



Integrating Entrepreneurship and Work-Based Learning in Higher Education

# National Literature Review Cyprus

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## PROJECT PARTNERS



This WEXHE publication is applicable to the following disciplinary sectors:

Hard pure (e.g. physics etc.)

Soft pure (e.g. literature etc.)

Hard applied (e.g. engineering etc.)

Soft applied (e.g. management studies etc.)

WEXHE research has showed that there are no substantial differences between these four sectors regarding the implementation of Work Based Learning in Higher Education. Therefore this document represents the four sectors mentioned.

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## INTRODUCTION

This report contains information regarding the WBL in Cyprus. As mentioned in the previous article (published) Cyprus does not have a tradition for connecting the academia with the Industry. We would consider the situation as not mature and needs time to adapt to the new needs and trends

Generally speaking - there is a general feel that WBL or training are only required for Jobs that require manual workers or technical expertise. A very good example of WBL that was abandoned due to immaturity of the system was the HIGHER TECHNICAL INSTITUTE (HTI) which included in the syllabus industrial placements that was compulsory during the academic year but also during the summer. The institute was operated under the ministry of Labour and it had mainly Engineering courses (3 years) which led to degrees equivalent to HND (higher national diploma) It was a mixture of White and blue collar education (if we can use these definitions)

At the time it was considered the top academic organization in Cyprus with graduates wanted for their skills all over Cyprus - It even had students from abroad since all lectures were in English language. Graduates were considered the first choice for engineers since they “could do the job” and since it was not considered as a university degree they could pay them less. This was until the early 1990s

In 1990s it was decided by the government to create a new university - The UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS. There is a general feel that Universities create scientists and there is no need for industrial placement since they are not manual workers or need technical expertise (white collar) as opposed to the HTI which needed to have work placement. Gradually this led the HTI to get less and less students every year and this led to its closure a few years later since all students wanted to be “white collar” + get a university degree and also the parents that their children were scientists and there was no real need to learn anything more

This immaturity of the system led to the situation we have today. The universities still live in their own bubble and the industry is looking for engineers that “can do the job” and they are not very easy to find

For this and other reasons WBL is not very clear for both the industry and the academia. Sometimes a training for a week (for a specific product or service) is considered enough.

## SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING

There are several organizations in Cyprus promoting different initiatives promoting Work Based Learning. One such organization is the The Planning Bureau/Directorate General for European Programs Coordination and Development (DG EPCD) which is the appointed body in Cyprus for the implementation of the European Program Erasmus+. The Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programs and the Youth Board of Cyprus have been appointed to implement the Program, the first in the area of Education and Vocational Training and the second is more specific to the young people in Cyprus.

The DG EPCD is also responsible for the implementation of the National Reform Programme for the Implementation of “Europe 2020” Lifelong Learning strategy in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Human Resource Development Authority and the Cyprus Productivity Centre.

DG EPCD is also responsible for defining the national policy in terms of Research and Entrepreneurship and is therefore, the authority overseeing all the actions of the Research Promotion Foundation and the implementation of the National Strategy undertaken by the Foundation.

The implementation of the National Initiative for Life Long Learning is promoted by taking action in the following four areas of significance:

- Promotion of access and participation of everyone in the program and recognition of its success
- Improvements in the quality and effectiveness of vocational training
- Promotion of Research and development to support Lifelong Learning
- Improvement of employability (promotion of entering/re-entering the work force)

Another organization promoting WBL is the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) whose main objective is to fulfill the needs of the Cyprus economy as those are defined by the social and monetary policy of the state through the continuous education and development of the work force in Cyprus in all aspects. In a nutshell, the HRDA identifies the needs in the Cyprus workforce through its own research and analysis and based on those findings the Authority announces different types of Programs in order to fulfill those needs. By identifying those sectors of the economy that are driving forces of the economy, the Authority offers several schemes that give incentives to prospective employees who are currently unemployed, current employees and employers to participate in educational seminars, schemes that match the qualifications of the prospective employee with vacant positions etc. There are also schemes where the Authority subsidizes for 6 months the salary as trainees for long-term unemployed as well as people that have recently graduated aiming

at giving a chance to those candidates to be employed in the long-run by the companies where they were placed.

Apart from the governmental authorities the universities in Cyprus are the other organizations that promote WBL for their students and graduates. For work placements, there are different ways by which that is done: in the most part through the Career Offices, Career Fairs, as compulsory credits

in the degree of study, departmental contacts and sometimes the professors' personal contacts. When it comes to Internships, for the most part, if it is not compulsory for a student to work as part of their degree they will not choose to do so unless there is a monetary reward.

Universities try to promote WBL:

1. By rewarding students with a grading scheme and/or awarding prizes
2. Identifying the skills and work related needs of the student
3. Using the results to identify the weak points of the WBL effort and aim to improve them
4. Assess the support provided to the students by the university and other external organizations
5. Obtaining accreditation for WBL schemes

Recently, there has been an effort to bring Universities closer to Businesses in order to promote WBL. In order to achieve this, the following actions have been taken:

- Creation of Career Orientation Offices and Liaison Offices with Businesses at the Universities
- Placements short-term placements of students at businesses (internships)
- Short-term training and education programs for businessmen and their employees
- Promotion of collaboration networks between Universities, businesses, and other employers and employees organisations (social partners)

## SECTION 2: TYPOLOGY

Programs of study where work experience is compulsory such as nursing, accounting, primary school teachers

There is no national legislation in Cyprus addressing student placements as yet. Placements are available and are organized by the universities, the professional body of architects and engineers, and other stakeholder associations. According to the Passport to Trade 2.0 survey on placements, only 9.5% of Cypriot respondents consider that the existing information on placements is adequate, while 38.1% considered them inadequate and 33% did not have an opinion. The internet and universities are considered the most important sources of information on placement opportunities. Students who are required to complete compulsory placements as part of their studies, which are eligible under the Erasmus program, can receive support for travelling to other European member countries to complete work or study placements. This is especially beneficial to students, as

companies often prefer to recruit employees who have previous work experience, although the lack of it won't always be an obstacle.

For a number of professional degree programs, placements are a compulsory part of the qualification. Graduates from technical programs in architecture or engineering must have at least 12 months of practical experience in order to be officially qualified and legally able to work and sign documents, and this is regulated by legislation (the statutes) of the professional body of architects and engineers. Practical work placements are also compulsory for university students who are pursuing education studies, whereby students are placed in elementary or pre-elementary schools in Cyprus to teach for one semester.

In Erasmus student placements, monitoring is done by the University, although students have the freedom to arrange their own placements. The present curriculum currently offered by the University of Cyprus does not provide for any industrial training or vocational practice during term-time. So the vast majority of students use the 3-month summer break to complete placements, without conflicting with lessons or examinations. In the University of Cyprus, students are matched with placements by criteria set out by the individual departments, after students submit a 'Form of Interest' showing the available host organisations. The originating and host organisations are bound by the Training Agreement, along with the student. Therefore, the work program of the student is predefined and agreed between the three parties before the beginning of each placement. The Training Agreement for placements is equivalent to the Learning Agreement for studies and is an important document for the monitoring of each placement.

For summer placements, the University Careers Offices are responsible for promoting the program of summer placements both among employers and students. Promotional activity

may include flyers, leaflets, a webpage and personal contacts. The implementation period is June to August with a minimum and maximum duration of 4 to 10 weeks, respectively.

Student placements may or may not be salaried, depending on the organisation that is sponsoring the placement. In the case of summer placements, students will normally receive a nominal payment, which will vary depending on the employer. The employer is also responsible for ensuring that any students are covered by the company's liability insurance throughout the duration of the placement.

(source: <http://businessculture.org/southern-europe/business-culture-in-cyprus/internship-and-placement-in-cyprus/>)

### Collaboration of universities with employers/Liaison offices

Cyprus universities are relatively new and therefore inexperienced in the correct way to promote the collaboration between industry and academia. In order to accelerate the effort to bring academics and businesses closer together the project "Industry Liaison Offices" with funding of €3.1 m EU Structural Funds was run during 2009 – 2014 consistent with the Europe 2020 strategy: "Innovation Union

Some of the aims of the project related to WEXHE were the following:

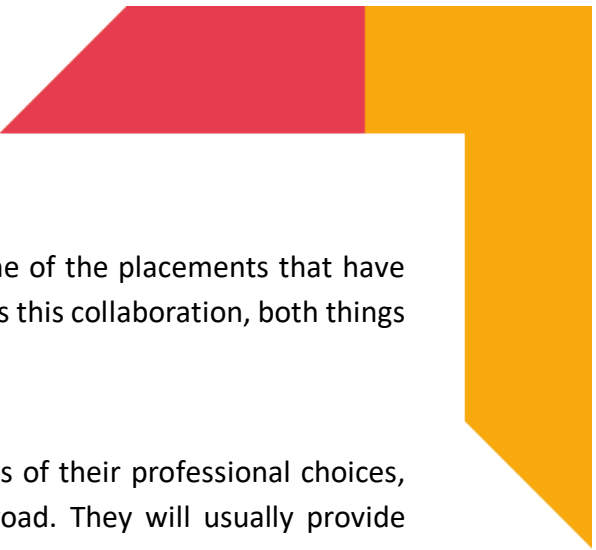
- Collaboration of Private and Public Sector within a mutual objectives scheme
- Development and Promotion of Innovation Culture
- Maximizing opportunities and employment potential of students/graduates through a student's' placement framework

Project results were presented in July 2015 and among the conclusions were the following:

- ACADEMIA: There was no real incentive for academics to collaborate, research was mainly theoretical, lack of regulations regarding IP rights, bureaucracy involved for collaborating with their own established contacts
- BUSINESS: There was no visible gain from the collaboration with the universities and due to the economic crisis at the time this was not a priority
- STUDENTS: No real incentive to participate in Internships / placements since most courses don't require this to graduate, minimal number of students willing to go for unpaid placement, and minimal number of Businesses were willing to spend time and money due to the economic crisis.

This experience shows that there is an immediate need for a better design of the process followed for these placements/internships, a change in the state of mind of both businesses/academia and students and a compulsory incorporation of internships in the





programs of study. This will be achieved by showcasing some of the placements that have been successful and shaping a viable procedure that promotes this collaboration, both things that our current project aims to achieve.

### Career Offices

Careers Offices provide students vital insights and awareness of their professional choices, and assist in exploring career opportunities locally and abroad. They will usually provide information and guidance, through workshops, presentations and seminars on topics such as CV Writing, Interview Techniques, Time Management, etc. Many universities organize Annual Careers Exhibition Fairs, which provides students and alumni with a networking opportunity with potential employers.

In addition, universities provide students with tools that allow them to better identify the positions most suitable to them:

For example, at the University of Nicosia the European Documentation Centre (EDCUNIC), promotes services and tools provided by the European Commission, offers advice, guidance and training on using EU resources/tools to search for internships/traineeships and jobs in the European Union.

At the European University, the Careers Office works closely with the Industry Liaison Office to develop mutually beneficial relationships with partner organisations and to connect students, faculty and industry in valuable partnerships, including research projects, student internships and full-time employment opportunities.

Careers Office has established with prominent organisations across the globe seeking career candidates.

### Personal contacts of university professors with employers

Many academics have contacts with local businesses due to personal relationships that they use to place students that they usually personally consider are well equipped for the positions.

### Psychometric and other tools

Career-guidance instruments developed to assist students' decision making regarding their educational and career future. These tools assess the relationships between the activities that the student likes or dislikes and to the activities of the various occupations he/she is considering.

## SECTION 3: CURRENT STATUS

WBL in Cyprus had been initially available in upper secondary education at technical schools for students between the ages of 14-18. More recently a new apprenticeship system has been established for young people between 14 and 18 who leave formal education. This system allows its participants access to several regulated occupations.

Post -secondary vocational education has been provided at post-secondary institutes of technical and vocational education and training since the 2012/13 academic year. These institutes provide citizens with two-year course to acquire technical qualifications that will better prepare them for the technical market.

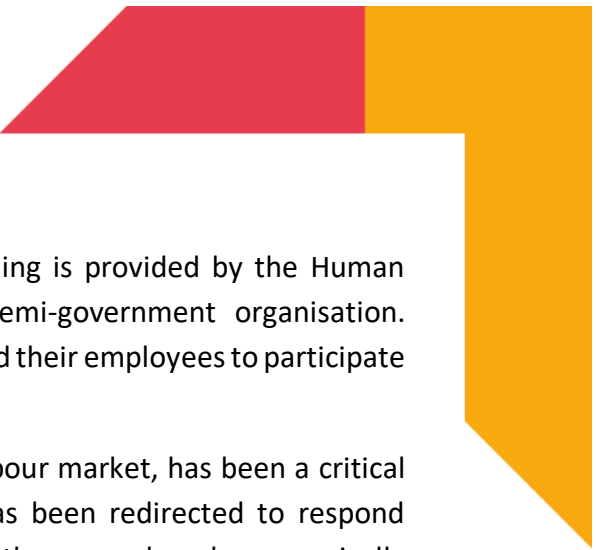
Tertiary, non-university vocational training is provided at several public and private institutions.

Vocational Education Training (VET) is an important and prominent part of the Cyprus lifelong learning strategy (CyLLS) for 2014-20. The main actions designed to achieve the objectives of the strategy include, amongst others, the development of the National Qualifications Framework and the promotion of the System of Vocational Qualifications, the enhancement of lifelong guidance and counselling services, the improvement of the attractiveness of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and the modernization of curricula. Furthermore, the Strategy includes actions for training the unemployed to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes in sectors with a potential for development, job placements of the unemployed to acquire work experience in enterprises/organisations and enhancement of the New Modern Apprenticeship.

Vocational education and training in Cyprus is mainly public. Provision of secondary VET including evening technical schools, the apprenticeship system and post-upper secondary VET is free of charge, while various adult vocational training programmes are offered for a limited fee.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has overall responsibility for developing and implementing education policy. The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance has overall responsibility for labour and social policy and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus plays an important role in vocational training.

Before 2012, VET at post-secondary level had not been available in Cyprus. The MoEC in cooperation with the MLWSI and other stakeholders has established, within the context of the education reform, post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training, co-financed by the ESF, which offer further technical specialisation as of the academic year 2012/13. Amongst the top priorities of the Department of STVE regarding the operation of the post-secondary institutes of VET is the recognition of post-secondary institutes of VET as a public school of tertiary VET.



A major incentive for participation in adult vocational training is provided by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA), a semi-government organisation. Funding provided by the HRDA has encouraged enterprises and their employees to participate in training and development activities.

The recent economic crisis, and its adverse effects on the labour market, has been a critical challenge for education and training in Cyprus. Training has been redirected to respond flexibly and effectively to the crisis, with targeted actions for the unemployed, economically inactive, and the employed.

A major challenge is to address the young as well as long-term unemployment. Actions are being taken to promote employability of young persons and the long-term unemployed, through individualised guidance, training and work placements.

Nevertheless, human resources in Cyprus are characterized by a high level of educational attainment. The percentage of population 25-64 years with tertiary education was 40.5% in 2015, significantly above the corresponding EU average (30.1% in 2015). There is a strong cultural trend among the Cypriot population in favour of general secondary education followed by higher education. Family plays a significant role in encouraging and supporting young people to continue to higher education. Despite the recent economic crisis, the tendency of Cypriots to continue their studies in tertiary education remains high. The number of places in Cyprus is rather limited as there are only three public and five private universities, so a large proportion of young people continuing to higher education enroll in education institutions abroad.

Vocational Training at the tertiary, university level is still in the early stages. In order to accelerate the effort to bring academics and businesses closer together the project “Industry Liaison Offices” with funding of €3.1 m EU Structural Funds was run during 2009 – 2014 consistent with the Europe 2020 strategy: “Innovation Union”.

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- **BUSINESS:** There was no visible gain from the collaboration with the universities and due to the economic crisis at the time this was not a priority

- STUDENTS: No real incentive to participate in Internships / placements since most courses don't require this to graduate, minimal number of students willing to go for unpaid placement, and minimal number of Businesses were willing to spend time and money due to the economic crisis.

This experience shows that there is an immediate need for a better design of the process followed for these placements/internships, a change in the state of mind of both businesses/academia and students and a compulsory incorporation of internships in the programs of study. This will be achieved

by showcasing some of the placements that have been successful and shaping a viable procedure that promotes this collaboration, both things that our current project aims to achieve.

Currently, WBL is underdeveloped and limited to the efforts of specific people in career offices or in some instances businesses/not a well organised initiative

There is resistance by university professors and hesitation by businesses because there is no motive and direct benefit to them

Students/ graduates also lack motive to pursue unless it is part of their program of study. Even in those cases the benefit from their placements is lacking.

## SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTATION

WBL or Vocational education and training (Vet) in Cyprus is mainly public. The Ministry of Education and Culture has overall responsibility for developing and implementing education policy. The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance has overall responsibility for labour and social policy and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus plays an important role in vocational training.

The Cypriot economy is emerging from a deep economic crisis which resulted in deterioration of the labour market, adversely affecting employment and increasing unemployment to exceptionally high levels.

The vocational training system and Training (VET) in Cyprus plays a decisive role in curbing the direct adverse effects of the crisis on the labor market and setting at the same time, the foundations for future growth.

Cyprus, which has limited natural resources, therefore has always relayed on its human resources to obtain a competitive advantage in an era of globalization, technological progress and demographic change. Therefore, the ability of the Educational and Training System to equip people with the knowledge, skills and attitude that will allow them to respond with flexibility and effectiveness in the challenges of the 21st century, is crucial for Cyprus.

The Education and Training system - including vocational training- is currently on track to reform in order to continue to meet the expectations of the Cypriot economy and Society.

The main issues facing the Cypriot Education and training system, as indicated in the national program reform, is to enhance participation in lifelong learning and in VET.

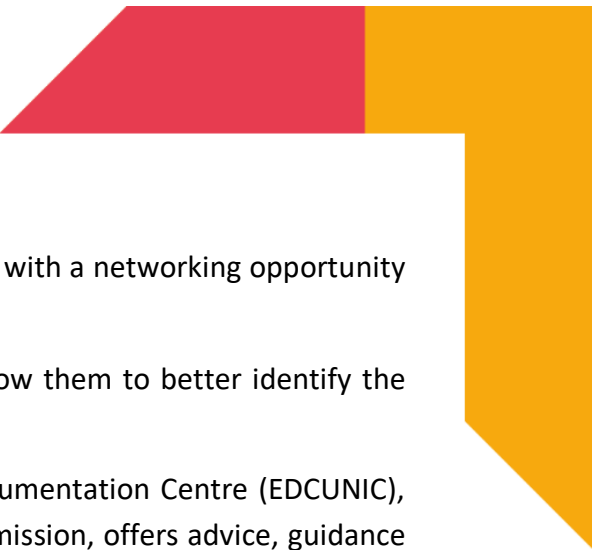
In addition to the public sector HEIs also promote WBL but in a different way. They primarily implement WBL in order to place as many of their graduates as possible to positions following their graduation and thus enhance the reputation of the Institution since employment is the most important concern of graduates. The main challenges of this effort are: a) there is no real incentive for academics to collaborate b) there is no visible gain for the businesses from the collaboration with

the universities and c) there is no real incentive to participate in unpaid Internships / placements especially if their course doesn't require this to graduate.

HEI's try to promote WBL through:

### Career Offices

Careers Offices provide students vital insights and awareness of their professional choices, and assist in exploring career opportunities locally and abroad. They will usually provide information and guidance, through workshops, presentations and seminars on topics such as CV Writing, Interview Techniques, Time Management, etc. Many universities organize Annual



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## SECTION 5: IMPACT

In the long-run, WBL implementation will allow a better development and operation of the Industry Liaison Offices at HEIs. A better collaboration of the Private and Public Sector should be achieved by the establishment of mutual objectives scheme. In addition, the “Innovation Culture” should be further developed and promoted.

If that is achieved then the research findings of the local universities will be explored and implemented by local businesses and commercialised, as the academic results will be more effectively communicated to them. This will also encourage research in the Cyprus Business Society. Furthermore, entrepreneurial activity will be further promoted.

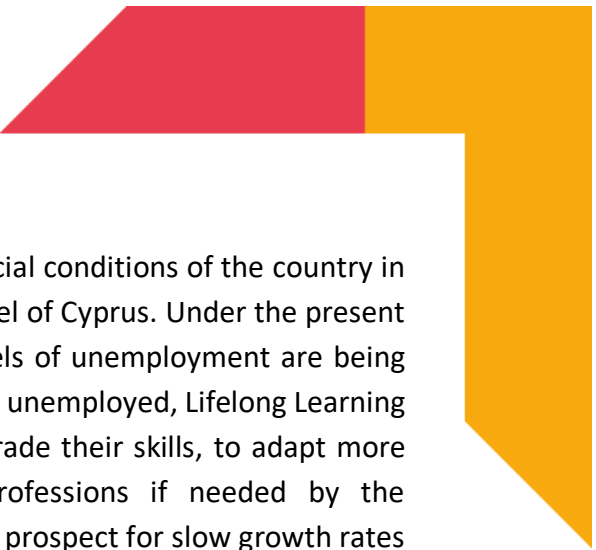
Cyprus, which has limited natural resources, therefore has always relied on its human resources to obtain a competitive advantage in an era of globalization, technological progress and demographic change. Therefore, the ability of the Educational and Training System to equip people with the knowledge, skills and attitude that will allow them to respond with flexibility and effectiveness in the challenges of the 21st century, is crucial for Cyprus.

The Education and Training system - including vocational training- is currently on track to reform in order to continue to meet the expectations of the Cypriot economy and Society. The main issues facing the Cypriot Education and training system, as indicated in the national program reform, is to enhance participation in lifelong learning and in VET.

The European Union has recognized at an early stage that education and training contribute to the transition to the knowledge society and are essential elements both for personal fulfillment and for the development of skilled, trained and flexible workforce, that has the skills and qualifications needed by the European economy and European society to remain competitive and innovative, while contributing to the promotion of social cohesion and inclusion. The importance attached by the European Union in the fields of education and training is evident in various policies, such as the "Europe 2020" and the Cohesion Policy.

The need for investment in knowledge, skills and abilities, throughout people’s lifetime and in all areas of education and training is imperative. Preschool education and school education lay the foundation. Vocational education and training plays a key role in facilitating the transition from the world of education to the world of work. Higher education trains the staff that is needed for the promotion of research, development and innovation. Upgrading the skills of adults is essential in order to have a productive workforce.

The education and training systems must be modernized in order to face current and future challenges, taking also into account the increasing impact of technology, in education, training and learning. The downturn of the Cyprus economy in recent years resulted in very difficult consequences that spread across the economic and social life of Cyprus, and is expected to mark our country for many years. The crisis in the banking sector after the decisions of the



Eurogroup in March 2013, and the deterioration of the financial conditions of the country in recent years affected the entire economic development model of Cyprus. Under the present conditions of the economic crisis in Cyprus, where high levels of unemployment are being recorded, particularly among young people and the long-term unemployed, Lifelong Learning (LLL) is a factor sine qua non as it allows individuals to upgrade their skills, to adapt more easily to change, to move freely between different professions if needed by the circumstances. The need for rigorous fiscal consolidation, the prospect for slow growth rates and high unemployment should not be an obstacle to the reform process in the fields of education and training