

Tandem Training of Tutors for Work-based Learning

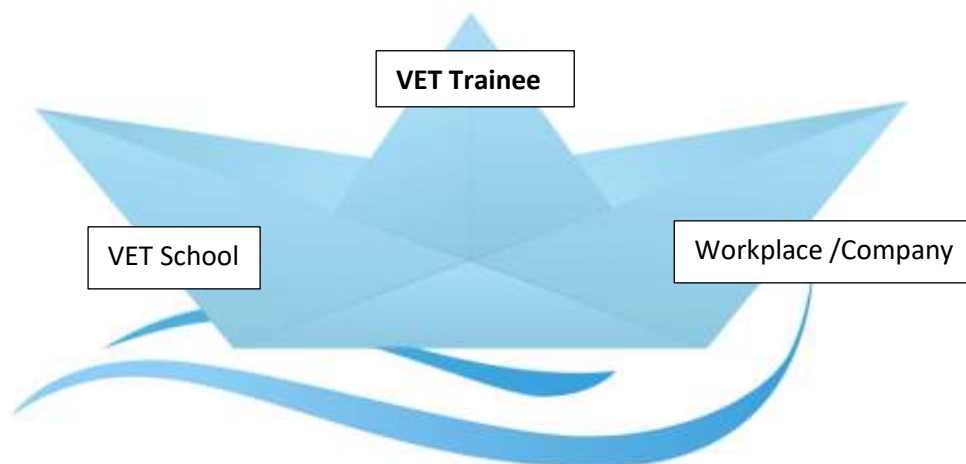
What do we mean by Tandem Training?

Currently, for our new work-based learning (WBL) system, workplace tutors are required to have training to ensure guidance for VET trainees during work placements.

We propose training of **workplace tutors together with VET tutors**, i.e. both sides: host company tutor and school tutor meet at the training workshop.

Why Tandem?

When we analyse real traineeships we easily come to a conclusion that the quality of the traineeship does not depend only on the actions of one or two persons. It usually depends on how good and effective is cooperation and communication of 3 involved parties or persons: VET school tutor, workplace tutor and the trainee. Do they have the same understanding of the goals, learning plan, and steps of WBL process?



The boat picture is made of 3 triangles. VET School (tutor) and host company (workplace tutor) both support and guide the trainee through WBL. The lines linking the 3 triangles (3 persons) illustrate communication and cooperation throughout the way. WBL is **teamwork of VET school and company**. We can say VET tutor and company tutor **work in tandem**.

Aims and Policy Context of Tandem Training

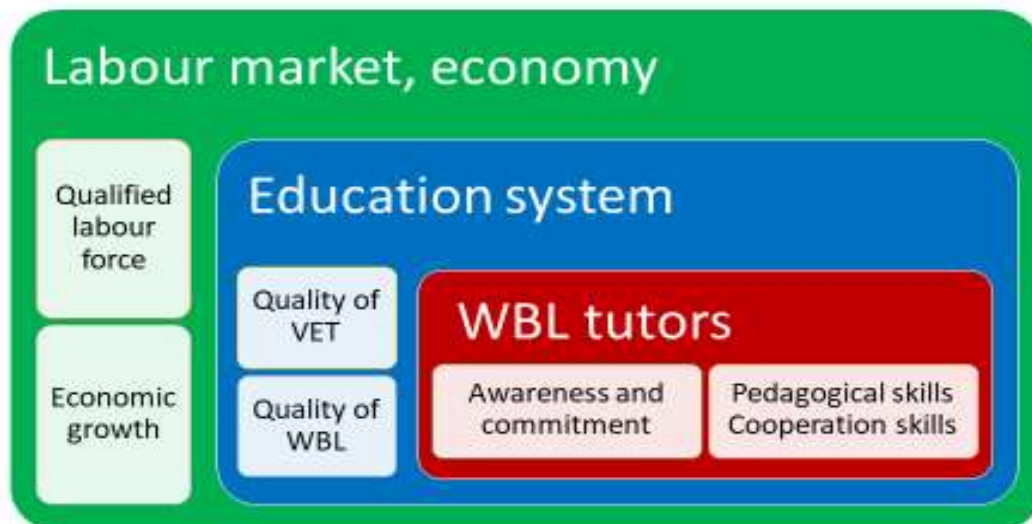
Quality of WBL and cooperation between VET and companies are keys to quality and attractiveness of VET. Competences and motivation of staff are also a pillar of quality. Thus, through Tandem Training we address several policy priorities of national and EU VET systems:

- Promoting WBL in all its forms
- Quality of WBL
- Cooperation, partnerships, continuous dialogue between VET and companies
- Continuous professional development WBL tutors.

Our training concept rests on assumption that **VET tutors and workplace tutors are key persons for ensuring quality of WBL and VET**. Their skills, understanding of their role,

and their commitment make WBL attractive for trainees and ensure that VET serves the economy.

Why WBL Tutors are so important?



When and where Tandem Trainings have taken place

In Latvia, tandem approach has been developed over several years step by step with the support of EU projects. In TTT4WBL project, through cooperation of several partners, we have organized national trainings for 300 WBL tutors (plus 50 more through other initiatives) in Latvia, more than 300 in Lithuania, more than 200 in Estonia.

We have also tried out Tandem Training for transnational WBL (international mobilities of VET trainees): for instance, in strategic partnerships under activity “joint staff training”, it is possible to bring together VET tutors and workplace tutors from different countries.

What's in the Tandem Training program?

The workshop program addresses 3 main groups of competences of WBL tutors from VET and workplaces:

- Organization and planning of WBL
- Guidance, communication involving the trainee
- Communication and cooperation between VET school and company.

Training of 2 days (16 hours) is organized as an interactive workshop, setting up small groups in which informal communication between VET and workplace tutors can take place.

The content is based on going through WBL process step by step, starting with planning and preparation, learning at workplace, evaluation and assessment. And the whole process is viewed through the eyes of each of 3 sides: VET tutor, trainee, workplace tutor.

Going through WBL process:



Our methods involve analyzing practical examples, real-life cases contributed by companies or trainees, role plays, simulations, problem solving, brainstorming.

In case of Latvia, 16 hours of classroom workshop were combined with independent work (hometasks or e-learning) to complete a program of 32 hours.

In ideal case, VET tutors and company tutors are potential partners in forthcoming traineeships. It is important that VET and company tutors represent the same sector.

Target groups of Tandem training

The training course is primarily designed for tutors from VET and workplaces directly involved in leading traineeships of VET students. However, since the program includes planning and organization of WBL and has much focus on cooperation between VET and companies, the course may be useful for middle management of VET schools (e.g. WBL coordinators) and HR managers and WBL coordinators from companies.

Why VET tutors need this training?

Sometimes we have found it difficult to convince VET tutors that they should take part in the training. Usually they say: “Oh, but we do not need any training. We have pedagogical skills and diplomas”. Many of them have not considered how to use pedagogical skills specifically in WBL context. Tandem training links pedagogy with an action plan through WBL process. And the biggest gain for VET tutors – Tandem Training is an opportunity to start planning and organization of WBL together with company representatives. It is not just training, it is partnership-building, learning to communicate between school and company.

Impact of Tandem Training

Almost all tandem workshops have been successful: we can see it from the atmosphere of trainings and, most of all, from the feedbacks of participants. Summarizing feedbacks, we can say that the main results are:

- A common vision of high-quality work-based learning;
- Overcoming stereotypes (school vs. company);
- Learning from each other, making personal contacts
- Building trust between VET and company, learning to work in team;
- Learning to work in team, creating a community of WBL tutors.

Participants Feedbacks in evaluation sheets – “What I gained from Tandem workshop”:

- Structured approach to organization of WBL
- Ideas for feedback and evaluation giving
- We understand what schools expect from us
- Looking at myself as tutor from aside
- Experience through good examples from life about problem-solving
- Cooperation between 3 persons as the main element
- How to become a good tutor
- Self-reflection about my pedagogical work

- Positive communication between company and school representatives
- Vision how to introduce WBL model in my school
- Experience of others
- Need to work in team, be social, understand young people
- New contacts
- Understood that WBL is team-work and that all parties involved need to learn
-, etc.

Quotations from interviews with participants:

“It is good we were together with school tutors. I understood that their work is hard and we need to work together”.

“Before, when I saw my colleagues working with trainees, I thought: Thank God, I don’t have to do this. Now I think, I can help them learn something. And I realized, I have to change myself”.

Impact from Trainer’s perspective

As a trainer of WBL tutors I work in tandem and also in non-tandem approach – with groups of workplace tutors from companies who need to get certificates to start WBL. I can compare the two approaches and I can see how much more effective Tandem Training is. When workplace tutors are alone in the group, they tend to be in opposition to VET schools and blame schools for all VET failures. When workplace tutors and VET tutors are in a workshop together they gradually come to respect each other’s arguments and in the end they agree - it has to be teamwork. The greatest result of Tandem Training is the feeling of group synergy, willingness to continue working together.

It is much easier to be a successful trainer in a tandem workshop: I have to work less as a trainer, but more as a moderator guiding the dialogue between VET and company representatives. Several times in the trainings of workplace tutors they have asked: why are schools not here? Do they know all this? **Indeed, I believe that Tandem training is not only a tool for developing skills. It is also a tool to introduce common WBL standards and establish the same understanding between VET schools and companies about VET and WBL.**

What could be the future of Tandem Training

Considering the future of Tandem Training we should remember its double role:

- 1) **way of training workplace tutors** who need certificates for WBL
- 2) **WBL governance tool:** a format in which regular communication between VET school and its partner companies; a partnership-building mechanism.

In the context of training workplace tutors, the next step should be a validation system for those who have acquired the necessary competences through experience (prior learning). Validation system in its turn should rest on qualification requirements for a WBL tutor. If these requirements place sufficient emphasis on cooperation skills, planning and organization of WBL, Tandem Training would be the most effective way to acquire these skills.

My personal view is that in a school-based VET system there should be a school-based WBL tutor training system. In that case it would serve as WBL governance mechanism, as a VET-business cooperation building mechanism.

In practical terms Tandem Training can be organized easily when schools bring their partner companies and school VET tutors together for a workshop. In that case VET and workplace tutors represent the same sectors. In that case the workshop serves as the 1st step towards starting WBL together:

- Getting to know each other (school - company; VET tutor – workplace tutor)
- Planning WBL process together, agreement on who does what
- Common understanding of guidance and assessment
- Both sides improving guidance skills
- Updating and sharing knowledge about industry/sectoral developments, etc.

Tandem workshop could be a regular school event each year or once in 3 years – to follow up on changes at VET schools, changes in companies and related industries; updating WBL process, bringing in new tutors, experienced tutors sharing their stories, updating guidance skills, discussing specific difficult cases and motivation mechanisms.

TTT4WBL project provided several opportunities in promoting tandem training:

- Organize tandem trainings on mass-scale in Latvia
- Transfer this approach to neighboring countries Estonia and Lithuania
- Promote this approach at EU level through dissemination activities
- Through involving researchers, assess the effect of tandem training.

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