

UCLL Leuven, Belgium, 14-15 June, 2018

Creating Relevant Learning Experiences; employers' involvement with higher education

Work and Learning Network Annual Conference

UCLL Leuven (Belgium), 14-15 June 2018

Co-organised by the UK Work and Learning network, EURASHE and BEEHIVES project

Conference Rationale

- Conference rationale – theme introduction, challenges, issues to be considered

The conference contributes to approaches that higher education, employers and other stakeholders can take to structure and implement strategies and curricula to enable students and employees to learn through, for and in work environments. Work-integrated learning (WIL), work-based learning (WBL) and apprenticeships have already started to develop these relationships and the conference looks at the key skills employers look for, and how these essential competencies can be embedded in HEIs' curricular and structures.

The conference will provide expertise and discussion to provide practitioners, educational managers and policy makers with the opportunity to gain greater insight into how the challenges and gaps of work and learning issues can be overcome and to develop the pedagogy and systems to the benefits of engagement with learning for and in work. The conference will disseminate the findings of the Beehives Project <https://beehives.de> and draw upon the expertise of academics in the field through papers and presentations.

Conference Themes:

- University Business Cooperation (UBC)/ Employer engagement
- Apprenticeships and work-based Learning
- Internships and placements involving employers and stakeholders
- Policy developments in professionally oriented higher education
- Pedagogies for a professional practice oriented curriculum
- Students' work-based projects
- Work-based curricula and assessments

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A key part of the EU Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education (HE) is a reform of HE to meet the requirements of the labour market with emphasis on relevant skills, qualifications and graduates' employability. A problem lies in the lack of a strong cooperation, understanding and interaction between institutions and businesses. Reflecting that, various new types and forms of professionally-oriented HE have emerged, mostly at level 5 and 6 of EQF for example, degree apprenticeships, placements, internships and innovative curriculum developments but also across all H.E. levels, for example access courses that span levels 3 and 4; 5 and 6; and at the other end of the spectrum professionally oriented Masters degrees, Professional Doctorates and Industrial PhDs. The dynamics of these developments have led to a raising of awareness of the needs of HE students in relation to their future careers with some qualifications traditionally falling within the HE remit and new qualifications being developed, yet the whole new dynamic of these initiatives still needs to be clarified and defined and adopted across Europe.

Work-based and work-integrated learning and dual / cooperative training in all its forms is a flexible tertiary education model that serves the various interests of society. These are the educational remit of the state, the requirement of trade and industry for highly qualified skilled workers, the opportunity for both young people and older people to continually develop their learning in a practically oriented manner. effective co-operation between the fields of education and the world of work, companies and enterprises becoming more engaged with work based and work integrated learning, students both contributing and being served by a strategic triangle of university, student and employer will be the main issues of the conference along with how existing models can be developed further. The results of the conference are a contribution towards generating or specifying policies and good practices in collaboration among the three stakeholder; H.E Institutions, world of work and students.

The importance of work-based and work-integrated learning is that it helps develop skills and abilities that are fit for our modern day lives and can assist people in being prepared for and finding professional roles. According to the statistics, in countries where apprenticeship or dual training represents a larger part of the education system, youth unemployment is lower and graduates participated in work oriented training programmes spend less time without jobs. Although these work-based and work-integrated learning practices clearly offer an advantage, they are still not widespread practises in Europe.

The proposed approach of the three conference partners refers to all levels of the QF European Higher Education Area (EHEA), embracing other providers where relevant offering high level qualifications. It should also be noted that the situation and challenges of work-based learning and dual training differs in countries in Europe. There is agreement that the common distinctiveness and underlying strength of HE provision should be its strong systematic engagement and integration with practice, particularly the world of work and its requirements.

The research results of the project BEEHIVES which has worked at the boundaries between traditional HE, and more professionally oriented HE will be presented. Beehives aims to equip education institutions offering EQF-level 5 qualifications and above, the tools and measures to improve employer involvement in all programme development processes and develop measures that are applicable across all sectors thereby achieving permeability. Hence BEEHIVES will focus on a specific relation and interaction between HE institutions, employers/labour market and students within the "strategic (partnership) triangle". Tools and measures for a better strategic collaboration and award processes will be presented and discussed in work-shops – showing how institutions can strengthen employer engagement through involvement such as programme and curriculum design, validation, accreditation, core processes of collaboration, - providing employers and the needs of the labour market with the central role that education can offer.

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Participants of the work-shops will discuss how to boost collaboration between the different parties and how dual training can provide work force that is productive and committed to the employer.

Presentations and key note speeches at the conference will highlight that due to the forward thinking of some HE Institutions and reforms introduced in the UK, Belgium, Germany, the Czech Republic work-based and work integrated learning has gradually developed and gained significant standing in some networks of HEIs. The conference will offer the opportunity to engage with WBL/WIL in HE through papers, presentations, good practice case studies and the dynamic literature that has developed since the mid 1990s. The Work and Learning UK network will therefore offer papers developed through its 25 year developments in this area. These include UBC issues, curriculum development and pedagogy as well as underpinning theories that support practice-based approaches to learning and teaching.

Presenters will discuss the associated general conditions for the role and responsibility of the stakeholders involved (e.g. the state, companies, trade unions, learners) and to identify joint elements of the strategic collaboration and the major themes in various models of education. One main focus will be the role of the companies as the bodies that play a crucial role in the strategic triangle and dual training system model. Employer involvement

Presentations, discussions and papers may raise the following questions:

- How can University Business Cooperation be strengthened?
- How can the necessary key-competences be embedded into curriculum initiatives?
- What strategies can be used for curricula to adapt to current and emerging labour market needs?