

WBL-PRO Professional Peer Network: The team talks with the professionals – Dr. Walter Riccius, Berlin, Germany

We are very pleased to present to you today **Dr. Walter Riccius** from Berlin, Germany



Professional background:

Vocational training: personnel developer, graduate jurist, QM-auditor, project developer, lecturer

Professional activities and fields: Education and Employment Research, head of several professional Educational Institutes, project coordinator of international projects in the field of education, personnel and project developer, expert auditor and faculty expert

Employed at: Institut für Betriebliche Bildungsforschung (IBB), free lecturer, Member of science research groups, Member of advisory councils

Please find below what he has shared with the WBL-PRO team:

- 1. Please share with us what the main advantages with respect to work-based learning are.**

In the digital age, the importance, possibilities and the position of this new type of work-based learning in the total system of professional education processes has completely changed. That might be a chance, however, this process needs to be restructured. It is not sufficient to reuse old methods. Moreover, it needs completely new instruments, new functions and forms of support for the involved companies and the work-based learners. That doesn't necessarily mean that any kind of usual and successful work-based learning method practiced before, won't play no significant part any longer. On the contrary, these kinds of methods will get completed, expanded and taken to a new level of quality. As the process of learning includes many different

resources which have been rather rarely and by accident than consciously used before. In addition, work-based learning has significant effects on the efficiency of staff and job options, as, for instance, for staff retention. It saves time by reducing a time-consuming research to find an appropriate education training provider and requires just a minimal disruption at work. Furthermore, its results, as for instance new acquired knowledge, meet the needs of expertise at work. It raises practice-related questions from daily life and supports the research for appropriate answers to solve a certain problem. As its results can get tested directly and, if necessary adapted, the work-based learning is indeed very immediate. It broadens the view of further related specific theme complexes which are necessary for the solution or the expansion of required know-how. It increases the motivation of each learner to find solutions, by individual searching, comparing and testing which definitely is more sustainable and additionally strengthens the capacity of each individual.

2. Please share with us what the main challenges with respect to work-based learning are.

First: Need for strict guidelines or orientations, both derived from the work object or from its future development for which fields and aims new expertise needs to be acquired?

Second: Free availability of technical devices, including programs, software's, platforms, networks for information procurement as well as its storage, editing and transfer (to co-learners and mentors). Moreover, electronical learning systems or the specifically designed software included.

Third: Access to locations which store information and knowledge related to the field of work-based learning: libraries, documentation centres. Ideally, external support from third parties [...]. More precisely, universities or external faculty experts.

Fourth: The learner needs to be able to earn knowledge about how to do specific research, how to prepare didactic material and how to use it for aimed solutions [...]. These are primarily methodical and pedagogical skills to support the learning process and to improve learning outcomes [...].

Fifth: The learner needs to have access to communication. [...] This affects the possibility to exchange ideas, to ask questions, and to listen to answers as well as to communicate ideas and facts.

Sixth: If learners wish to become successful, they need to keep motivated, to stay focused, and to deal with a certain topic (on their own) till they find a solution. In a next step, they need to reflect their personal learning process critically and discuss possibly better learning pathways and outcomes.

The more specific conditions (dependent on work object and work place) could be: a specific software, ways of simulation, access to laboratories to prove practice-related learning results, possibilities of consultation with mentors and experts in the related field of expertise, etc.

3. Please describe any solutions with respect to challenges and/or weaknesses related to work-based learning.

First of all, framework conditions of the involved companies need to be restructured to enable studying at work. In my opinion, the biggest obstacles in this case are the companies themselves. Accompanying several learners during trainings in the last two years, it turned out for me that around 80 % of them have created an appropriate learning environment at home. Only 10 % of them have completed the task with learning support or during their leisure time or they were allowed to absolve the demanded learning sequences at work.

Various companies provide already good approaches to deal with the lack of linguistic skills of their employees who therefore aren't able to solve certain tasks. However, such a process is usually relatively closed and has specific objectives. In terms of certain specific topics regarding content-related expert knowledge we face a completely different situation. [...] One of various questioned companies has tested a certain type of structure which was functionally rather oriented as a kind of promotion of work-based learning. That company initiated regional quality and innovation circles. These circles should pursue the task to take up new business ideas, impulses given by partner companies as well as, improvements by the employees and customer complaints and to edit them conceptually. Ideally, this should lead in the development of new business fields or learning sequences for the service staff. These work groups were formed interdisciplinary and so far, it turned out to be successful at several locations. However, the results have signalled very clearly that these groups need external support [...]:

- to sum up the results of their work in a structured concept
- to outline the real value of acquired knowledge and skills
- to outline the problem of knowledge deficits and to search solutions out of former acquired experiences or shared values
- to suggest a permanent learning process for the involved learners

4. Please share what the most important knowledge, skills and competences for the work-based learning professional are according to you. What kind of trainings are necessary to acquire them?

There are various areas of activities expected from a work-based learning professional. [...] Spoken in a very superficial and simple way: These key action areas should cover the evaluation of framework conditions, the precise determinations of requirements of learners, a conceptual period of the learning design, the implementation of the learning process itself as well as the evaluation of the results.

In this case, we definitely have to divide the mentioned actors into two separate groups: On the one side, the work-based professionals, who have already acquired pedagogical experiences during different processes, tested their methods and who are used to motivate learners

At the other side, the experts do have extraordinary know-how in the required complexes of themes and are likeable to share their knowledge with learners, but do not have pedagogical experience. They usually do have rarely pedagogical experience.

The starting points should be the already acquired competences of a work-based learning professional, to define them precisely and to develop on this basis certain training courses might be a solution. Hence, one could develop a catalogue with several training offers which could first of all serve as basic knowledge for beginners and secondly could be offered, as choices for the experienced work-based learning professionals. [...]

5. Please share information about work-based learning projects you are involved

5.1. Research project: Development of blocks of education for professions as well as professional activities in the field of renewable energies (in cooperation with colleges, universities and companies in Brandenburg)¹

-URL: www.weiterbildungssystem-energietechnik.de

5.2. Research project: Construction of a training centre and development of service-oriented profession profiles for the railway traffic in Turkey²

-funding program: ERASMUS+

5.3. Development and field trial of new profession profiles in the field of technologies and applications for Energy Storage as well as Energy system management³

-funding program: Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie

5.4. Meeting on The Establishment of HAACCP Training Modules on Food and Feed Safety in the Light of The European Standards

-funding program: ERASMUS+

5.5. Quali4Pro-Project- Innovative Approaches for Future-oriented Vocational Training

- funding program: Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung

¹ No official translation

² No official translation

³ No official translation

5.6. Research project: History of Science and Development of Science of drastic political culminations - eras, changes, reorientations and results⁴

-international participation in funding by several countries and universities

Please feel most welcome to like our facebook page and join the linkedin group to get acquainted with many best practices and other useful materials, tools and resources supporting the high quality performance of work-based professionals around Europe and beyond its borders!

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⁴ No official translation