



WORK BASED LEARNING

Information for Companies

What is Work-Based Learning?

WBL (work-based learning) means any type of learning which takes place simultaneously or consecutively in both traditional classrooms and workplace settings – thus is it **a form of education which combines the application of academic, technical, and employability skills in a work setting with the support of classroom and workplace mentors.**

In essence, WBL is learning that takes place within the workplace using tasks or jobs for instruction and practical purposes. It may be formal and structured, using instructional plans, or informal, occurring incidentally, in the process of normal daily work, for example, through experience, practice, mentoring or demonstration.

There are a number of formal work-based learning programmes, which typically aim to:

- develop vocational skills that contribute to recognised vocational qualifications;
- develop general work habits and job-readiness;
- help students to understand what is involved in jobs so that they make better career choices;
- give disadvantaged people and job seekers access to opportunities to work that they might not otherwise have.

In formal types of WBL, the learner might be legally an employee (specific cases of formal traineeships, internships, and traineeships) or a student (for example in certain traineeships, internships, work placements, and in cooperative education).

Dual education (DE) is a specific kind of formal WBL educational system.

What is Dual Education?

Dual education system (DE) is a specific form of work-based learning education system in which the professional qualification is acquired through a) practical training in a real working environment and b) training in a vocational or professional school. Typically, it combines **apprenticeships in a company** and **vocational education at a vocational school** in one course.

After finishing primary school, young people can opt for secondary vocational education. Secondary vocational education and training (VET) can be imple-

mented in a **typical scholarly form** (students are involved in practical education and training both at their school as well as at a company, they have the status of a student) or in **apprenticeship form**, (where most of the educational programs are implemented as practical in-company training – work-based learning, they have the status of a student and a status of apprentice during their practical training while working at the company).

Both forms of education are equivalent as they are carried out on the basis of the same educational programmes. This allows for the transition from apprenticeship to school form during education.

An apprentice is a student, who has an apprenticeship contract with a company and is obtaining education and training within an educational program for the acquisition of a secondary vocational or professional education. Half of their education and training is done in the vocational school, the other half is in-company training. A mentor is in charge of the apprentice's in-company training.

A mentor is a person employed by a company or a self-employed entrepreneur that has the appropriate education, work experience, and pedagogical-andragogical training. A mentor is an expert who is in charge of the students in their work-based learning during their apprenticeship programme. The mentor guides, directs and advises the apprentice during their training and learning.

What are the goals of DE/WBL?

- better development of competences, higher qualifications and better skills in accordance with the needs of the economy
- easier transition from education to work market: earlier professional socialization
- earlier employment of young people and more coordinated supply and demand of human resource

Why get involved with DE/WBL?

- A possibility to provide the student with the opportunity to acquire the competencies the employers (the economy) really need.
- The employer actively participates in the training and education of the apprentice and thus providing suitably qualified future employees.
- A better established and more intensive contact of the company with VET providers and potential new employees (students).

- WBL/DE gives companies the opportunity to obtain more qualified and experienced future employees.
- WBL/DE provides an opportunity for the company to find apprentices who are highly motivated, have a good work ethic, and are committed to their placement, who might turn out to be perspective new employees. In addition, it helps the company get to know the apprentice well first, making it easier to decide upon their potential future employment.
- Workplaces in which employees constantly learn new skills and new ways tend to be more productive and more profitable. They tend to be more innovative, be better at using employees' knowledge to improve product quality and customer service, and have lower staff turnover.
- During the onboarding process of new employees, there is no need to provide long lasting and expensive initial training for the job to be carried out effectively.

What do companies, involved with DE/WBL, say about their experience?

- It is becoming increasingly difficult to get suitable, competent, skilled staff. In collaborating in DE systems, however, you are part of the process of shaping a skilled worker, and you have all the conditions to be your ideal candidate at your first job.
- DE seems to me much better than students only learning professional subjects, because students acquire knowledge through practice and you can immediately see what problems can arise, so you also learn to solve professional and technical problems and you can immediately help the students master the virtues that would be very difficult with theoretical work.
- Students that are included in such settings in our company are often full of fresh new ideas. These are not always plausible, of course, but they can sometimes be of great help in sparking new ideas or providing new solutions, thus bringing positive change in our work – in the field of research and development as well!
- Being involved in DE has helped our existing employees build on their skills while providing training to our learners – including social skills. Generally, such collaboration also offers means of social engagement and community involvement, which increase our employees' job satisfaction.
- (DE) students bring fresh new energy and knowledge into our work settings.

- Students do not only gain practical skills and knowledge, but also get to know our company better – what we do, who we are, how we function, what is needed, what our rules are, and, of course, our employees. This makes the students' transition into their first “real” employment easier – the onboarding process basically happens while they're still studying.
- The relationships that are build between the trainer and the learner are a great social booster – they help the students' professional socialization and social networking, but the process is mutually beneficial. We collaborate with schools and even educational policy-makers better now (since being involved in DE), as it is a different experience altogether to deal with a person, an individual, in contrast to organizations as a whole.

More information

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