

Portugal: Work Based Learning

Introduction

Title: Work Based Learning

Country: Portugal

Type of tool: WBL - Work Based Learning (in Portuguese Formação em Contexto de Trabalho) integrates a set of professional activities under the coordination and monitoring of Professional Schools and Companies, aiming at the acquisition or development of technical, relational and organisational skills important for the professional profile of the learners and their career opportunities. It also aims to develop new skills and consolidate the acquired ones in a training context, by performing activities essential to the professional exercise, as well as facilitating the future (re)insertion of learners.

Target group: Students of Professional Courses, of all VET Schools.

Potential transferability: It is easy to transfer such a method. It depends on protocols signed between Professional Schools and companies that are open to receive trainees to develop their WBL. It has benefits for both parties: for Professional Schools because it is an opportunity for their students to get in touch with the real working contexts; for companies because they can receive students with new ideas for their businesses and new methods to answer to their needs, promoting their development.

WBL must be adjusted to the **operating hours** of the company where it will be developed, and the weekly duration must not exceed 35 hours nor the daily duration of seven hours.

Professional Schools designate a **guidance teacher** (among teachers who are connected to Technical training courses) and the companies have to designate a **tutor** to guide and monitor the trainee.

Trainees have an **insurance** that covers all risks regarding displacement and development of activities and the targeting of WBL includes, in all modalities, the acquisition of knowledge and the development of capacities in the field of health and safety at work.

A **protocol** is established between Professional Schools, Companies and students/trainees for the development of the work-based learning in the area of the professional courses they are enrolled in. Then, they are welcomed at companies by Tutors, who will help students/trainees to adjust to the companies' working environment and to their tasks (which are organised according a working plan elaborated by both Guidance Teacher and Tutor and includes the purposes of the work based learning, the tasks to be developed by students/trainees, schedule and place). Throughout the work based learning period (between 380 and 420 hours that can be organised during the three years of the professional course or concentrated in a single period), students/trainees have to present several **reports** (weekly, monthly and final). These reports, along with their performance during WBL, attitude, skills and punctuality/attendance are assessed by Tutors (70% of the final grade) and Guidance Teachers (30% of the final grade),

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who use an Evaluation Grid containing several items to be taken in consideration related with the above mentioned assessed areas.

To successfully accomplish a professional course, students/trainees have to complete their WBL period.

Work Base Learning (WBL) is carried out through the development of professional activities under the coordination and monitoring of the **school**. This training is included in the professional training courses and allows the acquisition or development of technical, relational and organizational skills relevant to the profile associated with the course attended by the student.

WBL **objectives** are to provide students with:

- proximity to technologies and techniques different from those simulated during training;
- the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired in real and concrete situations in the world of work;
- the development of creativity and divergent thinking;
- the ability to recognise the role of innovation in the organisational context;
- the opportunity to create work habits and develop a sense of professional responsibility;
- the knowledge of all the dynamics of a company / institution (structure, organization, functioning and organizational climate).

The WBL is carried out in public or private **entities**, frequently designated by Companies or Institutions. The training can also be developed in other organisations that carry out the corresponding professional activities.

To be a valid option, these organisations must meet the necessary human, technical, and work environment requirements that enable a full and complete performance of student functions. Between the school and the WBL site, a specific protocol will be signed, in accordance with current norms, which will include the commitment of the different stakeholders in this process.

The WBL is held in a professional context and takes the form of a **curricular internship**. The internship takes place in intermediate stages or in the final stage of the course, and may also be developed in other legally accepted forms.

The **duration** of the WBL is variable, can be stipulated in the Curricular Plans of the respective courses or be defined by the Pedagogical Direction.

In this context of training and through the specific needs of the student, the student may have access to transportation allowance, housing allowance, food allowance and professionalisation scholarship. Financial aid will only be provided if the attendance of the student is verified.

The WBL **certification** will be obtained upon completion of the professional course. A respective Qualification Certificate (according to the National Qualifications Catalogue) will be issued, which indicates the duration and classification of the WBL, together with the description of the subjects and the final grade of the course.

Implementation

Description of the target group

Students of Professional Courses, of all VET Schools.

Policy context

Internships, or actual work experiences, as they are also called, correspond to the guiding principle of the action of vocational schools, which aims at favouring the link between schools and companies and, therefore, have always been considered a great asset for schools, for the trainees who benefit from them and for the companies that welcome them and benefit from their knowledge and skills.

The **Professional Schools**, created in 1989, with pedagogical and curricular autonomy, because at that time each school could present a different curricular plan adapted to the economic and social reality of the region in which it was inserted, were not required to integrate hours of internship in the curricular plans.

At that time, the hours worked were distributed among socio-cultural, scientific and technical, technological and practical components, and the focus was on simulated practices within the schools themselves. Only a few courses, namely in the area of hotel and commerce, have always had hours for training in the context of work, which varied between 300 and 500 hours in the 3 years of the courses.

This phase continued until the publication of Decree-Law 4/98 which made it imperative to have at least 420 hours of **internships** in the companies, included in the respective Curriculum Plans.

More recently with the publication of Decree-Law 74/2014 the hours of internship have been able to vary between the 400 and the 600 hours, but most of the schools adopted an intermediate number of hours, that is in the 500 hours.

Usually vocational schools promote the internships in the 2nd and 3rd year of the courses taking into account that they correspond to the moment in which the trainees already master the professional practices.

The experience of vocational schools tells us that traineeships correspond to a **passport for employability**, since a large part of the students who attend the courses and who complete the internships in the companies are hired by the companies where they do the internships.

In Portugal, qualification levels are below the European average, so the WBL erupts as a fast combat device of these deficiencies, raising skill levels, capacitating individuals of mandatory skills to exercise certain professions. So this work is developed in order to stress the importance of a mechanism for acquisition of knowledge and skills such as Professional Training, as well as the benefits that it provides to individuals and society in general as an investment in Human Capital.

A society in permanent change requires a new context of cooperation from the school and the employers' organisations / institutions, sharing experiences and spaces of formation in a real work context.

It is an important challenge, aiming at the development of an extended set of competencies in young people, potentiators of a better achieved professional insertion. It corresponds, therefore, to the demands of the present society, in which unforeseen uncertainty, diversity, innovation and competitiveness.

In this study, we sought to understand the importance of Training in Work Context in the Professional Insertion of Young Graduates of a Vocational school. The WBL, as a moment of active learning of essential competences, can assume an important and facilitating role in transition to the world of work. The impact of the world of work on life of a young graduate can be a turning point, always clothed with some anxiety, insecurity and expectation.

Impact for assesses

Links

<http://www.anespo.pt/>
<http://www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx>

Interviewee

Jani Silva – Responsible for Work Based Learning in Escola Profissional do Infante.

