

Aleksandar Bulajić, Tamara Nikolić, Cristina C. Vieira (Eds.)

Navigating through Contemporary World with Adult Education Research and Practice



Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia
ESREA - European Society for Research on the Education of Adults
Adult Education Society, Serbia

NAVIGATING THROUGH CONTEMPORARY WORLD WITH
ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Editors

Aleksandar Bulajić, Tamara Nikolić, Cristina C. Vieira



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ФИЛОЗОФСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ

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Belgrade, 2020

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WORK-BASED LEARNING FOR HIGHER LEVEL VET PROVISION¹

Abstract

In this paper we reflect about work based learning as learning about work, learning at work and learning through work. The acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences through action-based or reflective learning in a vocational or occupational context is Work-based Learning (WBL) and is often seen as a strong energy for developing workplace skills and promoting productivity of the labour force. It is directly linked to the mission of Vocational Education and Training (VET) to help learners acquire knowledge, skills and competences which are essential in working life. Realising the potential of WBL requires companies and trainees to engage in WBL that effectively increases productivity. Creating opportunities for high-quality WBL lies at the heart of current European education and training policies. Efforts are needed to invest in expanding the offer of apprenticeships and traineeships in countries where opportunities for this type of learning remain very limited. This paper will try to show one view on understanding benefits of WBL and present why it is important to companies to provide high-quality WBL. Regional project “Master 5” is aimed to support the development and visibility of higher VET opportunities through regional partnerships between learning providers, business and social partners with a particular focus on needs for higher level VET skills at sectoral level. The specific objective is to design and implement new training framework based on WBL for higher level VET provision in craftsmanship to provide skills needs on the regional labour market, thus following the New Skills Agenda. The idea is that the major impact on both learners and business will be increased attractiveness and recognition of master craftsman vocations as providing access to employment and career advancement, as well as enabling further learning and progression to higher education based on strong WBL-basis. Views of companies participated in research in project “Master 5” will be shown in this paper as one example.

Keywords: work-based Learning, craftsmanship, “Master 5” project

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Introduction

Almost twenty years ago, by Copenhagen declaration from 2002, that is now process, directions and priorities of VET reform are set. Transparency of diplomas and qualifications as well as promotional activities, similar to Bologna process in VET is initiated (Dimov, 2007). In Copenhagen declaration role of social partners in socio-economic development is also emphasized through social dialogue and through lifelong competences and qualifications development. Special attention is dedicated to access to learning, higher VET and training, transfer and recognition of competences and qualification, aimed to support mobility within industry and mobility of citizens within labour market. To make it easier to set transparency, comparability, transfer and recognition of competences and/or qualifications referent levels are also set, general principles for certification – general rules that include implementation of credit system in VET and training. Also, it is insisted that support to development of competences and qualifications on sectoral level is improved through empowerment of cooperation and coordination with social partners. Sensitization of education system for those who are under risk of social exclusion and out of labour market – those who left education (dropouts), low qualified, migrants, people with special needs and unemployed – is emphasized as key priority in sectoral reforms.

This declaration/process almost pushed further efforts to organize non formal VET education.. The adoption of the Bruges Communiqué in December 2010 outlined a series of actions to increase the quality of vocational education and training (VET) in Europe in order to make it more accessible and relevant to the labour market. The Bruges Communiqué is the update to the Copenhagen Process for European co-operation on VET – European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training EQAVET is a result of this process (EQAVET, 2019). The Bruges Communiqué, which defines the European VET strategy up to 2020, calls for an active policy to enhance the potential of VET to support smart and sustainable growth, and to turn VET across the EU into a highly attractive learning choice (Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes, 2012). European cooperation on vocational education and training (VET) has been further enhanced by the Riga Conclusions (2015). EU Member states, Candidate countries, European Economic Area Countries, social partners and European VET providers have agreed on a set of deliverables for the period 2015–2020:

- Promote work-based learning in all its forms
- Further develop quality assurance mechanisms in VET
- Enhance access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible systems
- Further strengthen key competences in VET curricula

- Introduce systematic approaches to initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors (Riga Conclusions, 2015).

Today, the EU Commission's work on VET is supported by two agencies: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and European Training Foundation (ETF). Financial instruments that supporting VET policy are: Erasmus+ Programme (with Erasmus+ Strategic partnerships) and European Social Fund (ESF). The Advisory Committee on Vocational training endorsed an "Opinion on the future of VET post 2020" (2018).

All these and many more steps and efforts that we did not mention at this time, are aimed on raising quality of non formal VET, and they place high expectations before vocational education and training – one of them: "VET is expected to reposition itself within the future mix of a strong foundation of basic skills, generic, soft, transversal and professional competences. It should prove its ability to prepare people not only for existing jobs, but also – for future employment and job creation. VET is expected to continue fostering democratic citizenship and European values" (Opinion on the future of VET post 2020, 2018, 5).

Work-based learning (WBL) in vocational education and training (VET)

Most people learn from experience and they do this moderately well without any educational intervention. Work-based learning has been described as the linkage of learning to a work role. Levy et al. (1989, according to Cox, p. 2005) identify three components to work-based learning which they claim provides an essential contribution to the learning, by:

- identifying and providing relevant off-the-job learning opportunities;
- structuring learning in the workplace;
- providing appropriate on-job training/learning opportunities.

Later Seagraves et al. (1996, according to Cox, p. 2005) went on to classify the three strands as: learning for work; learning at work and learning through work.

In order to understand developments in work-based learning built on partnership, Smith and Betts (2000) consider that is necessary to distinguish it from the more generic work-related learning processes "that have played their part in the historical development of linkages between learning and work" (Smith & Betts, 2000, p. 591). These authors describe them as:

- Learning *about* work – which is informational;
- Learning *at* work – which is locational;
- Learning *through* work – that is experiential.

The first of the work-related learning approaches involves the transfer of information about work and the world of work via means other than the experience of working itself. “It does not of necessity have to be located *at work* or necessarily reflect upon the direct task of the learner (the job) in the work situation, i.e. the *experience* of work” (Smith & Betts, 2000, p. 591). The second approach indicates that learning at work is always characterized by its location. But, authors indicates that “the location of a student in the workplace, either by full-time employment or temporary placement, does not, in itself, match a sophisticated definition of work-based learning alone” (Smith & Betts, 2000, p. 591). According to their point of view “work-based learning... must reflect the significant qualitative changes that are emerging in its definition, which has been made possible through the recognition of *active* partnerships. As experience of learning at work has developed in partnership between employers, students and educational providers, the locational definition has become too restrictive. We have moved closer to a locational work-based model which we believe should really be described in a more sophisticated manner: namely learning *through* the experience of work” (Smith & Betts, 2000, p. 592).

Obviously, we can somewhat agree with the opinion expressed twenty years ago – “The phrase ‘work-based learning’ has today become something of a slogan, which takes on different meanings according to its immediate context” (Shaw, 2000, p. 399). A universally accepted definition of Work-based Learning in VET does not exist. Cedefop (2015) offer useful definition of WBL – in Cedefop research paper, No 49 “WBL is defined as:

- (a) Intended and structured non-formal learning;
- (b) Being of direct relevance to the current or future tasks of the learner;
- (c) Taking place in a work-based context, that means either in the workplace, in settings simulating the workplace or outside the workplace, but with specific learning tasks that must be directly applied in the workplace and reflected upon afterwards (train, apply, reflect)” (Cedefop, 2015, p. 7). In the same Paper, Cedefop indicates to definition proposed by Raelin (2008) according to which “critical elements in the WBL process is that:
 - (a) Learning is acquired in the midst of action and dedicated to the task at hand;
 - (b) Knowledge creation and utilization are collective activities wherein learning becomes everyone’s job;
 - (c) Learners demonstrate a learning-to-learn aptitude, which frees them to question underlying assumptions of practice. In this definition, self-responsibility is stressed while the work context is referred to as a source of (tacit) knowledge and possibilities to get feedback (community of practice)” (Cedefop, 2015, p. 16–17). “...Work based learn-

ing may be understood as self directed practices within specific area of expertise in which general demands of learning society are filtered and shaped through the given professional practice” (Nerland, 2012, p. 198). In this paper we reflect about work based learning as learning *about* work, learning *at* work and learning *through* work.

Work-based learning extends across all areas of education, training and employment, i.e. apprentices with the day to day requirements of their job with related learning, adult learners in the labor market, taking part in continuous learning and skills development, young people and adults gaining occupational and soft skills through activity in a workplace or in the work environment (Grazia Violi et al., n. d.). “In terms of delivery, Work-based Learning can take place onsite, in a company or organization, or within a more traditional learning environment such is a training centre, targeting learning that is vocationally or occupationally relevant and which centres on meeting the needs or expectations of a particular industry or profession” (What is Work-based Learning?, n. d.). To ensure needed delivery, Work-based Learning involves a wide variety of participants: employed, unemployed, teachers and trainers, tutors, mentors, classroom assistants, managers, business owners, human resources personnel; individual staff taking the role of advisors etc. “Work-based Learning is a fundamental aspect of vocational training – it is directly linked to the mission of VET to help learners acquire knowledge, skills and competences which are essential in working life” (Work-Based Learning (WBL), n. d.).

Despite the major benefits that Work-based Learning in VET can offer, still many obstacles hinder its development and widespread implementation (Grazia Violi et al., n. d.). We are of the opinion that work-based learning in VET can overcome some disadvantages of VET training indicated by some authors (Atkinson, 2016): VET provision sometimes fails to develop relevant skills, and, instead, provides training that is too general and not enterprise-specific enough, or lacks a focus on practical skills training.

“From a strategic perspective, the provision of high-quality Work-based Learning lies at the heart of current education and training policy, with education – industry collaboration regularly prioritized (at all levels) and work-based learning increasingly recognized as a means of ensuring that learners of all ages are provided with the competencies required by a labor market” (“What is Work-based Learning?”, n. d.). So, it is part of lifelong learning that “is a very promising project: it foresees great potential in learning and in the necessity of learning as part of the contemporary societal transformations” (Kopecký, 2011, p. 246). We agree with Nerland (2012) that the way in which knowledge is organized and collectively dealt with in professional work form mechanisms that route actions and modes of perception in certain ways – “in the perspective of Michel Foucault these processes are understood in terms of formative and mobilizing relations of power/knowledge” (Nerland, 2012, p. 197). Through this concept, knowledge and power

circulate together and form coalitions of energies that allow thoughts and actions to come into being while, in the same time, guiding them in certain directions – knowledge is understood in terms of “active dynamism that enable us to look at, understand and engage with world in particular ways” (Nerland, 2012, p. 197).

VET and education sectors have examples of positive partnerships between education and training institutions and workplaces. While many of these programs and partnerships are successful, “large businesses are more likely to have the resources and impetus to support these programs: they can demonstrate a commitment to work-based learning because they see its value to their businesses, and work-based learning is often supported by the senior executive leadership” (Atkinson, 2016, p. 18). On the other hand, small to medium enterprises (SMEs) can struggle to find the resources, time and effort required to supervise programs. “This is where education and training providers and intermediaries can play a vital role — in promoting work-based learning to SMEs and supporting them to engage in work-based learning” (Atkinson, 2016, p. 18).

The entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurship competencies, training and business and entrepreneurial aptitudes and skills are key competences for lifelong learning and that, in response to low economic growth and high unemployment, more decisive short-term and medium-term measures are needed to promote and enable entrepreneurship, especially among young people (Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, 2013). It is stated that education should be brought to life through practical experiential learning models and experience of real-world entrepreneurs. Partnerships with businesses can ensure that education and training curricula are relevant to the real world. Education institutions should be encouraged to become more entrepreneurial in their wider approach, to ensure that they develop and live a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation through their missions, leadership, stakeholder engagement, curricula and learning outcomes. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) dominate the European economy; according to Directorate-General Enterprise of the EU Commission, they account for more than 99% of all firms; SMEs are generally recognised as a cradle of innovation, industrial restructuring and experimentation; providing them with support in the present hard times is considered a necessity; SMEs are characterised by their adaptability to economic change, flexible working and opportunities to improve skills and qualifications; however they tend to carry out little training (Cedefop, 2010).

SMEs face particular challenges in engaging with WBL, given their smaller workforces, limited resources and lack of familiarity with the WBL regulatory and administrative framework. Their engagement can be encouraged by intermediary organisations that offer expertise, information and help to support and motivate employers participating in WBL. Intermediary bodies can relieve employers from the administrative burdens that are often associated with different forms of WBL provision and assist them in locating information, for example

advice on tax incentives to train young people. Intermediary organisations can, for example, provide advice to SMEs on curricula or on how to organise different forms of WBL. Countries should therefore support networks of companies and empower intermediary bodies such as Chambers to facilitate high-quality WBL, notably involving SMEs. “The monitoring activities highlighted the fact that cooperation and support for SMEs involving education and coaching targeting training supervisors at the companies and focusing on labour market legislation, pedagogical skills, soft skills and behavioural psychology aspects may overcome SMEs reluctance to employ trainees” (Grazia Violi et al., n. d., p. 10).

In many forms of WBL, learners are required to take responsibility for identifying and securing work placements. In preparing learners for their transition to the workplace, there are key issues to consider in relation to how learners are being prepared, particularly in terms of acquiring and developing the skills demanded by employers today. This is particularly important given that employers often complain about the level of basic skills and key competences learners have when they enter the workplace. As such, ensuring appropriate selection criteria is in place provides one such approach to ensure that learners are allocated to placements that give them the potential to grow and develop. Placing dedicated personnel in charge of recruitment/placement procedures, though resource intensive is another approach to ensure learners are placed appropriately. A key issue in relation to finding suitable placements for learners is the extent to which the placement matches the expectations from the perspective of the learner and the employer. Matching expectations is important so as to avoid a negative learning experience for the learner and to avoid situations where employers feel they are not able to support the needs of the learner or are no longer willing to provide work placements in the future. “With respect to placements offered by SMEs, a number of barriers arise, in particular that:

- a) SMEs may not have the structures in place to take on apprentices;
- b) The value proposition is not always clear for the SMEs;
- c) Educational Institutions are not always suited to mass-market their supply of students for placements, and to operate them at scale with large numbers of SMEs” (SAPS – Support for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises Engaging in Apprenticeships, 2017).

Considering that VET can provide the skills, knowledge and competences needed in the labour market (Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training on the Future of Vocational Education and Training Post 2020, 2018), “evidence from Cedefop shows that with the growing weight of VET specific content in parallel with key competences, learning provision is expected to become more hybrid – in terms of blurring borders in institutional profile, target group, curricula and learning environment between VET and general education, between IVET (Initial vocational education and training), higher VET

and CVET (Continuing vocational education and training), between VET and higher education... Emerging new technologies and work organisation formats are expected to be captured faster through skills anticipation systems and translated to VET provision in terms of needed skills, curricula and qualifications. VET systems are expected to develop ‘fast response’ mechanisms of both stable quality assured core qualifications/skills pathways and flexible formats of adding new or higher-level skills, requiring strong governance involving social partners, both employers and trade unions” (Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training on the Future of Vocational Education and Training Post 2020, 2018: 5). VET would need to combine and balance a process-oriented, input and supply driven model with a result and outcome-oriented approach, in view of meeting expectations of learners in terms of adequate skills, of employers in terms of skills needs and productivity gains and of society in view of a contribution to growth and social cohesion. In that way, maybe, “within the concept of governance as self-governance, people identify with the requirement of self-optimization. The needs of organizations are connected (or even identified) with the needs of individuals” (Kopecký, 2011, p. 252).

WBL for higher level VET provision in craftsmanship – “Master 5” Project

The project *Development of Master School Model through Regional VET-Business Partnerships* (Master 5) is realized in partnership between organizations from Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia: Območna obrtno-podjetniška zbornica Krško, Šolski center Krško-Sevnica, Hrvatska obrtnička komora, Obrtničko učilište – ustanova za obrazovanje odraslih, Regional Development Agency Backa, Kroatische Wirtschaftsvereinigung e.V. within *ERASMUS+ KA3 VET-Business Partnerships on Apprenticeships/Work-based learning*. The goal of regional Project “Master 5” was to support the development and visibility of higher VET opportunities through regional partnerships between learning providers, business and social partners with a particular focus on needs for higher level VET skills at sectoral level, as it is one of the recommendations “A New Skills Agenda For Europe – Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness” (2016). The specific objective was to design and implement new training framework based on WBL for higher level VET provision in craftsmanship to provide skills needs on the regional labour market (Educational baseline of Master 5, 2018). The major impact on both learners and business is in increased attractiveness and recognition of master vocations as providing access to employment and career advancement, as well as enabling further learning and progression to higher education based on strong WBL-basis. By connecting VET providers and SMEs the

project outcomes should be relevant and entail an impact on the VET and crafts' sector, through:

- Providing SMEs with skilled labour force with relevant skills gained through WBL.
- Enhanced employment possibilities and possibilities of widening business offers through employment of skilled labour force which is lacking, especially in craftsmanship.
- Strengthened collaboration between VET providers and businesses through active participation in development of educational programmes.
- Increased awareness of WBL as key element of successful acquisition of practical occupational skills.
- Increased awareness of responsibility of SMEs as WBL providers.
- Increased possibility of inter-regional work.
- Increased competitiveness of SMEs because of enhanced quality and employability of future labour force (Qualitative comparative analysis of Master 5, 2018).

Project targeted SMEs with a focus on craftsman as one of the key pillars of the Slovenia – Posavje Region, Croatia – Zagreb County and Serbia – Backa regional economies. Crafts and SME representatives were involved in all segments of the project implementation. Within the project survey was conducted as a quantitative basis for the surveys of real-business and educational background. The target group is craftsmen and entrepreneurs as the key pillars of organizing successful WBL in VET. In every region 30 entrepreneurs answered questions regarding their companies, employees and their skills needs, cooperation with educational sector. In the view of WBL, VET and HVET we find results interesting as one observation of possibilities for work based learning, training institutions involvement in skills development of employees and involvement of stakeholders such as ministries, public employment services, trade unions etc. As adult learning in the workplace is covered by different policy fields, a certain degree of coordination is needed for effective implementation: institutions – companies – providers. Once again it was shown that “a national governance and regulatory framework involving all relevant actors is perceived as a necessary precondition to effectively implement work-based learning opportunities. Nevertheless fostering the dialogue between all relevant stakeholders could help overcoming several obstacles highlighted, such as financial and resource constraints, lack of professionals to support the trainees, the challenges related to the effective development of integrated curricula as well as the transparency and recognition issues” (Grazia Violi et al., n. d., p. 34). It is the coordination (or in some cases lack of it) between companies and educational sector that is visible in survey results of the forenamed project.

Results of the survey conducted as a part of the project show that over 80% of companies that participated are SME's. In companies in Serbia most of the employees are with secondary education and/or VET (54%), and mainly from 1–10 years of work experience (48%). In Croatia most of the employees are with HRET (upper secondary education, specialized VET) – 55%, and in 46% of cases they have 10–20 years of work experience, while in Slovenia most of employees in companies that participated in survey, have secondary education and/or VET (38%) and they have 10–20 years of work experience mostly (37%). Most of the companies in the survey do not have specific organizational units that are involved in human resources (Serbia 79%, Croatia 89%, Slovenia 82%), they do not have specific HR development plans mostly (Serbia 62%, Croatia 69%, Slovenia 86%), nor do they do specific training needs surveys (Serbia 59%, Croatia 56%, Slovenia 75%). Such results are understandable since participants in the survey are mainly SME's and entrepreneurs (Qualitative comparative analysis of Master 5, 2018).

Regardless the fact that there are no specific organizational units for human resources or no training needs surveys, all companies expressed their needs for human resources development. To ensure the quality of WBL increasing learners' engagement in/for workplaces, enterprises' engagement with learners, or individual employers' engagement is important, so such reflection is understandable. Companies that participated in project survey mainly lack employees with specific competencies for work and as main reasons why workers with required competencies cannot be found on the labour markets, entrepreneurs state (Qualitative comparative analysis of Master 5, 2018):

- Underdevelopment of industry sector of enterprise, workers leave market and work abroad, lack of possibilities for practice and experience, education system that doesn't teach young workers to work, deficiency of qualifications.
- No knowledge that companies need, no educated labor force and interest for profession, decreased number of available qualified workers, obsolete school programs, not enough practice, no learning motivation, workers not interested to work, young people that come from schools are not ready for labor market.
- Deficiency of practice for non monitored work in production, no interest in industry sector, lack of workers in labour market and VET programs in education system, workers not interested to work.

Competencies that are assessed as most important are categorized into 5 groups: theoretical knowledge, practical competencies, licences, motivation for further learning and improvement in the field and innovations. In all countries, practical competencies and motivation for further learning and improvement in the field are assessed as the most important. In Serbia most of the companies that participated in survey did not cooperate with educational institutions as a way to suit needs for competent workforce (54%), whilst in Croatia and Slove-

nia cooperation is much higher (74% in Croatia and 71% in Slovenia). In all three countries cooperation was mainly through engagement of companies in conducting professional practice (Serbia 55%, Croatia 83%, and Slovenia 63%). Main obstacles for more efficient cooperation with educational institutions are estimated in lack of quality candidates that come from education system (motivation to work, lack of theoretical knowledge etc.). It is possible that the reason is what is estimated as a second obstacle – compatibility of education programs and plans, curriculum, with companies business needs. Not being able to influence on curriculum and content of professional practice is third obstacle (Qualitative comparative analysis of Master 5, 2018).

Entrepreneurs from all three countries suggest similar activities that could contribute to improvement of efficiency in cooperation with education sector:

- More and longer professional practices, improve cooperation between business and education sectors, development of education profiles that business need, constant training/education of workers, harmonization of theoretical and practical education (20% of theory and 80% of practice), more frequent conversing with employers about their needs for workers, increasing the offer of education sector for cooperation with educational institutions (Serbia)
- Provide incentives for retraining, provide revisions of curriculums, more impact and longer professional practices, modernization of theoretical and practical work with students and modernization of curriculums, expert gatherings with open discussions, the presence of masters in practice, student scholarship, more practice hours (Croatia)
- Co-financing by the state, more practice and practical training, adapting the program to the demands of the profession and the demands of businessmen, training mentors, theoretical and practical training of personnel, harmonizing the needs of businesses and educational institutions, better cooperation between business and education sectors (Slovenia) (Qualitative comparative analysis of Master 5, 2018).

Suggestions made for work based learning improvement (in cooperation with educational sector) and benefiting from, arouse from experiences and day-to-day operation of entrepreneurs that participated in survey and who emphasize importance of workplaces in which employees constantly learn new skills and new ways of doing things tend to be more productive and more profitable. We have to mention that “the individual’s prospects on the labour market as well as on other markets are determined by the amount of capital that individual holds. Investment in education represents postponed consumption; it is an investment with reliable revenue, which forms the basis of the competitive ability of individuals as well as entire countries” (Kopecký, 2011, p. 253–254). Workers feeling a sense of loyalty are more likely to stay with the same employer; for the company, this means a higher rate of staff retention. Additionally, “in econo-

mies adult learning in the workplace helps employees adapt to new processes or machinery, reduces breakdown rates (of machinery), reduce incidents at work, speeds up the induction of newly hired personnel, facilitates direct assessments of the training's impact on functioning of the enterprise and allows for combining sustained production with the promotion of training and professional development of employees" (Qualitative comparative analysis of Master 5, 2018, p. 28). They are key resources and main capital in every economy, but it must be noted that they are their own key resource and main capital.

This research on needs for specific occupations in all three countries where Project was conducted, lead to development of program for education of auto mechanic (master craftsman, level 5). This program is non formal education. Total duration is 1800 hours and consists of five modules: training "one-on-one", law, entrepreneurship, materials, auto mechanics and work based learning. The aim of the master school is to specialize the experts who will have competences for independent management of craft / entrepreneurial shop, shop management / enterprise, taking over tasks in the field of engineering, management and development of human resources, implementation of practice (dual education and training of future masters) and independent implementation of business competencies and adapting them to new requirements in those areas. Quality management is the basis for organization in modern operational procedures. In the plant, they determine and optimize workflows, distribute work assignments to professional staff, lead employees, coordinate work and are responsible for the readiness of the plant for work and the rational use of work equipment, such as machines, appliances and materials. When performing all these works, they assume control and guidance functions.

When making bids and executing orders, they also calculate commercial and technical calculations. As a contact person for clients, they ensure timely and professional execution of tasks and their invoicing. In addition, they carry out professional tasks, which require special knowledge and years of experience, and in smaller plants, mostly all professional tasks.

After having mastered the program of specialist or master craftsman training, adults take the specialist or master exam. The Master exam tests occupation-specific skills and general education, as well as law. Upon completion of the master craftsman school and passing the master craftsman exam, the student acquires a master craftsman degree, which in the European Union and the Republic of Serbia can prove that he/she has all the competencies for independent professional work, running a business or opening his own entrepreneurial shop.

The entire project led to multilateral sector cooperation and to create mutually recognizable qualifications. Future activities are directed towards the development of compatible training programs for non-formal adult education in those occupations that are considered most needed.

Instead of a conclusion

The development of innovative solutions supporting the modernization of VET systems significantly contributed to the integration of non-formal and Work-based Learning in traditional qualification pathways, to the development of models supporting the transparency of competences acquired within non-formal learning contexts. “VET should include a strong work-based dimension, whenever possible coupled with an international experience” (A New Skills Agenda for Europe, 2016, p. 195). “To ensure the best match of skills, people should acquire a combination of transversal (i.e. communication, citizenship, community etc) skills and specific skills needed for a job and then develop their skills further throughout life. This also requires employers to better use the skills and talents of their employees and to stimulate people’s development. The overall aim is to make work-based learning more effective so that it results in a win-win situation for both learners and for the enterprises” (Finnegan, 2016, p. 56).

Understanding the dynamics of the costs and benefits of work base learning and ensuring that those are reflected in the design of various schemes is essential to ensure that firms provide high-quality WBL and trainees perceive learning as an attractive option. “This calls for a rebalancing of the various sectors of education and training in order to make sure that sufficient resources, both public and private, are allocated to empowering that is taking place beyond initial education and training, to support the multiple transitions in the labour market that people will be facing (Promoting adult learning in the workplace, 2018, p. 15). Adult education therefore must be aimed on empowering adult learners through different educational contexts; work based one of them.

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