

## **WBL-PRO Professional Peer Network: The team talks with the professionals – Gergana Valkova, Varna, Bulgaria**

We are very happy to present to you today **Gergana Valkova**. She has started working 4 hours a day at the University of Economics - Varna during the second year of her studies. At the moment she is Manager of the Alumni and Career Sector of the University. Her main activity is to provide the link between business and students. Her job is to identify the needs of the business as well as the students' potential in order to find the most suitable workplace for them which often is combined with university education.

Since 2013 Gergana Valkova is a certified career counsellor under international GCDF program. Her professional experience includes 150 individual career consultations, more than 250 students and prospective students and more than 200 long-term unemployed who have joined group sessions. She is a lecturer in Career Development at the University too.



### **Please review below what he has shared with us:**

"According to me learning and work should walk hand in hand in order to lead to successful results.

As a career counsellor at a university I begin with the choice of education. I assume that the choice of primary education is dependent to a high extent on the parents understanding which school is good for their children. This choice is often related to the social status and possibilities.

Choosing secondary education in Bulgaria is required from the person himself/herself. Experience shows that this is a choice made mostly by the pupil burdened by teachers' and parents' opinions. No matter how we would like it to be, this choice is seldom a result of becoming aware about the personal qualities, values and interests.

When the time for the higher education comes a part of the pupils already know what they are interested in. Often the choice about their future profession is influenced by current incentives which they consider as values. Some are lead by the material

motives, others by the status in the society, family professions, demotivation, etc. Values often do not correspond to the real self-assessment of the pupils.

All the above stated are the main reasons for me to have a positive attitude towards work-based learning. According to me the main advantage of working and studying at the same time is on one hand the overall theoretical preparation they will have to acquire and the other hand - the work they conduct will give them the satisfaction that makes learning worthy.

This is of course the good wish. Not all professions provide possibilities to combine learning and working although every work place teaches you to some extent.

For example, it is possible to study for and work as an accountant at the same time. This will help you understand if you like to be an accountant at an accountancy company or in the accountancy department of a big organization. Someone can say that the place you perform certain job is not important. But is it true? Are the people you will communicate with similar? Is the distribution of the tasks the same? We can be good accountants but what our communication skills are - we have no problems in the communication among the team but have difficulties in the communication with external people or vice versa. These are small details but also details that should not be underestimated when we speak about satisfaction from work.

What happens when we study to become a doctor? It is not possible to make a heart surgery to become aware if it is what we are interested in. It is not possible to do it even if we are sure it is what we are interested in if we have not acquired a profound theoretical preparation. The process in these professions is impossible without combining learning and practice at least because they are related to human lives. The educational process before starting the practice is very long at the same time.

The cases when pupils whose values are related to earning a lot of money decide to study to become captains. And what happens after such a difficult education process? When you study and dream about what will happen very often you do not take into account that your relatives and friends will be away, the communication is not as it is on the shore, you have no access to the modern online communication in the middle of the ocean. Are we able to sacrifice these things? How can we answer these questions without real practice? It is again impossible to practice such a profession without profound theoretical knowledge because there are risks related to human life. Additionally there are legal obstacles that are challenges the will for work-based learning is facing.

There are many examples of advantages and challenges in work-based learning implementation. It is difficult to give a synonymous answer because the professions are different; different are the possibilities to implement work-based learning too.

When people start learning without a real professional experience it is difficult for them to assess their choice. WBL is a wonderful possibility to give a chance to the rapidly developing young generation. Technology is already so advanced that even if the teacher and the pupil are not together face to face, the theoretical knowledge can be transferred. e-Learning is more and more widespread which is beneficial to the WBL.

People often change their work places and professions in the dynamic nowadays global world which requires ongoing learning. It is not unusual to see parents and children studying together at the university. Additional trainings for performing different professions are needed but at the same time the financial factor does not allow young people to allocate a lot of time to studying without working. The needs of independence and the incentives for material satisfaction make young people start working earlier and this leads to the need to combine studying and working. Employers are also aware how dynamic life is and that employees often change their workplace and because of this employers are willing to provide more possibilities to study and develop for their employees in order to motivate them to stay.

According to me work-based learning is the correct approach to achieve a satisfied society."

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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