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Symposium abstracts

Vocational Education and Training - New models of  
apprenticeship

## **A new model of apprenticeship?: difficulties in integrating work based learning into vocational education**

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The paper explores the difficulties of and prospects for quality provision of apprenticeship, in particular the integration of work-based learning into vocational education in the context of changing labour market relations. In the UK, the government has recently stepped up efforts to improve the number and quality of apprenticeships. Whilst these have become central to initiatives for improving participation in post-16 education, underpinned by renewed recognition of the importance of intermediate level skills, there are serious questions over the possibility of increasing their capacity.

The paper draws on a current study comparing the vocational education and training (VET) systems of England, Germany, France and the Netherlands, based on case studies of four occupations: bricklaying, lorry driving, nursing and software engineering. It describes the problems in the English system, in particular arising from the failure to address the long-term interests of employees, and argues that these will be perpetuated through proposals in the draft apprenticeship bill, which neglects both the educational component and employee involvement. The study identified two distinct approaches to apprenticeship: the 'skills-based' model, prevalent in England, and the 'occupational' model, dominant in the continental countries. While the former is concerned with training for a particular job or tasks based on employer skill needs, the latter represents the more comprehensive framework needed for building occupational labour markets <sup>1</sup>. Based on social partnership, the occupational model incorporates the long-term interests of employees, through broad-based vocational, general and citizenship education, aimed at the development of the individual, both for the occupation and for wider society.

VET systems have developed a range of approaches to enhance the integration of college- and work-based learning, particularly through competence-based and situated learning. At the same time, throughout Europe, changes in the standard employment relationship, crucial to the operation of apprenticeships, have jeopardised attempts to provide high-quality VET, in which theoretical underpinning is integrated with workplace practice. In many countries, including the UK, a college-based route has been established by default, as young people are unable to secure work experience, thus significantly inhibiting the transition to employment. The paper concludes with an assessment of innovative approaches to apprenticeship which retain the critical element of work-based learning, such as group training schemes and training workshops, providing broad-based vocational education that equips apprentices for an ever-more complex and technically demanding labour market.

<sup>1</sup> See David Marsden (1999) *A Theory of Employment Systems*, Oxford University Press.

## **An initial investigation into the social uses of artisan qualifications achieved through the recognition of prior learning, in the South African mining sector.**

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For the past two years unhappiness has surfaced over the mining industry's reluctance to recognise artisans who qualified as artisans under Section 28 of the South African Manpower Training Act. This legislation allows persons who have not been indentured as apprentices, but who have the requisite experience and technical knowledge, to undergo a trade test. This trade test functions in the same way as a challenge test in the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

There are at least two contending positions. On the one side, the mining industry at present appears to treat the quality of the assessment (the trade test) as suspect and therefore the recognition of trade qualifications attained in this way is not guaranteed. On the other side, organised labour appears to view this non-recognition as a reluctance to recognise RPL as a valid assessment instrument and yet another way to keep semi-skilled workers from becoming fully qualified artisans. A further complication is the racial undertones which stem from labour unions with mainly white artisans being seen as wanting to keep out aspiring black artisans qualifying in this way.

At present there is very little research (either qualitative or quantitative) to inform policy development and implementation in this area. South Africa's skills shortage alleviation strategies such as the National Skills Development Strategy and Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition could benefit greatly from such research-led evidence-based policy development and implementation. This initial investigation takes the form of three case studies at different mining establishments and will inform further research initiatives.

The initial investigation tries to find out: "What's going on here?"

Hopefully such explanation will lead to better understandings of the social uses of qualifications in this context as well as policy advice that will assist in better RPL practices and skills shortage alleviation strategies for the mining sector.

## **Demands on Quasi-Modernization in Modernisations of VET?**

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Modernization of VET is likely to have three main characteristics, common to most national educational systems (Baethge 1984, Olsen 2008). Firstly, modernization is connected to processes of institutional differentiation, increasingly splitting off educational institutions from material production. Secondly, gradually more these institutions are regulated by bureaucratic rules and organisational norms put under state control and supervision. Thirdly, these kinds of institutionalisation are connected to development of distinct hierarchical levels of education, including specifications of entrance or transitions requirements. Among others, all three characteristics make suitable definitions of features related to the constructions of The European Qualification Framework, the European Credit Transfer System, et cetera, currently taking place in Europe. On the other hand, though, modernization also tends to make a kind of incongruent concept of organizations, lending for instance priority to principles like decontextualisation and liberalisation from organisational rules rigidities (cf Habermas 1986).

This paper shall address the way in which modern VET institutions seemingly are split in between principles of modernization on the one hand and principles of "situated learning" or "communities of practice" on the other. I shall discuss the extent to which a novel system regime in education introduced by a reform in 2006 are dealing with dilemmas connected to, respectively, extent use of standardisation and the simultaneous need of making flexible structures. First and foremost this is dealt with organisationally. Within the framework of a novel bureaucracy, coined "quality bureaucracy", different kinds of bureaucracy forms are incorporated and mobilised, such as "procedure bureaucracy", "market bureaucracy" or "network bureaucracy", balancing by means of technical equipment plus organisational instruments as connected the system organisation as a whole in between principles of top-down control regulations and learning processes from below (Deichman-Sørensen 2007, 2009). On the other hand, in Norway demands on flexibility in system adaptations also is dealt with by means of lack of congruent planning or steering. Pluralism is a typical Norwegian system trait, historically interconnected by means of the tariff system (eg. Halvorsen & Korsnes 1985, Kjeldstadli 1989). I shall discuss the extent to which tariff categories still might represent a suitable framework of organisational categorisation of competences, leaning on, among others, a German discussion on the reconceptualisation of "Kernberufe" (eg. ITB Working Group 2008).

## **Designing effective workplace learning: Searching evidence for the development of vocational education and training.**

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### Abstract

In the educational policy debate in the Netherlands, policymakers are in search for evidence-based development. Referring to research practices in Health and Medicine, innovations in education should be based on empirical evidence on the impact of educational measures. Vocational education and training (VET) moves towards competence based education, both in the Netherlands as well as in Europe. The European Qualification framework (EQF) is the reference frame for national qualification systems. In the Netherlands, VET is based on a mixed model: 2/3 of the students follow schoolbased courses, with internships in labour organisations; 1/3 of the students follow apprenticeship schemes, based on a labour contract. Work based learning forms in both trajectories an important source of skilling experiences. Nijhof and Nieuwenhuis (2008) state that the belief in the skilling power of workplace learning is not always justified. The workplace is not always the most effective learning environment; in some instances the workplace is even a contested learning place. Especially theoretical knowledge and learning to learn skills do need schoolbased support outside the workplace. On the other hand, work process knowledge, practical skills and social skills are well delivered through workplace learning.

Within VET, workplace learning is programmed in all courses, without much deliberation. The introduction of competence based VET, together with the actual political debate, has raised the need for more empirically based knowledge on the use of workplace learning in VET. For that purpose, the innovation body of Dutch VET has challenged the author to develop a practice based research programme, in which schools for VET and HPE (higher professional education) together with academic researchers investigate the impact of different work related schemes. Seven regional clusters of colleges, including the Dutch Police Academy, have taken up this challenge and started this research programme in spring 2008.

The paper will present first results. The curriculum theory in use is investigated for circa 25 extended teams (teachers and company mentors) for VET and HPE. Through interviews and document analysis, a thick description is delivered of the professional choices made by the extended themes, based on four theoretical issues (learning processes; sequence of practical periods, guidance/assessment, comakership school-company). Through observations and interviews with students, this description is checked in reality and estimations are made of the impact on competence development. During spring 2009, a betting debate will be organised on the effectiveness of the observed schemes. This debate will offer the fundament for experimental research, scheduled for autumn 2009 and 2010. In the concluding paragraph of the paper, an outlook on the empirical debate will be presented.

## Field-specific Workplace Learning in VET

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In many countries, vocational education and training (VET) is increasingly being shifted to the workplace (see e.g. Streumer & Kho, 2006). For example, in Finland, the compulsory, guided and evaluated workplace learning periods (at least 20 credits) were introduced in all study programmes at the turn of the millennium. At the same time several common principles and recommendations for organising learning at the workplace were created. For instance, the VET curricula require that students have to be coached for the workplace and that workplace trainers have to pay special attention to the guidance and assessment of students. The idea is to create similar workplace learning practices to all fields.

However, recent findings on Finnish vocational students' workplace learning have shown that there are remarkable differences between different vocational fields in how workplace learning is organized and how it is experienced by students. Particularly, the fields of Technology and Transport, and Social Services and Health Care differ in many respects (e.g. Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2008; Virtanen, Tynjälä & Stenström, 2008; Virtanen, Tynjälä & Collin, 2008). Therefore, it is important to examine more closely the educational practices and settings related to students' experiences of learning and vocational development in different fields, so as to lay bare the possible causes of the differences between them (Rogoff, 1991).

In this study, we will examine guidance practices during students' workplace learning periods from the perspectives of vocational teachers and workplace trainers. For this study, 12 teachers (5 women, 7 men) and 9 workplace trainers (4 women, 5 men) from both vocational fields (i.e. Technology and Transport, and Social Services and Health Care) were interviewed. Data were analysed by means of content analysis.

Preliminary findings show that the students' guidance practices in the fields of Technology and Transport, and Social Services and Health Care differed from each other. In the field of Social Services and Health Care, the support of the students' professional growth was priority both at school and at workplaces. Also the interplay between teachers and workplace trainers was well-designed and worked well. In the field of Technology and Transport, in turn, students' guidance was experienced more problematic and less well-organized. One reason might be that the teachers did not seem to have possibilities to influence the practices of working life in this field.

The findings suggest that it is important to examine to what extent it is possible to create common practices between different fields and how good practices can be disseminated across the fields.

## **New work learning arrangements: school and companies working together**

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The Dutch apprenticeship system and school-based vocational education are integrated into one vocational education and training system. Work based learning gets an ever growing place in school as well as work based VET. A growing number of different learning and working arrangements and with new connections between school and work based learning. The quality of workplace learning remains a topic of heavy debate. There are two main issues: the quality of workplace learning itself and the connection between workplace and school-based learning as part of an integrated development of vocational competences. New educational designs focussing on occupational core problems (i.e. problem based learning) as well as different and more intensive interaction patterns between employers and vocational schools are developed to improve the connection between learning in school and in the workplace. Working together, employers and vocational schools strive for high quality outcomes.

The paper presents first results from two case studies (regional colleges), that are part of a larger practice based research programme, in which schools for VET and higher professional education with academic researchers investigate the impact of different work related schemes. In the paper we will focus on the sequence of practical learning periods, guidance/assessment and co-makemanship of school and companies in this). We discuss qualities of some new developments and experimental programmes, that combine work and learning in new forms of learning between work and school. There are designed specific working-learning arrangements in which schools and companies work closely together. Real work sites are created, but these are either placed inside the regional college or, when in real companies, they are separated from regular practice (learning islands). There is extra guidance from school as well as the company. Examples are a training ward in an elderly home and a psychiatric hospital, a training facility for teaching assistants, a school restaurant, an administrative unit etc. Whereas some characteristics of real work places are difficult to simulate (i.e. work pressure), learning possibilities are made larger because there is focus on interesting tasks, there is more space for mistakes and guidance is more intensive. Regional colleges design these kind of learning sites for several reasons: creating high quality learning spaces for students who otherwise have difficult access to real jobs/ placements. In this way they hope to make vocational pathways from education to work more inclusive. Also these sites can be seen as double learning arrangements, for apprentices (students) as well as for school teachers and practice trainers.

## Researching pedagogical self-concepts of in-company trainers

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Although in-company trainers<sup>1</sup> are regarded as key figures in vocational training and its development, not many research findings about them are available. This leads to a black-box-phenomenon, for example when the quality of pedagogical acting or usability and acceptance of innovations in vocational training are discussed.

In my doctoral thesis, the pedagogical self-concepts of in-company trainers were evaluated with the so called dilemma interview, an interpretative method deriving from developmental psychology. A dilemma puts the acting person in a situation to decide between two or more options, which all are adequate and promising, but imply certain disadvantages. In a dilemma interview such problematic situations – each representing a class of problems – were discussed, so the basic ideas and the logic of decision making become manifest. While Lawrence Kohlberg (2007), surely the most popular user of the dilemma method, formulated hypothetical situations to study moral development, my approach includes concrete situations of the trainer's everyday-working-life. This is done because work-related, professional attitudes are examined, and it is probable that the same concepts and (defence) strategies, on which acting in work is based, will become manifest in the answers.

Several interviews with trainers have already been conducted and the analysis shows a fascinating range of conceptual emanations, with pedagogical concepts varying in trainee's perception, the definition of apprenticeship's quality and choice of pedagogical methods. Now some of the open questions are:

- Is there one perfect pedagogical concept in this aspect?
- Which impacts has a certain pedagogical concept on quality of apprenticeship?
- Is it desirable and possible to modify a pedagogical concept to raise the quality of apprenticeship?
- Is the dilemma interview a good research method for pedagogical concepts?

### Literature:

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Kohlberg, L. (2007). „Die Psychologie der Lebensspanne“. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.

<sup>1</sup>Following the Eurotrainer study I defined trainers as “people, who stimulate learning and integrate initial and/or continuing training and education functions into their jobs (preferably by actively engaging in carrying out training activities) and who are employed by a private or public enterprise” (Eurotrainer Consortium 2008, p. 3).

## **Servicing the horseracing Industry: apprenticeships past and present**

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Paul Hager's aptly titled chapter 'Finding a good theory of workplace learning' (1999) exemplifies the fact that workplace learning has recently gone from a largely unnoticed topic to one that has attracted unprecedented attention. As a contribution to this exploration, and drawing on data that is being collected for an ongoing PhD thesis, this paper investigates the changing models of workplace learning and training employed by the horseracing industry. It compares the experiences of former indentured apprentices with those of modern apprentices in order to gain insights into the changing practices governing workplace learning and the relations and conditions within which it takes place. It explores whether indentured apprentices received any formal training or learnt 'on the job' 'through common sense' and being shown and asks whether the learning process was a tacit, implicit one where knowledge is gained through practice. It suggests that indentured horseracing apprentices learnt by being part of what Lave and Wenger (1991) have identified as a community of practice. Following the abolition of indentured apprenticeships, training for 16 to 19 year olds has been made mandatory with trainees being enrolled onto the government funded modern apprenticeship. Apprenticeship once existed to enable employers to train the next generation of skilled workers, as was the case in the racing industry, but it is now regarded more widely as a means of achieving social and economic goals as well as a significant part of education and training systems. By means of a comparison with the indentured model, a group of modern apprentices have been followed through their initial nine week training at the British Racing School and, subsequently, interviewed in their places of work. Their experiences have been charted and compared with those of former indentured apprentices. Both groups participate in communities of practice where vocational education and training combine work and learning as part of a continuous ongoing process. Evidence presented in this paper, however, shows that both types of apprenticeship were and are restrictive in nature.

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Lave, J and Wenger, E. 1991. *Situated Learning. Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## **The contradictory location of high school apprenticeship in Canada**

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The educational aspirations and post-secondary participation rates of Canadian youth are very high. For example, over 60 percent of 15 year olds in a national survey conducted in 2000 hoped to attain one or more university degree (Krahn and Taylor, 2005), and approximately half of youth aged 18 to 20 who were no longer in high school were attending a post-secondary educational institution (Bowlby and McMullen, 2002). The popularity of post-secondary pathways is partly due to the lack of a highly institutionalized VET system (compared to countries like Germany) (Heinz and Taylor, 2005). At the same time, employers' and apprenticeship trainers' concerns about shortages of tradespersons coupled with concerns over the declining value of a high school diploma has prompted provincial governments across the country to establish high school apprenticeship programs in recent years. However, the stigma associated with vocational education and associated careers persists within secondary schools. Some provincial governments and educators construct high school apprenticeship programs as "stay-in-school programs" while often employers and promoters of programs seek to raise the status of trades work by attracting the "brightest and best" students.

This paper focuses on high school apprenticeship programs within this broader context to ask the following research questions:

- What kind of student do provincial policies see as clients for high school apprenticeship programs?
- What kind of youth are employers seeking?
- Which youth appear to be entering high school apprenticeship programs?
- Are there differences within and among partners in terms of expectations of youth and their learning capacities?
- If so, how are they reflected in high school programs and what are the implications for youths' learning opportunities?

To answer these questions about policy and practice, we consult provincial documents related to high school apprenticeship programs and reflect on case studies of high school apprenticeship partnerships in three different provinces. Cases in Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia include interviews with employers, unions, high schools, colleges, and other program partners. Our analysis views school-to-work transition partnerships as sites of negotiation between students, teachers, employers, and unions and will therefore draw on critical vocational work (e.g., Simon, Diplo and Schenke, 1999; Kincheloe, 1999) as well as social closure theory (e.g., Brown, 2004; Murphy, 1988). The aim is to better understand tensions within apprenticeship programs so that they can be more effectively addressed in policy.

## **The Industry Training Authority and Apprenticeship in British Columbia: What do they mean by**

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In this paper we address an innovative apprenticeship model that was introduced in British Columbia, Canada to improve the quality of the traditional approach and supplement it with a new industry-led model. The revised apprenticeship model alters the traditional relationships whereby educational institutions take responsibility for the delivery of theory and employers provide training at work sites.

The relationship between education and work in apprenticeship programs is critical to its foundations. In Canada this relationship is recognized through the development of theory in a formal educational environment and subsequent application of that theory in the workplace. During the last few years there have been noticeable disconnects between the academic preparation of students for the workplace to meet the demands of "industry" and employers who appear largely disengaged from the education process. These disconnects result in a fractured, ill-functioning apprenticeship system with students being poorly prepared for either the academic or workplace experience. Lack of adequate preparation results in increased employer disengagement and erects barriers for learners who wish to participate in further educational and training opportunities.

The Industry Training Authority (ITA) is the governing body responsible for trades education in British Columbia. To encourage employer participation and to address shortcomings in the traditional model, the ITA has opted to offer the traditional model combined with a "new model" of trades training. Three primary areas regarded as problematic in the traditional model include the length of formal education, with a focus on theory rather than on workplace competencies; lack of employer involvement in program development; and low completion rates due to employers being reluctant to allow apprentices to return to school. To resolve these challenges, the "new model" of trades training incorporates industry-led program development; full work-based training to meet all required competencies; modular training which allows students to progress through at self-paced rates; progressively credentialed training so that competencies are grouped by level and students receive credentials upon completion of each level.

In this paper we provide an overview of how changes in policy and practice implemented by the ITA have impacted the delivery of trades education in post-secondary institutions in BC. We outline what we have learned from the innovations of the ITA and its impact on current and future apprenticeship training in BC.

# **The role and meaning of occupations in the transition from education to work**

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## Purpose of the paper

The patterns of transition from education to work have generally become prolonged and more complex (Heinz 1999; Gangl & Müller 2003). The consequences of these changes are from the perspective of society that education and work are becoming more separate, and from a subjective perspective that the pathways from education to work are becoming longer, more insecure and less transparent (Hodkinson a.o.1996; Raffe 2003). Different education and training regimes differ in respect to the way they connect education and work and the strength of institutional support they provide (Deissinger 1998; Greinert 1999;Gangl 2001).

The Danish VET system is based the Dual System and occupational labour markets and is noted for having a low level of youth unemployment, and a smooth transition to work (Cedefop 2001). A key institution of this system is the occupation (vocation//profession or in Nordic: Yrke, in German: Beruf). The occupation provides a strong connection between education and work and supports the transition form school to work.

But the role of occupations has been weakened by flexible organisations of work, by modularisation of education and by individualisation of work identities. The purpose of this paper is to explore the current role and meaning of occupations in the transition from vocational education to work and in the labour market careers 5 years the after completion.

## Methodology

The paper deals in the first part with the qualities of the Dual System of VET in relation to transitions with a special focus on the role of occupations.

The second part describes the results of two empirical research projects on transition from school to work in the Danish VET system. It combined qualitative and a quantitative methods and included analysis of national register data, individual and group interviews and surveys. Careers of the former vocational students five years after the completion of a higher secondary level vocational education were explored. Special interest was given to their mobility in relation to the occupation and the subjective meaning of the occupation in their career.

## Results

The first part clarifies the concept of 'occupation' in VET and in the Dual System transition regime. Furthermore it assesses the strengths and weaknesses of vocations a structuring principle for school to work transitions. The second part points to the differences regarding the role and meaning of vocations for former students in VET in their first 5 years of labour market career.

## **Walking the talk: changing the way we work in Australian registered training organisations**

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In 2003, the Australian Government released its national strategy for vocational education and training for the period 2004-2010. Central to this policy was the requirement to build an innovative, client-focused and world class national system of training. Achievement of such a goal was and still is largely dependent upon the capability and capacities of the nation's registered training organisations. In 2004, a consortium of researchers was funded by the Australian, State and Territory governments to undertake research into various aspects of organisational capability. In particular, the research examined careers in vocational education and training; critical issues in teaching learning and assessment; organisational cultures and structures; leadership; human resource management; learning at work and decision-making around professional development. Designed to assist both public and private registered training organisations, the two-year program of research undertaken under the 'Supporting VET providers in building capability for the future' consortium program was managed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research for the Department of Education Science and Training. The work of the consortium has revealed much about the multiplicity of organisations that populate Australia's complex and diverse training environment. In response to demands by governments, industry, learners and the community, registered training organisations are changing the way they approach the delivery of training products and services. This paper will give a brief overview of these changes and synthesize the key findings from the overall program of research.

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## **Workplace learning for fostering transition to higher professional education**

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Qualitative and quantitative discrepancies exist between supply and demand of graduates with a bachelor-level in higher professional education at the labour market in the Eastern regions of the Netherlands. An important group for a higher enrollment in higher professional education are the students who finished senior secondary vocational education (EFQM: VET-4). However, the dropout ratio of this group is about 30 % in the first bachelor year, because of a wrong study choice, an incorrect image and wrong expectations of a bachelor study, and a too low level of relevant competencies. There is also the reverse for a group of students who is in principle eligible doing a bachelor study, but do not transfer because of an underestimation of the own capabilities, a wrong image of the study, etc. Workplace learning is applied to approach this problem.

VET-4 students participate in a partially VET-4 / bachelor workplace learning environment in order to give them also the opportunity to orient to and to get experience with a bachelor level. The goal is to improve the level of competencies needed in a bachelor study, and to provide them a more clear image of the study (difficulty; level of abstraction, job possibilities, etc.) in order to let them acquire a more grounded basis for a study career choice. With that, we have the hypotheses that the enrollment and study success will increase and the study dropout ratio in the bachelor will decrease significantly.

A practice-oriented research project is started in a regional institute for senior secondary vocational education for developing an effective and efficient VET-4 / bachelor workplace learning environment. The phases are: needs assessment, design, execution and evaluation, improvement, and implementation. The needs assessment takes place in a national framework of describing the state of affairs of workplace learning arrangements focussing on the learning potential of workplaces in the sectors Technology, Health & Education, and Economics of the regional institute. Both levels of learning potential – VET-4 and bachelor – are taken into account. Interviews and questionnaires are applied for the determination of the problems with the learning potential of existing workplaces in the regional institute. Next – in narrow cooperation with teachers of the regional institute and practice guides on the workplace – a plan is made up for redesigning the workplace learning environment that takes place in the second phase. The third phase consists of the execution of the design in the educational practice. The formative evaluation of the execution applying a quasi-experimental approach - a second comparable institute will be taken as a control group – will evaluate the impact on student competencies acquired and school career perceptions directly after the workplace learning, and student enrollment, study success and - dropout later on in the bachelor. Improvements are carried out using the evaluation, and finally in the last phase a more permanent implementation is considered. The results of the research are also input for the national project on workplace learning in order to formulate evidence-based heuristics for the design and implementation of workplace learning arrangements. We will report the results of the first phase, the needs assessment.