessment framework that not only has the required academic rigour that ensures consistency across a wide range of learner contexts, but is also flexible enough to accommodate the highly individualised nature of WBL.

Curriculum development can vary from being prescribed (determined by HEI) through being defined by external standards (eg. national occupational standards) up to being determined by workplace goals and objectives (negotiated). In the practice of the units represented by the interviewees, the most common are single modules or two or three modules grouped as the Flexible Learning Agreement Panel (FLAP). Also, full undergraduate and postgraduate awards leading to qualifications are offered. A key factor is having the most appropriate member of staff to deliver. One unit has a bank of part-time staff and external suppliers whom they can call on if required. Another unit has a number of staff members who have entered the university as practitioners or have a mix of academic/practitioner status which gives them more credibility.

As one of the interviewees reported, it is not too hard to match content and learning outcomes to employer requirements because it is about integrating aspects of the content, that are relevant to the workplace, into the workplace. WBL programmes have to be relevant to the job and this has to be made very clear to employers and learners. When an employee does not want to be involved in a certain aspect of learning, the HEI needs to help them understand how the learning relates to performance:

“As soon as they understand that...it isn't like being sent for punishment, they can start relating and reflecting and sharing their experiences with other people. Then they take ownership of the learning in a very different way to what I found when I was teaching the traditional undergraduates and postgraduate students.” [UK]

Cohorts are willing to develop and share, and the curriculum develops as learners and lecturers come together. The different perspectives offered by learners also allow lecturers to expand their skills and knowledge base.

4.3.3 Delivery

Delivery and teaching can be in a variety of ways. In one Faculty, most of the Masters award is undertaken through distance learning. There are module launch days run by the Award Leader and students meet their industrial mentor every fortnight for three hours, but otherwise Skype and telephone are the main types of communication with tutors. There is a wide variety of students which makes it very demanding; because of the negotiated nature of the award, each student requires a different type of support. In another Faculty,

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there are a number of foundation degree modules where there is a taught component and students are actually in a classroom situation on a regular basis, albeit not to the extent of a traditional learning course. For some students it is block release; for others it is day release every week. All classroom delivery is done through colleges or on the employer site. Around half the degree is a taught component; the rest is optional and made up of taught and work-based components or negotiated modules. The negotiated modules can be made up of aspects the employer has helped to design or of aspects that mirror what is taught at the University, depending on what employer and employee require. The delivery of the taught aspects, even when it is on the employer's site, is consistent with traditional teaching.

Another case is that 5-6 weeks are University-based, which is very much front-loaded with theory. Then students go out into practice for a four-day weekly placement, with a fifth day in university or for independent study. They have nine placements over three years. There is a lot of taught content in the classroom, but there are also mandatory skills sessions. In yet another Faculty, for the two MA modules, students come into the University for one week of intensive study at the beginning. There is pre-attendance reading and post-attendance activities either side of this week. They engage with the programme electronically through Blackboard. Foundation degrees are delivered off-campus through partner colleges. Awards are set up to be flexible and students can move through modules at their own speed rather than waiting for peers to complete.

Linked to curriculum development and delivery was the issue of resourcing, as sometimes even those lecturers who get time for it, do not want to work unsociable hours, particularly in awards that require evening or weekend teaching. In such cases, the award leaders have a difficult time building a team of people who are willing to take on teaching hours outside of the 9am-5pm Monday to Friday schedule:

"Well, I pulled it in through goodwill mostly. We get hours allocated for it, but essentially two lecturers immediately said, 'We aren't interested', and so I had to go to teachers that I knew would want to help out. It is quite hard because you don't know what people are doing on the weekends, and suddenly they would have to turn round and say, 'I have to go home because I have a meeting at 6pm'. That's not much fun." [UK]

Part of the problem is that the University and some of its staff have not yet recognised that there are different types of teaching and that sometimes these get interspersed. Whilst some people enjoy the flexibility of a WBL teaching framework, a need to be flexible has not filtered down to all staff and there are some that literally only do 9am-5pm hours. WBL is also about trying to balance WBL activities with traditional teaching activities:

"That is the other aspect of it; trying to balance it with the activities that are done traditionally here, so that you are supervising several work-based projects or distance projects as part of the negotiated framework, but then you also have certain teaching commitments here. They seem to be recognised in different ways so that when it comes down to how much work you are doing and quantifying that, I don't think it is viewed in the same way." [UK]

Another problem is cross-faculty collaboration for development and provision of WBL programmes. Although the interviewees representing different Faculties in the UK said that there is scope for cross-

faculty WBL programmes, but it was viewed as difficult. Because of a University requirement to allocate hours, it does not fit in with the costing structure of the award and there are ownership issues, which faculty you put the students into, which module codes you use with them, who would provide the resources, and who would be the administrator for it. It may be possible to rotate the lead, depending on where the main focus is. However, there are cultural and financial barriers to cross-faculty collaboration:

"There is a cultural problem that needs to be overcome. Whilst we are separate faculties and schools, we are still part of the same University...Those responsible for workload need to accept that a certain amount of work is done out of hours and attribute hours and income accordingly. [UK]

The problem of cross-faculty collaboration was also highlighted in case of Latvia:

"I would say that it is not an easy thing. And it is not an easy thing mainly because of really necessary financing, resources, because in circumstances of limited resources each tries to keep his/her resources and does not share them with others. And that, in my opinion, is the main barrier, because if we would have some reasonable financing per student, then I think this border will disappear quite quickly and the faculties will find a common language more quickly." [Latvia]

One of the biggest challenges of successful WBL delivery is varying it when block teaching:

"With six hours' worth of teaching in one day with the same people, you've got to vary it. Every 45 minutes or so, you have to say, I've talked long enough, you do this exercise, or right you've done that exercise, now I want you to do this instead, let's work in groups, let's work singly. And that can be quite challenging because of course within that one day block, the big issue with work based learners is you've got limited contact time with them, and with the best will in the world their independent learning is always compromised by the fact that they've got a life...and a job, yeah. So you're trying to cover quite a bit of territory, not necessarily in a huge amount of depth, to give them starting points and spark off ideas for them to actually pull some of that through into some of their independent learning, and then to feed that through into their assignment work and so on. Inevitably some things aren't going to be particularly exciting for individuals; others are going to be, 'I really want to find out more about this', and hoping that you'll spark something in everyone." [UK]

4.3.4 Assessment

Assessment plays a critical role in improving the quality of student learning through course design. Such a learning outcomes focused approach facilitates and enhances quality assurance across a range of set ups within the same profession which ensures the regulatory objectives of a profession can be met. It is of utmost importance that external quality assurance procedures are appropriate for learning pathways that accommodate individual options and choices relating to WBL.

The importance of diversifying assessment in WBL beyond the traditional modes is well recognised, with a variety of assessment formats proposed, including for instance learning logs, portfolios, projects, structured reports from supervisors or mentors, advanced problem-solving exercises, presentations and peer assessment.

Reflective practice was viewed as part of the assessment, based on a standard academic assignment, but showing how this is embedded within the student's workplace. Increasingly the emphasis is on making recommendations for improvements at work and capturing potential savings or financial gain. Postgraduate assessments are identical to traditional assessments; it is the delivery method that is different. Assessments are always focused on workplace issues:

"I would not dream of getting a work based learning student and saying, 'right go and write me a 4,000 word essay on' some abstract, random thing that has got nothing to do with their employment. It has to be about things they do in their everyday practice, getting them to reflect on that. There is a lot of reflective thinking which has been a bit of a barrier really. If they are doing something incorrectly and they don't know they are doing it until they actually stop and think, 'What is going on with this process? How can I approach it differently?', then they can find a better solution to it. They will then develop as professionals, really. Yes it has been about changing what we understand assessment to be." [UK]

An effective Assessment of Prior Learning process is the foundation of effective WBL and is an essential ingredient. APEL provides a facility for allowing accumulated experience in work and life to be recognised within higher education and thus provides a significant entry point into higher education. WBL philosophy and practice acknowledges that the potential candidate brings to the process considerable pre-existing experience, knowledge and skills from the workplace. However, sometimes using APEL is attempted to be avoided because it would not work for many of the courses. As pointed out by some of the interviewees, much of prior learning would not achieve the required academic standards and level of assessment. There are also time constraints and possible issues from the employers' perspective:

"We find that by the time they have completed the APEL process and whatever form it may mean filling in and developing the evidence for it, it is easier for them to go through the learning and do the accreditation anyway...Also, you get the beef of an employer who says, 'Well, why am I paying for this person to go on a course if all you are going to do is to sign off a form to say, Well, they have already done that?'" [UK]

In Latvia validation of qualifications acquired through past experience seems to be possible for the university staff interviewee, however providing a certificate of that would not be enough:

he/she should prove that he/she has work experience and definitely it will be necessary to have some discussion with the commission. Simply bringing a paper, nothing will happen. He/she should have discussion. [Latvia]

4.3.5 Finance and costing

A WBL costing model needs to be used if responsiveness is going to happen in a timely manner. A number of on-going costs were judged as making WBL provision actually or potentially more expensive. These included opportunity costs of set-up; management of employer relations; shorter course lifecycles; smaller cohort groups; reduction in economies of scale (i.e. lowered cost per unit through increased usage levels was difficult to achieve); and travel costs. More economic aspects of WBL provision include less call upon estates and facilities; reduced use of staff time; reduced administration for fee charging, programme registration and servicing; and servicing by employer staff, especially where programmes are mainly or wholly work-based. Such costs are likely to be transferred to the employer (the employer contribution was around 20%). Overall, the universities recommended that in providing WBL there should be due diligence in selecting employers; price should be distinguished from cost; frequently overlooked items (e.g. relationship management, licenses, travel contingencies) should be costed in; and a formula should be used to balance validation costs and the need for accelerated validation against the programme's lifecycle.

The operational staff in the UK university stated that the cost of WBL programmes is based on how many students are going to be in the cohort and the length of the course/programme. However, each client is different and cost depends on what they can afford and what the market can sustain: 'We need to know what kind of price will fly with the client'. Because of this a standard university costing model would not be useful:

"A standardised model across the entire university would be really problematic particularly if you are looking at the creative and cultural sector where it is such a varied arena." [UK]

The Dean of FH maintained that a face-to-face programme is seen as financially viable if there is a cohort of 20, but it depends on how bespoke a programme is wanted by an employer and how much work would need to be done by the faculty. Sometimes, when an employer wants a bespoke programme, it is better to give them a price for the module rather than according to student numbers. For some full time awards commissioned by the NHS, the faculty is told what fees can be charged, based on a national price.

WBL programmes are costed on an EPF (External Project Funding) form depending on the resources that are put in. It was indicated that a business agreement is made between the university and the employer to charge a particular amount for the provision for the number of students that the employer says they are going to provide. The university bills the employer, not the individual students. This works better, and usually the costs are lower per student.

4.3.6 Communication/language

One major issue that often interferes with the interaction between universities and employers is that of language. Whilst universities speak about education and learning, employers see the gaining of workforce skills in terms of training and development. To engage employers effectively in the assessment process, it is essential to ensure clear communication related to responsibilities and entitlements in the WBL

partnership. Although this requires making all roles explicit from the outset, given the changing contexts of WBL regular negotiation and updating are particularly.

Research for this project emphasised the necessity of a shared, accessible unambiguous language in communication between all stakeholders for effective assessment for WBL. We found the lack of a shared language to be a potential barrier to effective communication with employers. The language of assessment was perceived as arcane and impenetrable to employers (e.g. learning outcomes, credit transfer, modular frameworks).

This also involves a very practical issue of approaching the WBL learner/student. As reported in the UK case, tracking the students may pose a real problem if there is a need from administration staff to do that.

“The main problem that we’ve had so far is the tracking of the students because they don’t sit within the normal academic calendar like our on campus students. They may be starting modules throughout the semester. It’s a matter of coming up with ways of getting around that. It’s sometimes difficult to get in touch with the students because they’re not on campus and they’ve got jobs, so sometimes it can be difficult to get in touch with them if I need to do something on the system.” [UK]

5. KEY MESSAGES FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The key considerations about improving engagement of academia into work-based learning are made across the following levels of HEI management:

- strategic
- tactical
- operational

They do not go beyond the tripartite relationship academia – employers – learners and as these do not take account, for instance, of policy regulations remaining beyond control of WBL stakeholders in this relationship.

5.1 Strategic level

There are a number of issues of a strategic nature which determine a successful implementation of WBL inside the higher education institution. These include strategic commitment towards WBL, customer (employer and learner) focus, building sustainable partnerships with employers and effective APEL in place.

5.1.1 Strategic institutional commitment towards WBL

Work-based learning needs to be clearly identified as the institution's strategic priority for development. "Embeddedness" in the institution's strategic plan will allow it to communicate externally to the public and internally down to lower institution's structures, i.e. faculties, schools, departments guiding its customization at lower levels of HEI management structure.

Such institutional commitment articulated in the HEI's strategic documents will make a visible link with other institution's strategies. As a strategic priority it will be reflected in the institution's action plans, performance measures, reviews and improvement schemes.

5.1.2 Customer focus

Unlike what is often typical for traditional HEI thinking being centred around educational programmes developed with no relevance to actual employers and learners needs, HEIs wishing to engage in WBL need to adopt a business (commercial) approach to the possibly broadest extent. Customer focused approach

shall include recognizing needs of the demand side of the educational market upon which adequate educational offer maximizing employers and learners satisfaction can be drawn and realistic forecasts of take-up can be based. Therefore WBL programmes should align with key employer motivators and strategic goals such as workforce skills development and skills utilization and employer appraisal systems, on one side, and with employee personal needs guided by their career progression paths on the other side.

Customer orientation with clearly identified channels of mutual communication (including employers and learners feedback) and developed appropriate working mechanisms will allow the building of sustainable relationships with employers.

5.1.3 Dialogue with employers

As WBL is based on a tripartite agreement between the HE institution, the learner and the employer, the motivation of all its parties need to be recognized in order to create a 'win-win' situation for all. Employer engagement in all stages of WBL process including programme design, delivery and assessment is crucial to its success. Specifically it will require ensuring adequate and appropriate understanding of WBL learners' learning goals as a part of their career progression. This means that employers need to be informed about the academic requirements, practices and language as it relates to WBL. In turn the academic advisor needs to be familiar with the language, practices and constraints of the workplace. In both cases these considerations must be incorporated into the engagement process.

5.1.4 Effective APEL in place

Assessment of prior (especially experiential) learning can be seen as an essential foundation for successful WBL implementation. The gap between what may be accredited towards a degree and the learning required to bridge that gap has to be clearly identified.

In order to ensure its effectiveness the APEL process and related procedures need to be embedded in the HEI assessment policy and processes. Needless to say, the process should be recognised and understood by all staff and learners. HEI should provide the learners with the necessary skills of reflection and critical thinking of how to align a learner's prior learning with relevant theories and concepts required by the degree award (with some help of the contact person at the HEI) as well as with handful tools to collate evidence for APEL (e.g. an e-portfolio).

5.2 Tactical level

Tactical-level issues that determine a WBL success from the HEI perspective describe possible structures, processes and procedures that allow for optimization of HEI resources used for WBL development. In

particular these include monitoring of actions and activities carried out, staffing issues, use of physical resources and e-learning issues.

5.2.1 Optimisation-driven monitoring

In order to ensure effective and efficient WBL delivery, WBL activities need to be monitored and evaluated in terms of impact, costs and benefits. This should enable economic (financial) and organizational (with respect to staffing, structures, processes and procedures) validation of the process and taking correction actions if necessary.

5.2.2 Curriculum design

Curriculum design should be based on generic frameworks that will allow for its contextualising to the variety of employers and prompt flexible adjusting it to the employer and learner needs. This should ensure that curriculum design is cost-effective, fit-for-purpose and be negotiated promptly.

Generic frameworks could be based on pre-validated core learning modules to develop work-related generic skills, pre-validated modules emphasising experiential learning and modules for developing job-related or work-specific skills. As earlier mentioned, learning agreements are developed on an individually negotiated (with employer and learner) basis.

Flexibility and rapid development of curriculum design will require a flexible accreditation framework for design of WBL courses.

5.2.3 Human resources/ staffing

Staffing issue seems to be critical for the WBL success. Firstly, it will include right processes and procedures for staffing WBL programmes. WBL delivery will require from WBL staff an appropriate mix of skills, knowledge and business experience to which the recruitment, selection and workload allocation processes should give consideration. A real problem can be posed by limited predictability of the demand for WBL staff as compared to the mainstream education delivery where it normally fits to an annually/half-annually repeatable cycle. Secondly, it requires staff are assessed and trained in the areas where their skills are missing or need to be updated so that in WBL delivery highest quality teaching and learner support can be assured. In addition, WBL staff is confronted with a variety of issues which call for professional development and interdisciplinary approach. Thirdly, appropriate reward mechanisms are in place to benefit adequately staff involvement in WBL practices.

In case of missing staff capacities in house, proper consideration should be given to recruiting specialist educators who have had mentoring or coaching experience and /or roles within workplaces in addition to

wide educational experience. The ability to listen carefully and understand the complexity of the learner's contexts is here critical. The skills of supervision, mentoring and coaching are crucial skills for WBL academic advisors and facilitators in supporting and guiding the learner to frame their experience and knowledge in such a way as to both meet the academic standards and empower the learner to fully engage with new learning.

5.2.4 Organizational and physical resources

HEIs need to check what the organizational issues should be provided to support learning through this mode of higher education delivery.

Of utmost importance for WBL right design, delivery and assessment seem to be organisational structures and mechanisms that resource, support and co-ordinate the WBL strategy and activities across faculties, schools and departments. Taking into account the interdisciplinary nature of WBL establishing a central unit to coordinate WBL activities throughout the institution seems to be the most appropriate for development and implementation of effective practice in WBL design, delivery and assessment. This will prevent from avoidance of duplication of effort in WBL services and ensure consistency of approach in relation to the standard of WBL services, modes of their provision and assessment (unanimous business model) and costing policy.

5.2.5 ICT issues

Since e-learning tools contribute to cost-effective and efficient learning, communication, knowledge-sharing and assessment they need to be integrated into the curriculum design, delivery and assessment process.

Appropriate ICT tools should support registration, enrolment and payment. They should also support budgeting and costing procedures as well as costs-benefits analyses.

ICT tools should also serve as a platform for external (with all stakeholders) and internal marketing and communication (virtual learning environment enabling knowledge sharing practices)

5.3 Operational level

At the operational level actions must be taken to ensure 'doing the right things'. In particular, it comprises right communication between stakeholders, use of adequate processes and procedures, quality assurance, impact and cost-benefit measurement and issues of work-based learning outcomes.

5.3.1 Right communication between stakeholders

Since worlds of academia and industry differ very much, there often arises a problem of clear communication. WBL design calls for true engagement of employers in the process, so that at the end of the day there is no place for misunderstanding of the learning agreement made between the three parties involved. This requires careful 'translation' of languages (jargons) used by each party and this can be only made in close interaction at early phases of WBL programme design.

5.3.2 Responsiveness to employer

With WBL implementation HEIs enter the new domain which requires their re-orientation towards more business-oriented way of thinking and acting. To a previously unreported extent they need to closely interact with employers in a 'partnership dialogue' on programme design, delivery and assessment. HEIs need to have a suitable method of employer/employee needs analysis developed so that they are able to address the specific needs of the learner and do it in a timely manner which will build their reputation as a reliable partner. In order to achieve that they need to establish a WBL contact point within the institution which will be dedicated to run the 'dialogue' with current and potential employers opting for this method of professional development of their employees.

5.3.3 Use of adequate processes and procedures

Right processes and procedures for costing, recruiting staff and going through the negotiation process first and then for efficient delivery and assessing and accrediting learning need to be incorporated in the HEI's WBL practices to enable the university to respond to employer's expectations.

The development of individualised awards should be made possibly fast-tracked for approval while maintaining the essential academic rigour of validation and accreditation processes.

5.3.4 Quality assurance

HEI needs to develop and incorporate mechanisms to profile tutors and select those who have the relevant competencies at the appropriate level and are able to meet specific WBL methods and contexts and to ensure comparability of standards.

As earlier mentioned, HEIs need to ensure that employers fully understand the language and implications of academic quality and standards. This is extremely important from the employers' satisfaction point of view. Employers need to be included in programme design and validation processes.

There must be also some contingency situations carefully predicted well in advance (e.g. dissatisfaction from the mentoring services received, employer going bankrupt etc.) so that appropriate counteraction can be undertaken.

Another issue for consideration is appropriate procedures to feedback quality issues to employers involved in WBL courses in right and timely manner. Assessments incorporate appropriate feedback and allow learner and employer dialogue on the feedback.

Last but not least, assessments are relevant to learning outcomes (both competence and capability-based). Processes incorporated need to align with professional standards, qualifications frameworks and employers own standards.

5.3.5 Impact and cost-benefit measurement

Continuous improvement calls for measurement of the impact on learners and employers and carrying out cost-benefit analyses of programmes in the form of programme evaluation and regular reviews made with staff involved, employers and learners. WBL programme improvement needs to be embedded in the institution's normal assessment procedures.

5.3.6 Work-based learning outcomes

Curriculum design, delivery and assessment guidelines negotiated with the employer need to clearly articulate learning outcomes (linked to professional standards, sectoral skills or competencies acquired), activities through which they are achieved and how they relate to the context of work or the workplace. This should enable cross-curriculum mobility along different modules, different types of study (e.g. enabling shift from vocationally oriented study to study for mixed vocational/academic work-based degrees) and cross-industry mobility (if employees change the workplace, but would like to continue WBL education) 'bridging' programmes within and beyond one higher education institution.

Again the language through which all three parties of the WBL triangle communicate should not be misleading.

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8. ANNEXES

8.1 Template for Country Specific Report

1. Access to the higher education system
 - a. public vs. private higher education institutions
 - b. fees (are their discriminatory?)
 - c. scholarships
 - d. territorial distribution of higher education institutions
 - e. statistical data about the number of students per 1,000 inhabitants, percentage of people who completed tertiary education etc.

2. Quality of the higher education system
 - a. perceived quality of the educational service by society
 - b. quality assurance
 - c. validation of learning competences
 - d. matching the learning offer to the labour market requirements
 - e. number of students per one academic teacher (any differences across disciplines?)
 - f. wages for academic staff (any brain drain?)
 - g. graduates on the labour market
 - h. wage premium for the completion of tertiary education for graduates

3. Sources of financing for higher education institutions
 - a. budget expenditures for the higher education system (algorithm of money distribution)
 - b. other sources of income for higher education institutions and their relative importance to overall income

4. The relative importance of the following issues to the objectives realized by the higher education system:
 - a. research
 - b. knowledge creation and transmission
 - c. building competences
 - d. shaping appropriate civic attitudes

5. Cooperation of universities with industry
 - a. any closer alignment with industry over the recent years (its main drivers)
 - b. forms the cooperation takes
 - c. transfer of knowledge, innovation and expertise from academia to industry and vice versa

6. Have there been any important changes in the pattern of the higher education system over the recent years? If yes, what?

8.2 Template for the interview with senior university managers

- * What is the university perception of closer alignment with industry? Is it reflected in any strategic documents produced by your university? What is the rationale for this closer alignment given? Generation of more revenue? A better image of your university? With employers? With (potential) learners?
- * Is closer alignment with industry reflected somehow in better assessment of your university performance (and related increased funds from the government)? How meaningful in the assessment of your university performance are growth indicators (eg. growing number of students)? Financial indicators (eg. turnover, revenue etc.)? Research activities undertaken for the benefit of industry?
- * Is there any pressure from the university stakeholders (ministry, local authorities, local companies) to align closer with industry?
- * How do you see the importance of Work Based Learning (WBL) to your university in this context? Given 'blue sky thinking', where would you like to see WBL at your University in five years time? Are these aspirations reflected in the university's strategic plans?
- * Industry expects rapid and effective delivery of learning content. Do you think that WBL practice can respond effectively to this challenge? Does it pave the way towards a new learning model which suits best the needs of industry and learners?
- * WBL requires a move away from lectures and tutorials, to supervisions within the place of employment. Academics have referred to this as requiring a change of culture in universities. Do you agree? What do you think this means/ would mean to your university?
- * Do you think that the University structure around faculties, programme areas, timetables etc. can be a barrier to WBL? Are there any barriers within your university related to resource base? Skill base? Flexibility? How can this be facilitated?
- * Some of University policies and procedures are confusing to employers. For example APEL and validation etc. In what way do you think these need to become more flexible?

8.3 Template for the interview with faculty managers/ administration

- * To what extent are current learning programmes at your faculty demand-led and are tailored specifically to the work-related needs of the employers and the individuals?
- * How important to the transformation of the university towards (wider) WBL involvement are the challenges associated with the current state of economy development where employers seek not only branch-specific knowledge, but also soft skills such as teamwork and communication skills?
- * Do you think that the University structure around faculties, programme areas, timetables etc. can be a barrier to WBL? Are there any barriers within your university related to resource base (eg. ICT infrastructure)? Skill base? Flexibility? How can this be facilitated?
- * As WBL would also involve individuals with no traditional qualifications, but with substantial work experience, skills and knowledge, how do you see the issue of facilitating entry to degree-level studies for these persons from the practical point of view? Do you see any practical possibilities to translate work-based experience into direct academic credit?
- * From the practical point of view how do you see the possibility of practical application of WBL in view of validation requirements imposed by ministry and related workload minima/ limits designated for lectures, discussion classes, laboratories etc.? How important is to have the curriculum design and content of WBL courses to be consistent with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications?
- * The expectations of employers from WBL contents include teaching multifaceted issues which would require cross-faculty cooperation? How would you go with that? What are the barriers to such cross-faculty cooperation? How could they be facilitated?
- * Is faculty prepared to respond quickly to any inquiry from employers to develop and deliver a customized learning offer to its employees? In terms of contents? In terms of costing?
- * To what extent can the contents of a WBL course be more student-oriented instead of teacher/tutor oriented and control remain more with employers rather than university?
- * How do you see WBL possible delivery? Would modularisation which gives scope to accredit broader experience be of any help? Should the modules be delivered 'off-the-

shelf' (with no contextualisation), or be a combination of 'off the shelf', customised variants of existing modules or new modules designed to the clients specification?

- * What assessment criteria could be used to achieve equivalence and comparability between university-based learning and work-based learning?

8.4 Template for the interview with academics

- * To what extent are current learning programmes at your faculty demand-led and are tailored specifically to the work-related needs of the employers and the individuals?
- * How important to the transformation of the university towards (wider) WBL involvement are the challenges associated with the current state of economy development where employers seek not only branch-specific knowledge, but also soft skills such as teamwork and communication skills?
- * Do you think that the University structure around faculties, programme areas, timetables etc. can be a barrier to WBL? Are there any barriers within your university related to resource base (eg. ICT infrastructure)? Skill base? Flexibility? How can this be facilitated?
- * Do you think that your faculty is prepared to respond quickly to any inquiry from employers to develop and deliver a customized learning offer to its employees in terms of contents?
- * To what extent is the workplace in/adequate as a learning environment? Do you agree with the statement that effective learning can take place at the workplace and not only in the formal academic setting?
- * To what extent can the contents of a WBL course be more student-oriented instead of teacher/tutor oriented and control remain more with employers rather than university?
- * How do you see the role of tutor in WBL learning? Would it differ from the one in traditional teaching model?
- * How do you see WBL possible delivery? Would modularisation which gives scope to accredit broader experience be of any help? Should the modules be delivered 'off-the-shelf' (with no contextualisation), or be a combination of 'off the shelf', customised variants of existing modules or new modules designed to the clients specification?
- * What assessment criteria could be used to achieve equivalence and comparability between university-based learning and work-based learning?