



Development of a flexible, innovative and practical framework for Work-based Learning in higher education of Armenia and Russia

Key Action 2:

Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices
Capacity Building in the field of higher education

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WBL-TECHNOLOGIES AND MARKET CHALLENGES

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INTRODUCTION

Frequently work-based learning and work ***are treated separately*** from each other, as if they were autonomous, unrelated activities. It's quite widespread that the learning process takes place outside the place where people work. Nevertheless, while working, many people continue to learn on their own and often contribute to the development of production by increasing labor productivity and the quality of products or services, introducing innovations. However, in most cases, informal, spontaneous learning has occurred that is ***difficult to formally recognize.***

The growing popularity of non-formal education around the world has received many foreign investors advocating the ***integration of university education and the improvement of knowledge in the workplace.*** There are more and more people who are convinced that the most valuable have the necessary skills and experience that they receive not in a training event, but especially in that workplace.





MARKET REQUEST

Since employers are interested in developing employees, companies express their willingness to participate in the life of the university when the training content is in line with their business needs. Due to the emergence of new priorities, higher education and the employer require **effective** and **flexible** learning systems aimed at achieving a synergy effect in integrating the goals of the employer, employee, university and other stakeholders.

The universities of the future will increasingly have to offer:

- **initiatives** that can meet this demand for short, focused modules
- **schemes** using a flexible system for the provision of educational services
- **creative** and sometimes **individual approach** to scheduling



MARKET REQUEST

And, as a consequence, there are **development** of non-traditional, part-time, alternative learning paths in higher education and **emergence** of modules that are designed specifically for the needs of production. There is also **a need to create** courses in forms and sizes that are suitable for professional development of teachers and tutors, so that they keep abreast of all the innovations and inventions of the industry.



MARKET REQUEST

Recently, many program documents have been written all over the world about "**custom-made**" training. Employers would like to see their contribution to education, to its individual disciplines, designed by educational providers. The creation of new courses is **very costly** in terms of the resources and man-hours spent by the university staff and the labor intensity of the work performed. The Work Foundation suggests that one of the reasons for the increase in demand for universal skills is ***the disruption of the boundaries of industrial sectors*** associated with the enormous growth of the intellectual capital of the knowledge economy. Formats of training, combined with work, contribute to ***the increase in the intellectual capital*** of companies, ***the development of key competencies*** of specialists, and ***increase their competitiveness***.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WBL TECHNOLOGY

- PARTNERSHIP. There should be real cooperation between the university and the enterprise, the purpose of which is ***to achieve the required quality of education.*** By combining the various resources of partners, the necessary educational environment is created. Work-based learning requires special conditions. Without the partnership of all stakeholders, organizing such a learning process and setting it in the right direction is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Partnership in WBL programs is based on formal agreements between the university and the enterprise in various forms.
- WORK AND LEARNING ARE CARRIED OUT TOGETHER. The trainees are either employees of the enterprise, or are involved from outside in its work specifically for training in a real production environment. Students have the opportunity to independently choose educational programs, but it's limited by the priorities and objectives of the enterprise, so ***the curriculum and plan must be approved by both*** – the university and the enterprise. The agreement reached on the plan for the implementation of training and its final results should be provided with resources and support from all subjects of the educational process.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WBL TECHNOLOGY

■ THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENT AND THE ORGANIZATION WHERE HE WORKS.

The creation of the curriculum should be *based on the development needs of the workplace and the student himself*. The student's production activity is transformed into a professional educational program, in which the requirements for the quality of learning outcomes coincide with the requirements for the quality of the production process. This approach is especially attractive for working people who want to continue their professional education, but don't "fit well" into the disciplinary approach with its rigidly defined boundaries and traditions. Education in the WBL system should always contribute to solving problems aimed at the development of a particular enterprise.

■ PERSONAL LEARNING TRAJECTORIES AND RECOGNITION OF PREVIOUS LEARNING.

Learning begins at some starting point of the planned individual educational trajectory and necessarily takes into account the previous educational experience of the student, as well as his learning prospects and degree of motivation. WBL programs often have more stringent procedures for recognizing and recognizing prior learning than courses that use prior experiential learning assessments. Initial competencies are identified in accordance with *what the student can do now*, and *not with what he demonstrated in the past* when he acquired these skills and abilities. Focusing on core competencies is essential for creating realistic curricula and delivering them effectively. This approach allows for a flexible organization of the educational process.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WBL TECHNOLOGY

- EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS. Projects in the workplace are *a central component* of the programs. They are focused on meeting the needs of the student worker and the enterprise, improving existing and planned production processes. Routine training is completely excluded from WBL programs. The student independently develops a project and receives advice and support both from colleagues at the enterprise where he works and from the university where he is currently studying. Anything that contributes to the desired learning outcomes and helps students meet the necessary university requirements can be an integral part of the WBL program.
- EVALUATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES. The university evaluates the applicant's competencies identified during the negotiations and conclusion of a training contract. A set of requirements is formed on the basis of various standards and is compiled individually for each student. The learning outcome must be approved by the university in order for the student to be awarded a formal qualification. In the event that a student under the WBL program is not guaranteed continuity of work at the enterprise, the university is obliged to facilitate the search for additional opportunities for further employment of the student. Unlike traditional courses, the work programs of the WBL disciplines *don't have a unified content, any single content and material that is mandatory for all students to study*. As a rule, there is a framework that binds the elements of an individual educational program into a single whole.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WBL TECHNOLOGY

- CREDITS. Under the WBL model, the use of credits to account for prior learning has shifted from accounting for a "specific" credit institutionally belonging to some curriculum to what is described as "**comprehensive credit**". Such a comprehensive credit relates to learning outcomes that are a consistent part of the entire study program as described in the educational contract. This solution aligns well with the idea of recording the applicant's prior learning and claims to be considered a self-developing process that supports self-directed learning skills.
- QUALITY ASSURANCE. The flexible programs of study and research that WBL students are involved in have built-in quality assurance mechanisms that ensure that educational outcomes are achieved with students diligence, however, like other university programs do; all university programs are subject **to continuous quality improvement**.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF WBL TECHNOLOGY

- CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENTERPRISE. The contribution of WBL programs to the development of the enterprise usually occurs in ***three ways***. The most immediate of these is the ***value of the project itself***, which is developed in the workplace, and the emergence of new skills and changes that the implementation of the project brings as a result.. Secondly, ***the development of students' knowledge and skills can also have an impact on the enterprise*** due to their increased professionalism and motivation, especially if it's used by the enterprise to extract property benefits through staff development and changing their roles in the enterprise. Finally, ***WBL programs can have a broader impact*** through influencing organizational or technological change, identifying new business directions, gaining external recognition, and increasing the enterprise goodwill.



CURRENT REQUIREMENTS OF EMPLOYERS FOR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

List: employee awareness of business-client relationships, self-management, literacy and communication skills, employment skills, presentation skills, ability to think strategically and analytically, ability to solve production problems independently and creatively, common sense, awareness of responsibility for one's actions, ability to learn independently , erudition, added value for the company, proactive training, adaptability, susceptibility to new information, general and universal life skills



CURRENT REQUIREMENTS

Research shows that **35%** of employers are dissatisfied with "employee awareness of the business-client relationship"; **20%** – with self-management skills; only **30%** are satisfied with literacy and communication skills. In the above-cited CBI studies, most employers (**82%**) believe that universities should focus on developing employability skills for their students instead of increasing the number of graduates, which negatively affects the quality of their training. **70%** of employers suggest considering the employability of graduates as the highest priority and the main result of vocational education.

From the graduate and student at the university, they are expected to be able to make ***presentations, think strategically and analytically, and solve production problems independently and creatively.*** A graduate should not only be sane, aware of responsibility for his actions, but also ***capable of independent learning*** due to a high degree of awareness in the field of his professional activity. It was especially emphasized that when hiring a graduate, the employer would like to see in him a ***noticeable added value for the company,*** moreover, in addition to erudition in his subject area and specialization.

CURRENT REQUIREMENTS

In the conditions of a dynamically changing employment market, in the near future, labor personnel will have to have ***preemptive training, be adaptive*** and ***multifaceted both professionally and personally***. It is unlikely that the worker of the XXI century. during the working life will occupy the same position or will perform one type of work. Labor resources of the XXI century. will last longer than previous generations and in constantly changing circumstances. A new attitude to one's work career suggests that a person must ***be receptive to new knowledge, have a clear mind***, as well as ***general and transferable life skills***, which are enhanced by the ability to constantly reflect.



SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WBL STUDENTS

The classic WBL student is an adult working person who can only visit the campus occasionally. He doesn't usually have a higher education, but he needs it to qualify, remain competitive or get a promotion. Students of the program decide to study on their own, but sometimes they are sent to the university by the employer to improve their skills. Many students, starting training, don't interrupt work.

Many students come to the university from enterprises where the complexity, originality, and innovativeness of production processes are in many respects ahead of the ***practice-oriented component*** of the learning process at the university. University education accepts this fact, as well as the fact that often employees of enterprises are much more competent than university teachers in these aspects. The situation associated with a significant lag in the practice-oriented component of the educational process forces universities ***to develop and implement new theories and methods in organizing pedagogical interaction in WBL programs.***



SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WBL STUDENTS

An important factor in the attractiveness of WBL programs for working students is the fact that their places of work and residence are located in **various parts of the world**. When entering a university, it's important for them to know that they will be able to study remotely. Therefore, an important task of universities is to provide the learning process with appropriate software and information support. Both students and teachers must have access to the Internet, have digital competence to work effectively in the information and communication environment.





THE ROLE OF TUTORS AND TEACHERS

To support the ongoing intellectual evolution, universities need to **carefully select** tutors and teachers who are able to improve the educational process by bringing their personal rich professional and everyday experience into the curriculum. Good tutors for students become "*facilitators, experts, advisors and academic consultants*". Universities should also **invite experts to give lectures and master classes**, seek opportunities for students to acquire knowledge and work experience in partner companies or through participation in research projects.



THE ROLE OF TUTORS AND TEACHERS

The actions of the tutor in this training format include:

- helping students to take the initiative in identifying their needs and intentions, as well as in managing their own learning process;
- advising during the entire educational process;
- assistance in developing the skill of reflection;
- assistance in identifying the ethical aspects of learning;
- support in efficient use of workplace resources;
- development of academic skills and assistance to students in their use in the workplace;
- providing expert opinion;
- support for the emotional background of learning - inspiring and encouraging students.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the spread of work-based learning means the transition of vocational education to another level, where the leading experience is a transdisciplinary approach to learning. A purely disciplinary approach to obtaining knowledge in modern higher education is becoming obsolete and ceases to "work" as a driver that can attract and interest a student. Today, employers expect a prompt response from universities to their requests for qualified personnel. Universities must constantly improve their services, offers and knowledge transfer mechanisms, improve educational programs, and develop scientific research. Particular attention should be paid to the working environment in which learning takes place, which includes the use of innovative pedagogical methods and the provision of workplaces with effective learning tools. Both universities and employers should be interested not only in the professional development of student workers, but also in their personal growth. Attention now needs to be given to developing "meta-skills" and abilities that enable students to become "self-directed" practitioners and "self-directed" learners. The idea of part-time students as employees of enterprises whose development is supported by universities and mainly depends on the goals of the employer is also yesterday. Many part-time students, primarily those in graduate and postgraduate studies, are already in positions that require independent, non-programmable decisions regarding the management of production processes. In this regard, the format, means and quality of training of labor resources should be considered critically not only in the context of the employer's response to its needs for qualified personnel, but also from the point of view of long-term prospects for the development of the labor market and society, extending beyond the demands of any individual employer.



CONCLUSION

Thus, the conceptual foundations of modern vocational education should be formed considering the dynamics of the development of intellectual capital and the desire of organizations, professional communities and industries to develop and remain competitive in the knowledge economy.



THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION