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EUE-Net Guidelines for Practical Placements of Students

Editors: Doru Talaba, Simona Lache

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1. INTRODUCTION IN PRACTICAL PLACEMENTS OF STUDENTS

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1.1. Concepts and Situations of PPS

One of the most important dimension of the quality management system is higher education institution is the developing of university strategies adapted to the labour market. An essential role is played by the practical placement system which is part of the curriculum.

The organization of the practical placement in the curricula is an essential preoccupation of the management of the faculties, both as number of hours, as positioning within the three years of studies, and as modality of doing from the efficiency and utility point of view. Many times, the research practice in order to elaborate the license paper capitalize the results of the practical placement, the students being elaborated case studies and concrete models of improving different practical components at an institutional level; this means that the theoretic concepts are applied to practice, as well as the theory is developed through practical integration into research.

Any program of change must begin with an objective evaluation of the current situation in the national and international context. Such an analyze implies the identification of the strengths and weaknesses at an institutional level through some adequate concepts: practical placement (PP), PP principles, practical evaluation system.

A practical placement:

- is a learning experience which enables students to develop their knowledge and skills;
- is a working experience for students in which they act as employees in order to achieve certain competences;
- is any element of work, observation and experience in a workplace outside the University which is a requirement of any subject offered by the University,

Practical placement principles consist of a set of concrete curriculum rules for practical placement that explain the developments in this area. The most relevant principles for the contemporary universities are:

- **principles of PP connection to the labour market** – it means that the PP programs should be created so that to assure an optimal insertion on the labour market;
- **principles of maintenance the adequate profiles of studies** – it consists of the need of correlation among different disciplines as well as different professional development programs in a changing society when we assist to a huge diversity of the knowledge domains;
- **principles of transferability PPS** – it means the horizontal and vertical transfer of the informational components at the level of the specific competences; in other words,

between theoretic modules and PPS a strongly connection must be created in the sense of a flexible relation between theory and practice;

- **principles of coherence** – it takes into consideration the university internal credit system according to which the PP curriculum is correlated to the other study subjects;
- **principles of equity of the professional and educational chances** – it means that the PPS system allows every student to maximize his/her potential; in other words, the PPS must identify some compulsory components needed to admit the diploma validation and recognitions and also some optional components that might correspond the personal expectations, motivations and abilities;
- **principles of personal development** – this principle implies the curriculum decentralization; from this perspective, the optional or elective discipline correlate the compulsory frame defined by the professional validation to the personal interests and aspirations and to the specific educational context.

Evaluation system for PPS consist of an internal university mechanism of appreciation of the PPS activities and it conversion into a grade according to a scale for passing or failing. Evaluation is very important for the entire PPS system:

- PPS are significant curriculum components for obtaining credits that are needed by the students in order to finalize their studies and get the degree;
- PP activities are different credited according to the type of the PP included in the curriculum and accepted by the university;
- Evaluation of the practical stage or of the activities is made according to some documents, such as:
 - Final Rapport of Practice – this is a standardized paper on a specific subject identified by the placement coordinator together with the supervisor;
 - Journal of Practice – it consists of a complex description of the professional activities the student developed and also observations, in a personal manner, of the events during the practical placement period;
 - Essay – this is a description paper for the practical stage of a maximum length identified by the university;
 - Case-study – it may be elaborated by the student him/herself or it can be solved by the student during the PP stage.

Placement coordinator means the member of the staff of the University responsible for supervision of the experience or placement.

Supervisor means the person in the workplace responsible for the direction of the student during the placement.

The conceptual analyze of the practical placement implies delimitation on two levels: institutional and national.

At the **institutional level**, the practical placement is a compulsory or elective activity included in the curricula and its length is different from one university to another from one profile to another:

- 1-2 days/week or 2-3 weeks/semester as a work experience of approximately 160 hours;
- 5-6 weeks placement during holiday time;
- 3 months summer placement as a single period in one year of studies or several periods in different years of studies;
- 6 months placement as a single period or as several periods during studies within the same company;
- 12 months/year self-employed placement for the students who have entered to the labour market and have become employees.

At the faculty level, a professor called placement-coordinator is nominated, to be responsible of the PPS and students orientation to institution/companies. The contact person from the company is called supervisor and coordinates the stage and the practical activities inside the company; many times this supervisor is a person from the Human Resource Department. The University and the host institution become signatories of the Practical Convention, compulsory document, no matter if the host institution is chosen by the faculty or by the student.

At the national level, there are several methodologies, standards and references standards and lists of performance indicators that impose to Universities the re-shaping of the PPS, according to quality management system for higher education institutions.

1.2. Role and Responsibilities in the PPS

There is a considerable evidence that practical placement during a course improve the student performance.

The practical placement is very useful for the students, helping them to find their professional direction. PPS is sometimes the first contact with the business community or the labour market. PPS becomes a good opportunity to increase the student's experiments on professional life.

Several responsibilities must be defined for the actors involved in the PPS:

- Students;
- Placement-coordinator;
- University;
- Supervisor.

Responsibilities for the Students:

- To behave ethically and in a manner which promote the good name of the University;
- To adhere to the PP requirements in order to fulfill their obligations;
- To understand the goals of the curriculum;
- To inform the placement coordinator of any aspect which may diminish their capacity of undertaking the placement;

- To accept the supervisor’s recommendations regarding the behavior inside the company;
- To consult with the supervisor regarding their time spend inside the company;
- To be punctual and to inform the supervisor of the possibility of the attending the placement;
- To provide a medical certificate in case of several absences.

Responsibilities for the Placement Coordinator:

- To organize the program and to distribute the students to companies;
- To introduce the students to the supervisor in case the latter prefers that;
- To be available for communication on placement subjects by e-mail or telephone for the supervisor and students;
- To provide information on placement requirement to the students;
- To evaluate the students activity;
- To suggest to the management improving directions for the PPS.

Responsibilities for the University:

- To develop long term cooperation relationship with companies if they contribute to the students increasing competences;
- To sign the special professional agreements with the companies;
- To accept the recommendation from the people involved into practice for the theoretic education.

Responsibilities of the Supervisor:

- To ensure that students read the rules of how to behave inside the company;
- To accept the role of facilitator of learning;
- To provide a diversity of learning experience;
- To clarify the outcomes of the placement to the student;
- To provide a safe work environment;
- To help the student to integrate in the environment of the department.

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2. THE CONCEPT OF STUDENT PLACEMENT

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For about forty years and with a growing importance the links between universities and enterprises have taken on a social stake and have been promoted as the lever of modernisation of the educational system. Different events have favoured this evolution especially the strong impact of the economical crisis on youth unemployment. The paradox was that increasing classes of young people were more educated and more graduated but they had more difficulties to get a job, especially a first job. The connection between the academic world and work experience was developed as a solution to adapt curricula to the evolution of society and of work organisation. The practical placement with work experience was presented as the innovative answer to graduates' difficulties to integrate the job market.

The reasons for the generalisation of professionalization in higher education are threefold:

- a political and social reason: on one hand, answer to the traditional criticism toward high education as an “unemployment maker”; on the other hand improve higher degree diploma on job market.
- an institutional reason: a new legitimacy for the educational and training systems which have the opportunity to demonstrate their social and economical usefulness
- a strategic reason: the necessity to fill the gap between high education and working worlds in order to develop connection between universities and companies and to adapt to the society evolution.

In most European countries, the rapid change of the society during the last decades, has urged to look for new approaches in higher education. Until recently, the university considered that its role was to produce and transmit knowledge. However, the fast evolution of techniques, the strong competition in industry and business, the emergence of a new population with different backgrounds in the university, has confronted the world of education with new missions. University was pushed to add to its traditional role, professional objectives in order to respond to the demand of industry and employees for professional skill.

2.1. Concept, definition

Practical placement encompasses several realities according to the national dispositions. It concerns institutional system, pedagogical organisation, modalities to get a qualification.

The general definition is a period of time spent by students in a company in order to be initiated to work organisation, to get work experience and to be assessed for skills, competences and qualification acquired.

The practical placement can be compulsory related to the academic training program depending of its focus and status. It is the case for alternate periods at university and in the company during the academic year.

The student is supervised by a supervisor or a tutor in the company and often also by a teacher at university.

From a pedagogical point of view the practical placement can mainly be a way to acquire know-how, a work- based learning process, or a means to apply knowledge, the assessment will be different in both ways.

The student can be paid during the working period by the company, the state or the local authority. He can be supported by a contract of employment like in the french apprenticeship system. His practical placement can be taken into account to get unemployment allocation, pensions, or other financial support. The innovative notions introduced by practical placement are the references to competences, know-how and behaviour skills as team work, communication (written and oral report), work organisation, assessment of capacities to handle an argument in different concrete situations, capacities to solve a problem or to develop a project in practical contexts. Work- based learning generates knowledge different from the academic one, a return on action, a reflection on the occupational activities in order to extract good practices. Placement learning highlights also new social values like the culture of autonomy, efficiency, responsibility, mobility, appreciations on labour market.

2.2. Practical placement : Who? Why? How?

The three main actors in the practical placement of students, i.e. the student, the enterprise and the university, may consider this new approach to higher education in a different way, according to their objectives. Also what can be an advantage for one of them, may appear as a complication or even a disadvantage for another. The success of such practice is based on a delicate balance where the different organizations or people involved can obtain a benefit from it. But mainly, the achievement of practical placement depends on a strict definition of the process and of the role of each partner.

The main contributions of practical placement to professionalization in higher education as well as the conditions of success are examined here from the point of view of the three partners, the student, the enterprise and the academic institution.

2.2.1 Benefits

i. The student

- It is an intermediate period between studies and employment which facilitates his next employment,
- He/she turns into practice his/her academic knowledge by developing his know-how,
- He/she reinforces his/her motivations to study,
- He/she learns about the functioning of a company,

- He/she develops his/her professional behavior.

ii. The enterprise

- It can be a test period before employment,
- It can be a workforce to develop new labors or to explore new fields that the enterprise has not time to investigate otherwise ,
- It is an opportunity to introduce new knowledge or new technologies developed in universities, directly through the student, or indirectly by establishing connections with research teams.

iii. The academic institution

- It improves its social role by giving more chance to its students to integrate the job market,
- It can integrate new topics or new instrumentations to adapt its curriculum on industrial needs,
- It can develop industrial connections which can bring funding and new technology developments.

2.2.2. Conditions of success

First, in order to guarantee the involvement of the enterprise, the tasks assigned to the student have to fit the industrial projects.

In order to ensure to the student a maximum benefit from the internship, a specific agreement has to be written and signed by all partners. It includes the assignments, the rights and the obligations of each party. Mainly, the following items must be well defined:

- iv.* the objectives for the student by the academic tutor
- v.* the guide of good practices
- vi.* the activities and the results to achieve
- vii.* the schedule of conditions which includes the list of the tasks, the duration of each step and the identification of the supervisory staff
- viii.* the means made available by the company to accomplish the tasks

2.2.3. Some problems to avoid

- the student is considered as a cheap labour,
- the student is employed to do various tasks which are not clearly related to his curriculum, or which level is too high or too low,
- the connection between the enterprise and the academic institution is too loose,
- the enterprise's tutor is not enough available.

2.3. The historical and international context

European countries have different traditions in the vocational training area. Since the beginning of the seventies the modernisation of higher education has been focused on a general rising of qualification levels by a massive access to universities (France, Netherlands, Denmark and nordic countries) or by developing the “dual system” (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) based on the companies’ investment in the contents and modalities of apprenticeship. In parallel, in the United Kingdom, Belgium, as in southern countries (Spain, Portugal, Greece) qualification is acquired on the job out of the educational system.

During the last twenty years European countries have been orienting their policy to adapt with more efficiency the vocational training system to the social economical context.

At the european level , the Bologna declaration signed in 1999 by 39 european countries and the European council in Lisbon in 2000 have promoted the vocational education and training model with an European system of capitalization and transfer of credits based on assessment of competences

In this framework of developed original responses we can gather in the following specific groups.

2.3.1 German speaking countries and Nordic countries: professional culture

The main common feature of German speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) is the “dual system” based on a practical training in companies and a theoretical part at school. It concerns short technical education. But the specificity of the process, the constraints and the high cost of the system, the investment of enterprises, the trade unions and the Länder, the key role of the “training rules” (Ausbildungsregelungen) are often undervalued as compared to their international counterparts. This context explains that the part of big corporations is getting more important than SMEs, particularly because it occurs that they financed the students’ training and sometimes support the courses.

Even if nowadays students of these countries are often more attracted by higher education in fachhochschulen and universities, the dual system still attracts them. Besides as competition between young higher educational graduates on job market is growing, some graduates enter the dual system after their degrees.

On the contrary, Scandinavian countries strengthen their apprenticeship system especially the Denmark. The common point with Germany is a tradition of social dialogue. In fact the “dual system” is less structured than in Germany and sometimes work placement, when it is difficult to find, is replaced by practical learning at university.

In Norway, an original successful policy enhances the partnership university – company by developing “2+2 model”: 2 academic years followed by 2 training years in enterprise.

2.3.2 United Kingdom: culture of performance

Practical placement or sandwich courses are marginalized in higher education and concerns less than 10%. Sandwich courses or integrated courses alternate study periods in colleges and training periods in industries, a common arrangement is 6 months at college

followed by 6 months in a company for the first three years of the course with a final fourth year at college. But there is a variety of periods and sequences.

The practical placement is not a prescriptive period but is based on the acquisition of a qualification, referred to NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) system, at the end of the studies. What are assessed are the performance and individual competences to perform activities rather more than the knowledge necessary to handle the activities.

2.3.3 Countries with little tradition in practical placement of students

Those countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and southern countries) have no traditional culture in partnership between university and enterprise. The practical placement during the studies is developing slowly. But there is a strong traditional knowhow of work training on job out of the institutional system.

2.3.4 Countries mixing general and professional culture, education and training

This group of countries (France, Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland) handle practical placement in general curricula as in vocational curricula and besides France carries on a vocational training system with an optional salary status for students: with or without apprenticeship during the studies.

2.3.5 The French situation

As in most European countries, one significant challenge was the introduction of the practical placement of students (PPS) in some curriculum. The important evolution of the french vocational system is due to a decentralization of public services and diversification of the training modalities and institutional disposals.

To answer to the demand for professional training in higher education, two different approaches of the PPS have been made in France to respond to the demand for professional training in higher education:

⇒ *stage*: continuous period of professional training in an enterprise

⇒ *enseignement en alternance*: alternate university-enterprise work-based learning

In the frame of vocational training involving mobility between European countries, only the so-called *stage* has to be considered here.

This system exists since many years, but was, until recently, limited to only some technical and short curricula, such as BTS¹ and DUT². In the BTS, there is two training periods in company, of approximately one month duration each, one each year. In the DUT, this period is 10 weeks minimum, generally at the end of the second year, and hence may be considered, in some cases, as a test period in the view to be hired. In both cases, there is an academic and an enterprise tutors. The academic tutor has to meet the enterprise tutor and the student in the enterprise. At the end of the year, the student must present an individual written

¹ BTS : Brevet de Technicien Supérieur, two years curriculum after High School, in technical college

² DUT : Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie, two years curriculum after High School, in University

report and an oral presentation supported by slides in front of an examination board where are represented both the academic and the enterprise tutors.

The so-called *stage* as been recently extended to other curricula of the university, but with less strict rules about duration, connections between academic and company tutors and final evaluation.

To conduct the relationship between the different partners - company managers, tutors, students, professors - the academic tutor must have a good enterprise culture, a good grasp of the Socratic pedagogy and a good experience of group expression techniques and of problem solving.

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3. MODELS OF PRACTICAL PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN EUROPE

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3.1. Identification of existing models

Student placements are becoming an important component of many university disciplines. Industrial placement, practical placement or work placement are the terms used to describe the planned working period of students during the penultimate year of their studies in a sandwich course. This planned working period is usually part and parcel of their study programme and provides them the opportunity to put theoretical knowledge into practice. In the past, the participation in industrial placement schemes might have received relatively little attention. However, in the last few years there has been widespread utilization, especially within sandwich courses in UK higher education (Gush & Hall 2007). Students who do not undertake an industrial placement are less likely to find employment than those with industrial experience (Hall 2007). In addition to that, Colley and Jamison (1998) stress that students who participate in industrial placement experience are achieving better academic performance in the completion of related coursework, better attendance, and higher graduation rates (Colley & Jamison 1998).

It is during placements that students have the opportunity to translate theory into practice, experience the 'real world of working' and learn about professional values. All practice placements should provide the student with a variety of learning opportunities to enable them to achieve the relevant learning outcomes. These typically involve combinations of observation and enquiry, hands on assessment and practical activities, self directed study, working in groups as well as direct supervision from a practice educator (teacher, tutor etc) to reinforce work-based training.

3.2. Models for placement

There are several models for students' placement. Each of these is briefly reviewed. Duignan (2002) defines two different models of placement which are as follows:

1. Laissez-faire model:

In this model, the student is given an indication of what he /she is expected to derive from placement; it may include guidance on the compilation of a log book or diary; tasks given to the student in the work environment is at discretion of the host.

The benefit of this approach is that students have a clear idea of what to expect from placement. The drawback is that there are no clear indications of how students would be assessed.

2. Formal-structure model:

In this model, the whole placement environment from initial information sessions, preparation of the CV, instruction and practice in interview techniques, through to the interview and selection by the host firm (placement co-ordinator) and the work experience itself is systematically controlled to achieve pre-determined outcomes. This model will include some or all of the following:

- a) appraisal of performance in the workplace by host and university;
- b) a formal tri-partite learning contract;
- c) assessment for academic credit;
- d) post-placement activities such as seminars and de-briefing sessions.

The main advantage of this scheme is that there are clear procedures to follow and each person, such as the student, the university and industrial person in charge of the student knows what has to be done. The disadvantage is that it takes time to set up the procedures in the first place.

Other different models defined by Coll & Eames (2000) classify organizational models as:

– ***Decentralized model***

In this model, the program is organized as part of an academic department and functions totally within it.

– ***Centralized model***

This model functions by means of a single department or group that is responsible for all the students across subject disciplines.

– ***Centralized-decentralized model***

This model consists of coordinators housed within their departments, but the program is overseen by a central group that serves to set the policy that applies throughout the institution. These models represent a continuum of degree of interaction between the coordinator and the student, the employer and the faculty. The placement coordinators' role varies significantly according to the model.

The delivery of placement leading to the realization of potential benefits for all stakeholders (university, student and enterprise) is not a simple task. It can be argued that 'there is no single model of successful practice' (Martin 1997) and programs have to be tailored to suit the particular needs of the stakeholders involved, whilst considering all the available resources.

Besides the above models, there are also variations of the above models used in different disciplines such as the health sector. Discussions of some of these models follows below.

Apprenticeship models

The Apprenticeship models involve one educator supervising one student, in any clinical setting. Usually the educator shares part of their caseload with the student while continuing to carry the rest of the caseload. (Martin et al 2004). This model continues to

evolve to reflect changes in thinking about education and learning. In this model, the educator is more of a manager/facilitator (of learning) and the student is the self-directed learner.

The disadvantages are that (NHS Scotland 2007):

- Limited capacity to increase student numbers
- Time pressures on educator who has to manage existing caseload in addition to supervising student
- Student may become too dependent on supervisor
- Potential for personality clashes
- No support or shared learning with 'peer' or other student(s)
- May not reflect active (or self directed) learning advocated by many Higher Education Institutions (HEI's).

Peer assisted learning, collaborative learning models (NHS Scotland 2007)

These models encourage students to use each other for support and mentoring and to work with the practice educator and other students as part of a mini-clinical team. These models encourage students to develop improved communication, reflection and autonomy.

There is some evidence for improved learning outcomes, peer assisted learning models have the additional benefit of increasing the numbers of placements a site can offer. Most descriptions of these models involve one educator and multiple students (usually two), with the educator assigning an increasing proportion of their clinical caseload to the students to manage over the course of the placement (Baldry-Currens 2003).

The limitations of these models are:

- Organisation of placements can be time consuming initially.
- May not be suitable for some settings due to space restrictions e.g. domiciliary visits, 'lone working' or low patient throughput.
- Misunderstood by many clinicians, therefore educators may be resistant to taking more than one student at a time.
- There may be a problem with rivalry between students.
- Placements should be tailored to individual needs of students.
- Care must be taken to give students individual time and attention.
- Educator needs to balance different learning styles and students of varying abilities.
- Ratio limited by the experience of educator and other clinical demands on educator.
- Requires more thorough knowledge of education theory.

Split model, Shared Model

This model describes the situation where one student is shared between two or more members of a team, ideally with one lead educator to co-ordinate activities, learning goals and assessment (Gaipman and Forma 1991).

Advantages of the model include:

- Greater flexibility to improve placement capacity, cover leave arrangements.
- Applicable in community or acute setting or mixed settings meaning lone workers (or part-timers) may be able to contribute more to placement provision.
- Applicable for joint working across sectors.
- Allows all members of the team, full-time, part-time, all clinical grades and support staff to contribute to placement education.
- Students get the opportunities to experience different communication, problem solving and treatment styles.
- Suitable for all levels of students.

Disadvantages of this model are:

- Placement needs to be well planned with all members of supervising team in agreement to lines of responsibility, role and reporting.
- Can be difficulty in ensuring parity/reliably/validity of assessment if two educators are assessing the same student.
- All team members must contribute to feedback so as broad a picture as possible can be gained about the progress of the student.

Designated clinical educators (DCE), full-time teachers

This model uses a member of staff, who is not carrying their own caseload, to instruct and supervise a number of students during a clinical placement. Clients are obtained from other staff members' caseloads allowing the students to experience a range of client groups.

The educator is employed specifically to teach students during semester time and may then return to clinical duties when students are not on placement.

The benefits of this approach are:

- Opportunity for academic staff to improve clinical skills.
- Can free time of clinical staff whose clients are being seen by students during the placement.
- Offers the educator a clinical role in non-student time and the possibility of research.
- Ideal for use where close supervision is needed to develop highly specialised skills.

The limitations include:

- Less support for educator with challenging student.
- Not all staff have the opportunity to teach.
- Sudden increase in clinician's workload at the end of placement as clients are transferred back to responsible clinician.

Role-emerging model

This model involves the student(s) undertaking a placement in a setting where they are supervised by someone who may not necessarily be of their own profession.

Professional supervision is provided at a distance, either via telephone or video link or often by face to face supervision by a member of Higher Education Institution staff. Supervisor in host site should be identified to deal with any concerns from student and to coordinate placement outcomes. The student(s) often investigates and organises the placement experience in a 'non-traditional' setting such as private business or corporations, commercial outlets, voluntary sector.

Advantages of this model are:

- Strengthens relationships between public and voluntary sector.
- Can improve/expand the service offered to clients i.e. initiatives started by the student may continue after their departure.
- Allows placement opportunities for isolated or remote services.
- Promotes self-directed learning for students.
- Greater scope for creativity in treatment planning for service users.
- Experience working alongside other professionals.

The limitations include:

- Quality assurance process can be complicated – it can be difficult to ensure a fair and reliable assessment.
- Setting up of placements can be more problematic than traditional placements due to supervision arrangements.

Supported Distance Education Model

This model's focus is the use of technology to provide clinical supervision to students on rural and remote placements. An agreed supervisor on site to assist with administration, supervision and support but professional supervision offered via web/video link. Distance education includes distance teaching – the instructor's role in the process, and distance learning – the student's role in the process.

The advantages are:

- Opens up placement opportunities in setting with no placement of the right type on site.
- Students can have more control over their learning.

The main disadvantage is:

- Reliant on high levels of technological competency from student, educator and the university.

Practice placement model for health personnel

All practice placements should provide the student with a variety of learning opportunities to enable them to achieve the relevant learning outcomes. These opportunities will usually be combinations of observation and enquiry, hands on assessment and treatment, self directed study, group work and tutorials as well as direct questioning/supervision from a practice educator (teacher, tutor etc) to reinforce clinical reasoning in the health services. “Practice placement models” or just “models” as they are generally called here refer to how the placement is structured with particular reference to the relationship between practice educator(s) and learner(s). Whilst practice placements often are within the NHS, increasingly Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) are working in social care settings, the voluntary sector and industry and some of the models mentioned here are applicable to these settings too.

According to the NHS Scotland (2007), the successful production of a competent, confident health graduate is the end product of numerous partnerships and collaborations. The Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), the NHS (including organizations such as NHS Education for Scotland), the professional bodies, the Health Professions Council, and the learner and future AHP all have a role to play. Practice placements and the models used by the health service to deliver them rely on all partners doing their bit to keep the process going.

3.3. Things to consider for all placements:

Irrespective of the above mentioned models, in order for placement to be successful, there must be a university policy for all stages and aspects of the placement function, clearly defining all areas. Firstly, this must include the responsibility of the university, the placement office and officers, the tutors, students and employers. The policy for placements should be able to identify with all sections of the QAA Code of Practice, particularly Section 9: Placement Learning. Secondly placements should be integrated into programme design, validation, revalidation and assessment and have clearly stated learning outcomes. Thirdly, placement aims, learning outcomes and programme requirements should be made clear to university degree applicants and new entrants from the outset. Fourthly, Universities should set up a clear communications network for student, placement office and employer activity. Fifthly, Universities should have in place a comprehensive recording system for all placement preparation, management, reporting activity and assessment. Sixthly, the university should ensure that all placements staff are aware of their obligations under the Data Protection Act.

Seventhly, the University should ensure that all staff involved in placement are aware of the rules and rights concerning disabled students and are aware of the university’s Equal Opportunities Policy and how it relates specifically to the placement function. Eighthly, Placements should be properly considered as an integral part of the programme of study and clearly documented at design, approval, validation, revalidation and review. A clear tracking system and progress files should be developed to record all stages of programme/ placement development and implementation. Ninthly, placement preparation and learning should be thoroughly integrated into programmes of study. Students should be encouraged to reflect on what they are trying to achieve. Placements should have progression procedures integral to the programme.

In addition to the above, the following must also be considered:

- The same quality assurance standards should be applied to placement assessment and progression as are applied to other modules.

Ideally universities should have in place a Learning Agreement to be agreed jointly between the students, the employer and the placement office preferably before the placement starts.

- The Learning Agreement should clearly define the method of assessment. The employer should be encouraged to become involved in assessment.
- In all instances, the university remains responsible for ensuring that placement objectives and requirements and methods of assessment and evaluation are clearly identified and apply to all students.
- Where students make independent arrangements, the university should ensure that the Learning Agreement is established and appropriate.
- Institutions should be able to assure themselves that placement providers know what their responsibilities are during the period of placement learning.
- Written placement procedures and guidelines should be issued to all tutors.
- Prior to placements, institutions should ensure that students are made aware of their responsibilities and rights.
- Institutions should ensure that their staff who are involved in placement learning are competent to fulfil their role.
- Institutions should ensure that there are procedures in place for dealing with complaints and that all parties (university, employer, and student) are aware of, and can make use of them.

There is no perfect model of successful practice (Martin 1997, p78) or programs to suit the particular needs of the stakeholders involved. The challenge is to develop a flexible program with wide applicability across the spectrum of more generalist degrees, whilst maintaining a critical attitude to its pedagogical value. However, Higher Education must align itself more closely to the needs of employers and the labour market. Models that focus on providing a quality learning experience for the student, and that also meet the needs of other stakeholders are, in our view, the most successful.

3.4. General Principles: Mechanisms for motivating of actors

Having discussed the possible models for placements, the following section discusses the many different schemes and disciplines currently operating in Europe and the benefits that they provide for all of the participants.

Schemes

Everyone has a different view of what a work placement can be and this varies dramatically from industry to industry and from country to country. In order to get a fair

estimate of the different types of placement we have combined the results of several surveys and papers.

Brenda Little and Lee Harvey in their paper *Learning Through Work Placement and Beyond* (Little & Harvey 2006) 'needed a representative sample of students and placement for their work. Eighty-two students took part and interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to an hour and a half. The students were from seven higher education institutions, including pre-1992 universities, post-1992 universities and a recently established university, formerly a college of higher education.'

From these students they focused on three different types of work placements planned as part of a first-degree programme:

- Compulsory short (6-week) placements within a first-degree programme covering a broad range of subjects;
- Compulsory thin (2x 6 months) sandwich placements within a general business administration programme;
- Year-long sandwich placements (compulsory or optional) within a range of programmes including science-based programmes, general business, accounting and finance, and computing programmes as well as more specific programmes, for example, transport and logistics; economics and international development.'

We also sent out a survey to the placement network in the UK placenet@jiscmail.ac.uk asking the following questions:

- How long are your student placements?
- How many times do they have to go on placement during their award?
- In what discipline (e.g. IT, marketing, health, etc.)?
- Are they paid or not? If so, approximately how much per annum?
- Are they 'pass or fail' placements or do they have a mark to show how well they have done?

The responses received are listed in Appendix 1, at the end of this paper.

Finally we added the standard 6 month German Placements and the 6 or 12 month French placements, plus some of the more unusual placements we have at Staffordshire University covering Film, TV & Music Technologies and also the Enterprise Placements. These are 12 month self employed placements where the student is provided with an office and £125 per month plus enterprise training and short 5 week unpaid placements in the TV and Music industries.

Bringing all the data together we find we can categorise placements into one of six types.

- a) **Twelve-month placements** - known in the UK as a Thick Sandwich, popular in many industries including Business, Computing, Engineering, Human Resources, and Marketing where the student is employed for 12 months as a permanent member of staff and gets heavily involved in the activities of the company. Some companies have

a permanent student placement where at the end of a placement the current student hands over to a new student with an overlap of 2 -3 weeks. The 12 month placement normally occurs after 2 years study and there would be a further year of study after the placement, but before graduation.

- b) **Six-month placements** – known in the UK as a Thin Sandwich, it occurs in many industries. This is also the standard placement duration in Germany and covers one semester's work. The student can get a good relationship with a company in 6 months, but may not get the depth of experience that a 12 month student will. Many universities also have schemes where the student does 6 months academic training then 6 months placement then a further 6 months academic etc. some are linked to major corporations as part of their training system (e.g. IBM, HP).
- c) **Summer placements** - 3 months between June and September. Used a lot in Design Engineering and Human Resources. The placement generally gets the student to understand the industry, but offers insufficient time in the Engineering professions to get any serious work done. In some administrative professions, particularly Human Resources small projects are possible.
- d) **Short placements - 5 weeks.** Can occur as a one off project or in some industries (e.g. TV and Film) can be periods of contract type work as part of a larger project. The student would get fairly low quality work on one of these, but may be asked to partake in other periods if they show promise. These placements also seem to occur in the Arts and Media studies disciplines.
- e) **Work experience - 1- 2 weeks.** This is generally used to get students to understand the basic concepts of work as there is insufficient time to go further. It is not generally felt that 1-2 weeks gives much of an experience to the student. These placements are often used in the creative arts as catalysts to produce coursework based on the work experience.
- f) **Self employed Placements** – As the level of contract work increases and the desire of more and more students to set up their own companies, particularly in film and TV technologies, then the idea of a self employed placement where the student can not only get to know the industry but also can get to understand the commercial environment they are working in is increasing in popularity. The balance in the UK between large corporates and small companies has shifted in favour of small companies (SMEs – Small to Medium size Enterprises).

Payment or non-payment of the placement student tends to depend on which industry the placement is in. Most 12 month placements in Business, IT, Marketing and HR seem to pay the students. However, the shorter placements of 3 months or less seem to be either unpaid or expenses only.

Another anomaly around Europe is employee insurance, in the UK and Germany the longer placements of 6 or 12 months have the employer paying the insurance for the employee whereas in France and for short placements everywhere it is the University that insures the student as they are not considered to be a part of the company.

3.5 Costs of PPS

Company Costs

As with any new member of staff in a company there are certain basic costs to the company whether the placement is short or long, paid or voluntary. These are mainly based on time taken by current staff to support the student and any consumables such as telephone, heating etc. used by the student; the time element will vary depending on the length and complexity of the placement. Other costs will vary from placement to placement and include:

Direct Costs such as salary, possibly employee insurance, employers tax & expenses. Obviously if the salary is low then some of the costs will drop, but then so may the quality of the student that a company attracts.

Indirect costs include lack of productivity while training, distraction of boss and hence reduced productive work when the student wants some information, possible risk to systems if wrong actions are performed due to lack of experience. Some of these skills can be taught in training modules before students go on placement. This was shown to be necessary in the definitions of the skills required by industry that were generated in '*Tuning Industrial Education Structures in Europe*' (Luca 2007).

The benefits of placement students to the employer can best be described as:

- 'Derive value for money within the placement period.
- Benefit from the students enthusiasm and creativity as well as up-to-date knowledge and skills.
- Train other staff in new skills.
- Implement an extended selection procedure.' (Wilson 2001).

Will the placement benefits vary between different sized companies or are the benefits different for different industries? Twelve-month placements in IT, Business and Marketing seem common, but these are industries with a reasonable profit margin whether they are small or large. The artistic industries such as dance, music seem to go for shorter placements. So how can we best evaluate the benefits and risks.

In her talk about practical placements in the Brasov 2008, Mihaela Obeada of Dräxlmaier (Obeada 2008) produced a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) chart to show the benefits and risks of a placement. This chart highlights how a company can assess the benefits of a placement and its responsibilities.

We can look in detail at this chart and see which items will be:

Strengths

Image – may help get your company name recognised by more people. Taking University students suggests that the company cares about society.

Possible future employees. - For technology and manufacturing companies with a turnover of staff this is useful. For very small companies with only 1 or 2 staff then less useful. In the health sector it is essential as all nursing and medical staff have to do placements and it helps hospitals considerably when recruiting graduates if the student has already worked there.

Reduce costs for the integration in the company as a new employee. – See above.

Shape students to our specific needs – Each company is different in its attitude to its staff and to the way it works. Some are very formal others very relaxed, some work strict hours whereas other companies have very flexible working with lax timescales but a strong work ethic. It is helpful to take a student who has never worked in another company and train them in your style of working. In small companies this is essential as a mismatch of ways of working could be destructive.

Good Collaboration with a university – University collaborations in one area can easily be extended to other areas such as research, consultation and training.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our image - Possible future employees - Reduce costs for integration in the company as new employee - Shape the students through our specific needs - Good collaboration with Transylvania University <p style="text-align: right;">S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Salary costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Salary, social taxes, lunch tickets, paid holiday, transport - Training on the job costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time, money, space - Possible damages - Short time \$ not an profitable investment <p style="text-align: right;">W</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial help provided by the Government \$ Unemployment Agencies - Programs initiated and supported through Universities - Developing new projects with students teams <p style="text-align: right;">O</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No responsibilities from the students - Lack of financial resources - A inflexible pattern of practice matrix - Bureaucracy in obtaining specific financial funds - Access to important information <p style="text-align: right;">T</p>

Figure 1. SWOT chart for placement of students (adopted from Obeada 2008)

Opportunities

Help from Government agencies – in many countries the government or the European Union will subsidise some of the students costs. In other countries this is not the case and in some countries it is the parents who have to pay for the students living expenses during placement.

Programs initiated and supported through Universities – All universities will support their students to some level. This will vary depending on the country, the university and the course. In some countries the University is totally responsible for the student until the completion of the course if the placement is part of the course and as such must check exactly where the student is working and the conditions they are working in. Some university courses are very strict in saying exactly what subjects have to be covered others are much more flexible and use the placement as a means of consolidating the previously taught theory with current practice.

Developing new projects with students' teams – This depends very much on the type of organisation. Most engineering and IT companies have lots of ideas of how to improve their systems or potential ideas for a new product. These ideas often do not justify a professional engineer being diverted from his existing workload. Student teams are ideal for running pilot schemes to see if an idea is viable and so getting sufficient data to justify or not an application for development funding. They are relatively cheap, do not effect the mainline of business and are generally flexible in their thinking.

Weaknesses

Salary & Costs – All staff have some costs and even if the student is supported by government or university agencies and is paid no salary there will be still costs such as heating, lighting and stationary.

Training on the job costs – It must be a requirement of all placements that the student has a supervisor in the company. That means that there will a period of time when the supervisor is talking to the student and not doing his normal work. The effect of this cost varies greatly from company to company, with small companies of one or two people this could be considerable whereas in larger organisations this may be part of a supervisors role and has little effect on profit.

Possible damages. – Everyone can make a mistake unfortunately, the less experience a person has got the greater the risk.

Length of time – As we have seen in the review at the beginning of this section the length of time a placement lasts varies dramatically. We are unsure whether time is a weakness or a strength as it depends on the job and the industry. If one can go into an industry with a short training period such as HR or tourism then a placement student can be doing useful work in a short timescale and so justify the costs. In an industry such as Engineering or IT there is a much greater learning curve so the point at which a student becomes productive will increase. In these cases the length of time of a placement can be a weakness if it is shorter than 6 months.

Threats

No responsibilities from the student – This is most likely to occur if the student is not engaged with the organisation and this can be for many reasons including disinterest in the job, home problems, a feeling of isolation in the company and boredom due to lack of challenging work.

Lack of financial resources – This would be a threat for any company if it over stretched its finances and is not restricted to placements.

Inflexible pattern of Practice – There must be a role that a placement student can fit into in a company as any member of staff without anyone to manage them is likely to cause a rift in a company.

Bureaucracy in obtaining funding – we suggest this should be in 'weaknesses' as we feel it will be an irritation rather than a risk.

Access to restricted information – This is a real threat in some industries where the organisation makes it's profit from innovation or secrecy (e.g. Artists, Film companies, Games design companies, the military, some manufacturing organisations and IT). The problem can come from two sources, the report written by the student or the ideas that have been overheard whilst on placement. The report can be checked by the company before it is released but the information in the students head remains. Most students, if they are asked to, will sign non disclosure agreements but there are always a small number of students who don't care. See No Responsibility in Weaknesses.

The idea of the SWOT analysis is not new in placements as it has been used to assess tutors viability to become a mentor in the health industries for several years. (Congdon et al 2002). We have not found any record of SWOT analysis being used by industries to assess a placements' viability, although it seems to be to be the obvious answer. We therefore propose creation of a SWOT chart that should be relevant to all companies large and small, Technical and artistic.

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Future employees</p> <p>Cheap Labour</p> <p>Highly Intelligent Labour</p> <p>Fresh ideas</p> <p>Company Image</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Training Costs</p> <p>Labour Costs</p> <p>Limited Time</p> <p>Costs of Errors</p> <p>Bureaucracy in setting up</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Try new projects</p> <p>Links with Universities</p> <p>Leading edge practices</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Security of ideas.</p> <p>Lack of student responsibility</p> <p>May disrupt current work practices</p>

Figure 2. Revised SWOT chart for student placements.

The variations from the Obeada (2008) chart are:

Strengths

Cheap Labour – The actual wages of employing a student will be lower than taking on an equivalent Full Time member of staff and could in many industries be zero.

Highly Intelligent Labour – In principle students should have higher than normal intelligence as they have already passed the universities entrance qualifications.

Fresh Ideas – Students will have generally been taught the principles of the subject they are working in and will look at a problem with an unbiased view. They also do not have any career prospects to worry about so the employer will get a fresh approach to a problem, which is useful.

Weaknesses Very little difference except that we have moved Bureaucracy in Setting Up from Threats.

Opportunities

Leading Edge Practices – some companies get stuck in the way they work and a student is an opportunity to have someone who has been trained in current, if not leading edge, practices without having to invest in a training course for existing staff.

Threats

We have reworded the ‘Inflexible Pattern of Practice’ to read, “May disrupt current working practices”, as this seems to better describe the problem.

Examples

Below we offer examples of placements showing varied structure in the placements ranging from 12 months and highly paid working on the current day-to-day problems of a company to the highly structured layout of the health service system where everything is marked during the placement and the students must cover certain subjects as part of their experience.

The following examples cover both large and small companies in several different fields from Manufacturing to Social Sciences.

Example 1

A major aircraft manufacturer in Europe has, for the last 10+ years, had an ongoing requirement for both IT and Test students. It has allocated permanent placement positions in different sections of its software development and test departments which it fills annually. The students are allocated their jobs when they arrive and spend the first 2 weeks of the placement shadowing the previous student so as to get to understand the basics of the job and also to understand the geography of the town where they are working.

With the students overlapping it is also possible that the rented accommodation vacated by one student can be re-negotiated for the new student. The company pays €1400 a month for 12 month placement students and is now trying aeronautical students for test placements. The same company also takes 6 month placements from Germany, but pays them considerably less (around €700) as it argues that there is twice as much training as the 12 month placements.

Example 2

A small web design company of one takes a placement student each year on a 12 month placement to deal with some of the web design work load so that the owner can spend some time on selling and administration. Each year the company asks for students from 4 or 5 local Universities and chooses the one most suitable to their needs. The placement does involve the student having to work on their own for periods of time but as there are only 2 of them in the company the quality of support is very high and the students get both practical web and commercial experience. The company pays around €1200 a month.

Example 3

Music Technology students have great difficulty getting a placement because the majority of sound engineers are self employed and either travel around a great deal to

different contracts or have their own sound studios and a regular set of clients. They see students as future competition in a small overcrowded profession. A suggestion of getting the students work by using the University studios for charity recordings threatened to lose the University the few placements we had with a complaint of unfair competition as the university had the latest equipment.

Example 4

Social Workers are required to do placement work as part of their qualifications, many local authorities will take the students, but refuse to pay them as they say the placement is compulsory so the student should cover the costs.

Example 5

A local company in the Internet services industry took several placement students from one university to help develop and support a new web based search facility they were selling, they also did the same with a neighbouring university. One of the students asked us what the rules were for working late and at weekends. We found that the company had 4 or 5 permanent staff and around 9 students. The owner was constantly harassing the students to meet very tight deadlines and was interpreting the rules on holidays illegally. One of the Universities pointed out the employment law discrepancies and threatened to withdraw the students. The company then started to become more reasonable as it wished to stay in business.

Example 6

In the UK all nursing staff are required to do periods of work in hospitals and to produce portfolios of that work as part of their studies. That work has to cover specific areas that match the theory they have been taught. They get a small salary while they are working in the hospital.

Example 7

In the UK at present there is a scheme called **Student Placements for Entrepreneurs in Education (SPEED)**, being funded jointly by the European Union Regional Development Fund and Advantage West Midlands, the regional funding body for the West Midlands area of the UK. It allows students who wish to start up their own businesses during a placement year an opportunity to do so. The students are provided with a desk in one of the Business start up 'villages' attached to one of the Universities in the scheme (currently there are 13 universities taking part), a PC containing basic office functions and links to the university network, a phone line and around €200 a month. They are also given training in key business skills such as sales and marketing, accounts, legal issues and general business administration plus a business mentor to assist them. The students are expected to attend the training sessions, fill in timesheets and to give a 3 monthly report; failure to do this leads to withdrawal of funding until they comply. (www.Speedproject.ac.uk). This has been running for 3 or 4 years now and is particularly helpful to TV and Film students and also web and games programming students. These are industries where there are a lot of small companies who move from job to job. Recently, students in the Arts & Crafts sectors are starting to apply as this is an area that

traditionally has been heavily based on self-employed artists and craftsmen who take on commissions and sell their own work.

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Appendix 1

The results of a survey conducted on the 'Placenet' network in the UK

University	Subjects	Period	No. of placements	Paid Y/N	Salary	Pass / Fail	Marked
Bedfordshire	IT, Marketing.	12 months	1	Y	£14000	Yes	
Derby	IT, Business, Marketing, HR, Accounting & Maths	9 - 12 months	1	y	£12 - £14000	Yes	
Brighton	Building environment, Geography, environmental Sciences, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, product design, pharmaceuticals, biomedical sciences.	6 - 12 months	1	Y	0 - £20,000		
Portsmouth	Business, Marketing & HR	12 Months	1	y	£14000	Yes	
Plymouth	Marketing, HR, Hospitality, Tourism, IT, Finance	12 Months	1	y	£12 - £14000	yes	
Bath	Mathematics (includes statistics, Finance, Business & Computing)	12 months	1	y	£17000 - £22000 for London	Yes	
Bournemouth	Law, Business studies, Finance	10 months	1	Y	Law 0 - £9000, Business & Finance £12000 +	yes	
Bournemouth	IT & Electronics	12 - 15 months	1	Y	£11000 - £28000	Yes	
Middlesex	Media Arts	22 days	upto 3	N	-	No	Coursework based on exeriences
Middlesex	English Studies	15 days & 30 Hours	2	N	-	No	Coursework based on exeriences

Middlesex	Dance	35 hours	up to 3	N	-	No	Coursework based on experiences
Middlesex	Education	30 Hours	up to 4	N	-	No	Coursework based on experiences
Middlesex	Communication & Cultural Studies	15 - 20 days	3	N	-	No	Coursework based on experiences
Middlesex	Product Design Engineering	48 weeks	1	Y	Travel Costs - £15000	No	Coursework based on experiences
Middlesex	Design Engineering	12 weeks	up to 3	Y	Travel costs - £15000	No	Coursework based on experiences
Middlesex	Theatre Arts	100 hours	up to 3	Y	Travel Costs - £15000	No	Coursework based on experiences
Middlesex	Language & Translation	12 - 24 weeks	2	Y	Travel Costs - £15000	No	Coursework based on experiences
Middlesex	Business, HR Development & Management	12 weeks	1	N	-	No	Part of Dissertation
Kingston	IT, Business, Marketing, HR & Accounting.	12 months	1	Y	£15,000	yes	
Leeds metropolitan	IT, Music, Multimedia & Business IT	12 Months	1	yes except Music	£12000, Music £0	Yes	
Manchester Met	Business, IT, Marketing, Finance & Retail	9 - 12 Months	1	Yes	North £12000-£16000. South £14000 - £16500	Yes	
Staffordshire University	IT, Business IT	8 – 12 months	1	Yes	£11000 - £14000 London £18000-£20000	Yes	
Staffordshire University	Mechanical & Electrical Engineering	9 -12 months	1	Yes	£11000 - £14000 London £18000-£20000	No	Optional Module of presentation and report on experiences
Staffordshire University	Film & Music Technology	4 – 6 weeks each period	3 or 4 in a year	No	-	No	Optional Module of presentation and report on experiences

Figure 3. Survey results from Placenet (UK) Network

4. ORGANIZATION OF PRACTICAL PLACEMENT - CODE OF PRACTICE FOR PARTIES

Contributed by
Marian GHEORGHE, Politechnica University of Bucharest

4.1. Principles and code of practice for parties

Practice and practical placement of students (PPS) are associated with specific principles, to be known by students, home higher education institutions and teachers, host enterprises / organizations, tutors and trainers.

1.1 Principles of practice and PPS

Practice is associated with specific principles, as follows.

- Practice is a well-defined activity.
- The main outcomes of practice are skills.
- Essentially, practice transforms knowledge in skills.
- Practice has commonalities and differences among study fields / programs / years and degree levels.
- Practice effectiveness is function of working environment and process quality.

Practice, as a *well-defined activity* realizing *skills*, is part of curriculum, with all defining features: content; duration and repartition in time; credit-points; working environment, i.e. home university institutional framework, student specific abilities, supervising teacher competences, host tutor / trainer competences, practice place conditions.

The practice has more roles / outcomes: improvement, solving, refining, maintenance, gaining practical experience etc. But, the main role / outcome of the practice is the *transforming of knowledge in skills*. Essentially, the content of practice is reflecting the knowledge to be transformed in specific skills.

The practice features are correlated to the main characteristics of the curriculum, i.e. to: the study field / program - mathematics, mechanical engineering, music, etc.; study year; degree level - Ba, Ma, PhD. So, practice has *commonalities* and *differences* among the study fields / programs / year and degree levels.

Practice effectiveness, as function of *working environment* and *process quality*, concerning the specific activities, implies a standard level of each of these, as framework and details (e.g. *repeating frequency*).

* * *

Practice is realized in different places and ways: at home, by working on computer, or playing a musical instrument, etc.; in university labs, by performing specific works; in enterprise / organization, by working in real conditions / projects.

Practical placement of students in enterprises / organizations is the best way of realizing practice, i.e. practical skills, because the working environment is real, like in the future professional life.

* * *

Practical placement of students in enterprises / organizations, PPS, is associated with specific principles, similar to those addressed to practice, as follows.

- PPS is a well-defined practice system.
- The main outcomes of PPS are practical skills of students.
- Essentially, PPS is contributing to transforming knowledge in practical skills.
- PPS has commonalities and differences among study fields / programs / years and degree levels.
- The effectiveness of PPS is function of the working environment and process quality.

PPS, as a *well-defined system* contributing to realizing *practical skills* of students, is part of curriculum, with the features defined by the necessary working environment conditions, i.e. linked to home university institutional framework, student specific abilities, supervising teacher competences, host tutor / trainer competences, practice place conditions.

The PPS has more roles / outcomes: offering real professional environment, integration in new teams, working in cooperation projects, accessibility to advanced technology, etc. But, the main role / outcome of the PPS is the determinant contribution to *transforming of knowledge in practical skills*.

The PPS characteristics are defined by the main features of the practice to be realized i.e. of: the study field / program - mathematics, mechanical engineering, music, etc.; study year; degree level - Ba, Ma, PhD. So, PPS has *commonalities* and *differences* among the study fields / programs / years and degree levels.

The effectiveness of PPS, as function of the *working environment* and *process quality*, concerning the specific activities, implies a standard level of each of these, as framework and details.

4.1.2 Code of practice and PPS

The code of conduct, with respect to all parties contributing to the PPS, is defined by conditions and actions as follows.

- The home higher education institution provides full *presentation* of the necessary data about the content and duration of the *activity to be practiced* during PPS, and about its teachers supervising the activity.
- The host enterprise / organization offers *practice places* in accordance with the *presentation* given by the home higher education institution, and provides all relevant information about these, and about its tutors / trainers, including language competencies.

- The home higher education institution and the host enterprise / organization prepare a specific *practical placement agreement*, acceptable by the student, and to be signed by parties.
- This *practical placement agreement* contains data about the content and duration of the *activity to be practiced* during PPS, evaluation procedure, full recognition of the activity and its results, including, eventually, the certificate to be obtained, health insurance, accommodation, visas, etc.
- The financial mechanisms - as definition, procedures, documents, amendments, reports, etc. - are clear and transparent.
- The home supervising teacher and the host tutor / trainer are responsible for *realizing the actions* stipulated by the practical placement agreement, including the adapting of these to the changes occurred during placement, in favor of implied parties.
- The students, as beneficiaries of the practical placements, are responsible for their effective activity, and they are asked to provide a continuous quality feedback.

4.2. Objectives of the PPS

PPS is an opportunity and a direct way to achieve major requirements of the enlarged Europe labour market for its individual members, concerning skills, work experience, economic culture, etc.

So, the objectives of the PPS, focused on the students of the enlarged Europe, for personal fulfillment and the benefit of society, are as follows.

- Realizing of well-defined professional skills.
- Developing language skills.
- Increasing work experience, entrepreneurial spirit.
- Development of quality assurance, social cohesion, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue.
- Exploitation and dissemination of different experiences and results.

4.3. Open questions, new challenges in the enlarged Europe

The practice and the PPS, as actions and research topics, too, are faced with open *questions/ challenges*, addressed to specific activities and implied parties.

- Practice must be defined, as part of curriculum, in terms of *clear features*, i.e. with well-defined: content; duration and repartition in time; credit-points; working environment, i.e. home university institutional framework, student specific abilities, supervising teacher competences, host tutor / trainer competences, practice place conditions. Similarly, PPS must be defined, as part of curriculum, in terms of *clear features*, i.e. with well-defined working environment conditions - linked to home university institutional framework,

student specific abilities, supervising teacher competences, host tutor / trainer competences, practice place conditions.

- The content of practice must include the *skills to be acquired*, as reflection of certain knowledge. Similarly, PPS must have the determinant contribution to *transforming of knowledge in practical skills*.
- The practice and PPS features must be correlated to the main characteristics of the curriculum, i.e. to: the study field / program - mathematics, mechanical engineering, music, etc.; study year; degree level - Ba, Ma, PhD.
- Effectiveness of practice and of PPS implies definition of *standard levels of working environment* and *process quality*, concerning the specific activities, as framework and details.
- The home higher education institution and the host enterprise / organization must prepare a specific *practical placement agreement*, acceptable by the student, and to be signed by parties.
- The *PPS Agreement* must contain full data about the content and duration of the *activity to be practiced* during PPS, evaluation procedure, full recognition of the activity and its results, including, eventually, the certificate to be obtained, health insurance, accommodation, visas, etc.

5. DESIGN OF PRACTICAL PLACEMENT FOR STUDENTS. THE UNIVERSITY VIEW

Contributed by
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5.1. Objectives of the PPS

The practical placement involves three main actors:

- The student;
- The placement coordinator from the University;
- The supervisor from the company.

The Code of Practice consists of PP current policies strategies and practices related to the workplace experience and other practical training requirements which comprise some of the subjects offered at the University. The role of the Code of Practice is that:

- It makes clear to the students what is expected from them;
- It diminishes difficulties generated by misunderstanding or less communication;
- It explains to the placement coordinator what is the company's task regarding the PPS and the supervisor's role;
- It offers a general approach on PPS in the University not being compulsory for every type of PPS or profile activity, but being considered of general orientation for such activities.

The cooperation between the Universities and professional environment/companies reveals the objective of the practical placement from the student and company perspectives.

Objectives of the PPS from the student perspective:

- Creating and consolidating some competences/skills as well as some relevant working experiences;
- Increasing the employability after graduation as well as the chances of earning a reasonable income;
- Developing and getting some general/transversal competence, like: team working, decision making, responsibility assuming, efficient relationing, personal marketing;
- Improving the CV by including a training according to a good practical placement proved by recommendations or certification;
- Increasing the self-confident in his/her own abilities;
- Getting support for involving in professional associations.

Objectives of the PPS from the company perspective:

- Direct and free access to the selection of the best-trained future graduates;

- Students monitoring and evaluation for long time which increase the validity of the future personnel selection;
- Creating with minimum costs a large data base for recruiting potential employees; professional development of the future employees at the working place.

5.2. Classification of the PPS

The most relevant aspects that should be considered in analyzing (designing) the practical placement are:

- a) The recognition of the educational/curricula consequences of the implementation of the Bologna declaration;
 - b) The delimitation among the qualification levels;
 - c) The curricula design.
- a) From the perspective of the educational/curricula particularities, the implementation of the transferable credit system must be followed by several changes in educational designing and certifying. The diploma supplement procedures which will be given to every graduate free of charge, the qualification certification through the academic discipline and competences generate new curricula and new conception of the study programs starting from a new definition of professional roles and competences.

The Bologna structure implies possibilities of adaptation and flexibilization for some study domains according to the possibilities of entering the labor market.

The objective of the Bologna Declaration is not the reducing of the study duration, but the differentiation of the qualification levels.

The Bologna Process consists of a real transparency among the European higher education systems through the implementation of the two principle cycles: Bachelor and Master.

Many European countries have already adopted the qualification structure on two cycles based on the distinction between Bachelor and Master, but this thing has not been done according to a general understanding or a mutual understanding on the differences between the two cycles. The Bologna process implies a common frame of qualification, both national and international.

- b) The differentiation of the qualification levels has as main objective the defining of the results, of the training and of the general and specific competences.

The competences include three levels:

- To know and to understand (theoretical knowledge of an academic area, the capacity of understanding);
- To know and to act (knowledge and their practical implementation in specific context);
- To know and to be (values as way of perceptions of others and of living together with others in a certain social context).

c) The general and special competences are developed through the modality of curriculum structuring according to the academic objective (concluded in specializations) and the requirement of the labor market (concluded in qualifications). The general competences are reflected in the core curriculum and the specific competences in the specialization curriculum. Such a mechanism include the following:

- restructure of the specialization according to the social, economic and scientific progress;
- correlation of the specializations with the qualifications according to the labor market requirements, the duration of the study program and the study cycle (L, M, D);
- identification of the general competences, which any graduates must be able to achieve;
- identification of the specific knowledge, the student is able to achieve in a particular study domain;
- curriculum design: elaboration of the courses on a common base of knowledge and on specialization knowledge, selection of forming and developing of competences (strategies of teaching and learning), integration of the practical placement and practice in the community.

Under such conditions, the practical placement is both an element of the curriculum, a study discipline and an activity which concretizes the competencies achieved at other disciplines.

The level of the practical placement according to the qualifications and skills achieved can be classified as the following:

Cycle I: LICENCE

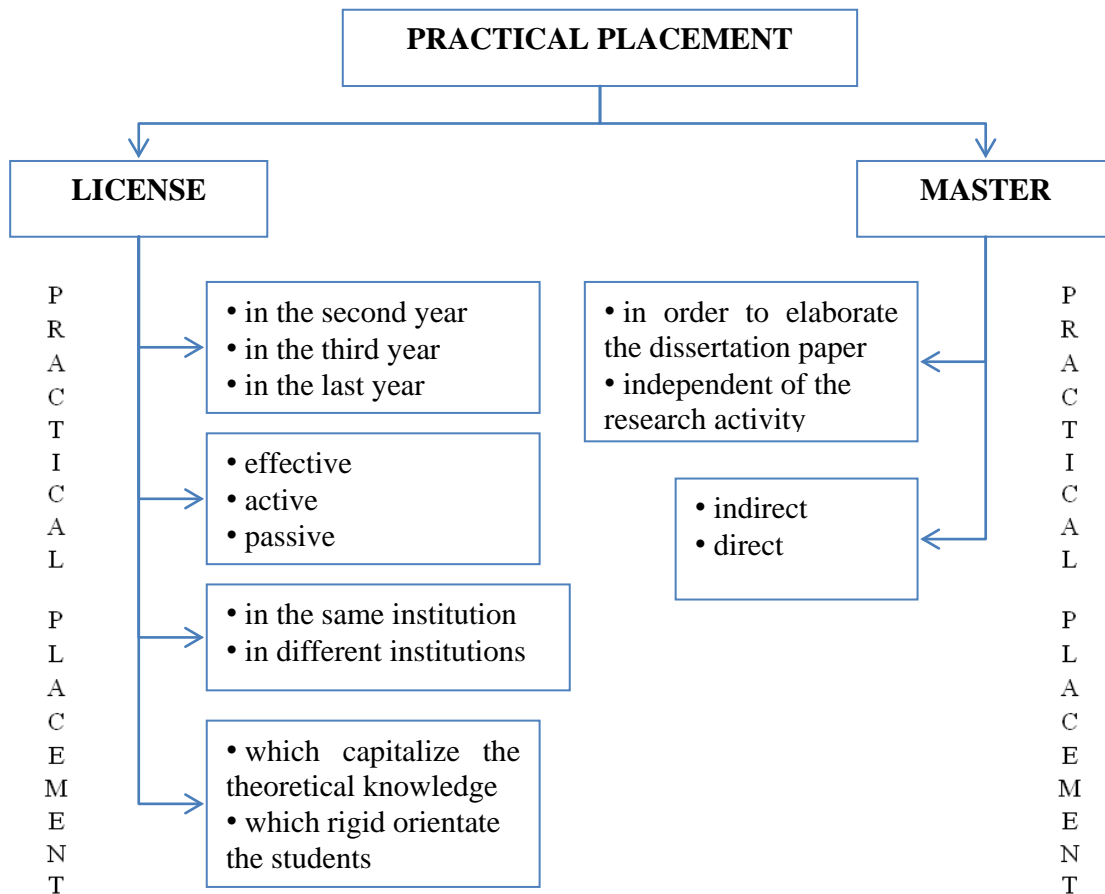
- according to the year of study that includes the practical placement:
 - practical placement in the second year;
 - practical placement in the third year;
 - practical placement in the last year;
- according to the efficiency of the practical placement:
 - effective practical placement;
 - active practical placement;
 - passive practical placement;
- according to the continuity aspect:
 - practical placement in the same host institution;
 - practical placement in different host institutions;
- according to the nature of the implementation of the practical convention:
 - practical placement which capitalize the advantage of the students knowledge;

- practical placement of rigid orientation;

Cycle II: MASTER

- according to the relation between practical placement and research activity:
 - practical placement made in order to capitalize the period of preparation of the dissertation paper;
 - inefficient practical placement and independent of the research activity;
- according to the teaching method:
 - indirect practical placement, through the promotion to some disciplines which requires applications and studies;
 - direct practical placement which is evaluated and marked;

Briefly, this classification can be summarized like in the figure no. 1.



5.3. Needs and Expectations of the actors

The forming and developing of the special and general competencies according to the academic objective (concretized in specializations) and to the labor market requirements (concretized in qualifications) are assured through the modality of curriculum designing.

Thus, the needs and the expectations of the agents involved in the practical placement designing can be observed like in the table no 1:

Table 1. Needs and expectations of the agents involved in the practical placement

ID	Type of need	Concrete need of the		
		University	Company	Students
1	Current needs	Need of students and practical agreements	Need of well-trained specialists	Need of programs which generate additional competences
2	Satisfaction needs	Need of recognition of the study program as being coherent, logic and adequate	Need of perception as an institutions with a proper personnel policy	Need of recognition as a good decision-maker in choosing the training area
3	Development needs	Need of quantitative evolution by diversification the study program and qualitative one, by implementation the quality management	The need of expanding to new markets and the number increasing of the employees of new products	The need of the career development
4	Involvement needs	Need of redesigning the curriculum	Need of cooperation with the educational suppliers	Need of expressing the experience from the didactic activity and practical placement
5	Self/understood needs	Needs of : -Students with adequate behaviors -Correlated legislation -Coordinators of the practical placement	Needs of: - serious students able to learn during practical placements - open management able to understand the organization role as future employer	Needs of: -respect inside the host institution -recognition of the already existed competences

A general frame for PPS must take into consideration the following alternatives:

- **internship** – it consists of the student placement to real labor situations having an employee status in different departments, for several weeks, usually, during summer holiday;
- **professional/industrial placement** – it means the student placement to real situation as employee in different departments in order to improve technical/professional skills;
- **voluntary placement** – it consists of activities in which the student wants to involve him/herself in order to get a more realistic image on his/her future professional career;
- **visit to companies** – it means short placement for students in order to increase their relevant professional experience, during few hours or a working day;
- **work shadowing** – it contributes to create a positive and responsible attitude for a certain profession, for several days;
- **training courses** – it means that the students spend few days in a company or a training place in order to develop professional competences;
- **part time work** – it means the students are already involved in practical activity.

The practical placement must be such organized in order to become effective in the sense of the efficiency and to capitalize the knowledge and the competences got during the studies. Thus, the practical placement gets the feature of sustainability.

The sustainable practical placement consists of the activity which corresponds from the efficiency point of view to the all involved actors interests: universities, organizations and students.

The main characteristics of the sustainable practical placement are:

- is developed by the involvement not only official of the host institution, but effective/active one;
- is becoming permanent through stable relations with the higher education institution;
- generates preoccupations from the organizations to involve in the orientation and the structure of the curricula.

Thus, in order that the practical placement becomes sustainable, there must be developed among the three implied actors – universities/professors, employers and students:

- good and very good cooperation and communications relations;
- flexibility and openness to changes;
- understanding the necessity of stopping the failure spiral and orientate to performance and success at individual, organizational and society level.

The failure spiral, as the success one can be shown like in the figure no 2:

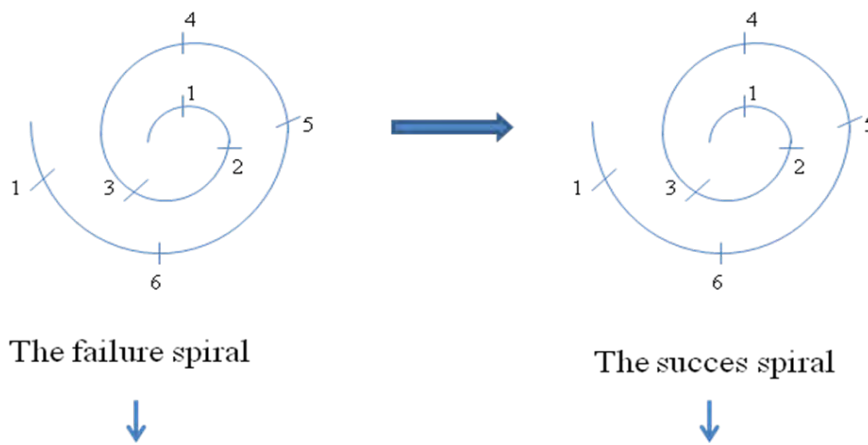


Figure no 2.

- 1- formal and inefficient practical placement
- 2- competences not capitalized or non-existent
- 3- unprofessional employees
- 4- services and activities poor organized and administered
- 5- un-satisfaction at an individual, organizational and society level
- 6- non-motivation and non-interest on the new change suggestions
- 7- a new circle based again on poor practical placement (1)

- 1- efficient practical placement
- 2- competences capitalized and developed
- 3- professional employees
- 4- services and activities better administered
- 5- satisfaction at individual, organizational and society level
- 6- interests in the new tendencies
- 7- a new circle based on efficiency practical placement (1)

Thus, all the actors have a special role in making the practical placement more efficient:

- universities have an important role because an untrained graduate will never be open to practical knowledge more and new and will pretend to have some abilities, becoming a “false” manager; in turn, a well-trained graduate will be capable to correlate the knowledge from the faculty to the challenges from the labor place and the organization, as well as the individual will progress;
- organizations have an important role because if they do not involve in organizing the practical placement, the student will not achieve any ability and will become a future non motivated employee; in turn, an involved organization will be able to separate the good students of the less good students and will better select its future workers;
- the students have an important role because if they do not seek for information, they will learn nothing and will not be prepared to face the competition on the labor market; in turn, the preoccupied students will become successful graduates, performing specialists, and satisfied individuals.

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6. DESIGN OF PRACTICAL PLACEMENT FOR STUDENTS. THE ENTERPRISE VIEW

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6.1. Classify the level of the PPS related to the trainee's qualification and the skills. The *enterprise view*

The actual level of preparation of the students, after the changing followed to the application of the Bologna process, requires a significant differentiation of the PPS – in terms of duration, complexity, effort from the three main actors of the process (student, university, enterprise) – according to the training path followed by the students. As a matter of fact, from the point of view of the enterprises, the competences acquired by students at the end of the 1st cycle of university courses are not enough to make them interesting and attractive as resources to employ.

The scenario of nowadays market is so unstable and constantly transforming that enterprises – mainly those of small and medium sizes - need human resources characterized with a high level of flexibility, adaptability, problem solving ability, attitude to cooperate; this means that employees should have non only technical knowledge and competence in their specific field of training, but also (and above all), ability of reasoning, abstraction, problem setting and problem solving, initiative, self improvement, capacity to face problems and changing in positive way, adaptability. These are probably the characteristics that are more difficult to be acquired during a normal university course, no matter how long it is.

Anyhow the proposal we present is made taking into account the point of view of small and very small enterprises that are actually the majority in Europe. And a premise is necessary: the problem of the PPS is generally faced by universities within the logic of their historical relationships with medium-big size enterprises, that have the structure and the “intelligence” for a proper use of the tool of PPS and for taking profit from it: medium-big enterprises are more oriented and better equipped to do this. The needs we want to represent are those of small and very small enterprises, which have no structure or business intelligence to understand what are the benefits they can take from the tool of PPS. This typology of enterprises needs a different kind of approach. Since it is impossible to have a one to one relation between university and small enterprise (as universities are few if related to the numbers and variety of small enterprises), the role of the associations of enterprises as third actor, mediator and facilitator of this relationship is fundamental.

In other words: to be interesting for small enterprises *stages* and *internships* must be focused on *real projects* addressed to satisfy the *needs of enterprises*.

In the PPS context the key points are: 1- the stage/internship; 2- the project; 3- the enterprises' needs.

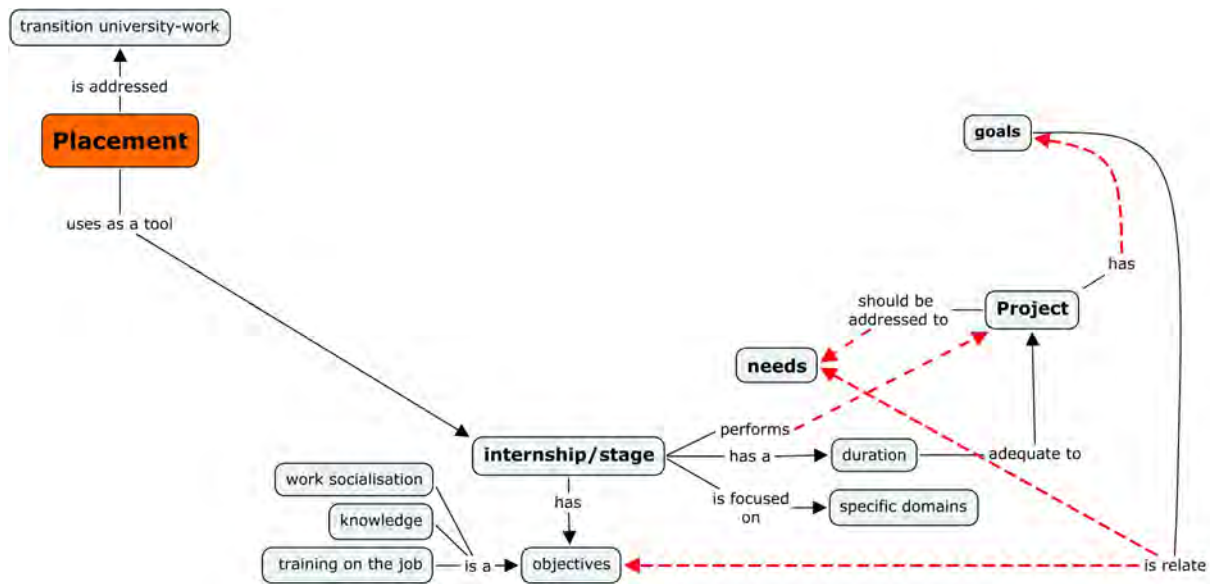


Figure 1

Let's analyze briefly each of them: first of all, the placement is addressed to facilitate the transition from the university and the work life; one of the more efficient tools used by placement is the internship or stage experience. It has as objectives the work socialization of the student - an improvement of his knowledge and training on the job (all of these are didactical objectives important mainly for the student not for the enterprise). In order to stimulate the enterprise's interest and involvement, the stage has to perform a project that has objectives that must be strictly related on one side to the real needs of the enterprise, and on the other side to the didactical objectives of the stage (otherwise we could risk to place students into an enterprise as underpaid resources). The goals achievement has to be guaranteed by the university.

The actors of this process are:

- the universities;
- the enterprises;
- the association of enterprises;
- public entities;
- students and graduated of course.

Who is in charge to decide which needs are relevant for the enterprises and which kind of projects can be designed to satisfy them?

The best thing of course could be a direct relation between the two actors of the university on one side and of the small enterprise on the other side.

But in the reality small enterprises are too many to be contacted one to one by university; moreover most small enterprises don't have a management class able to interface properly the university. Therefore it is necessary to involve in the PPS process a new actor: *the*

associations of entrepreneurs that can play the role of mediator, setting the relationship in a more balanced way from the numerical point of view.

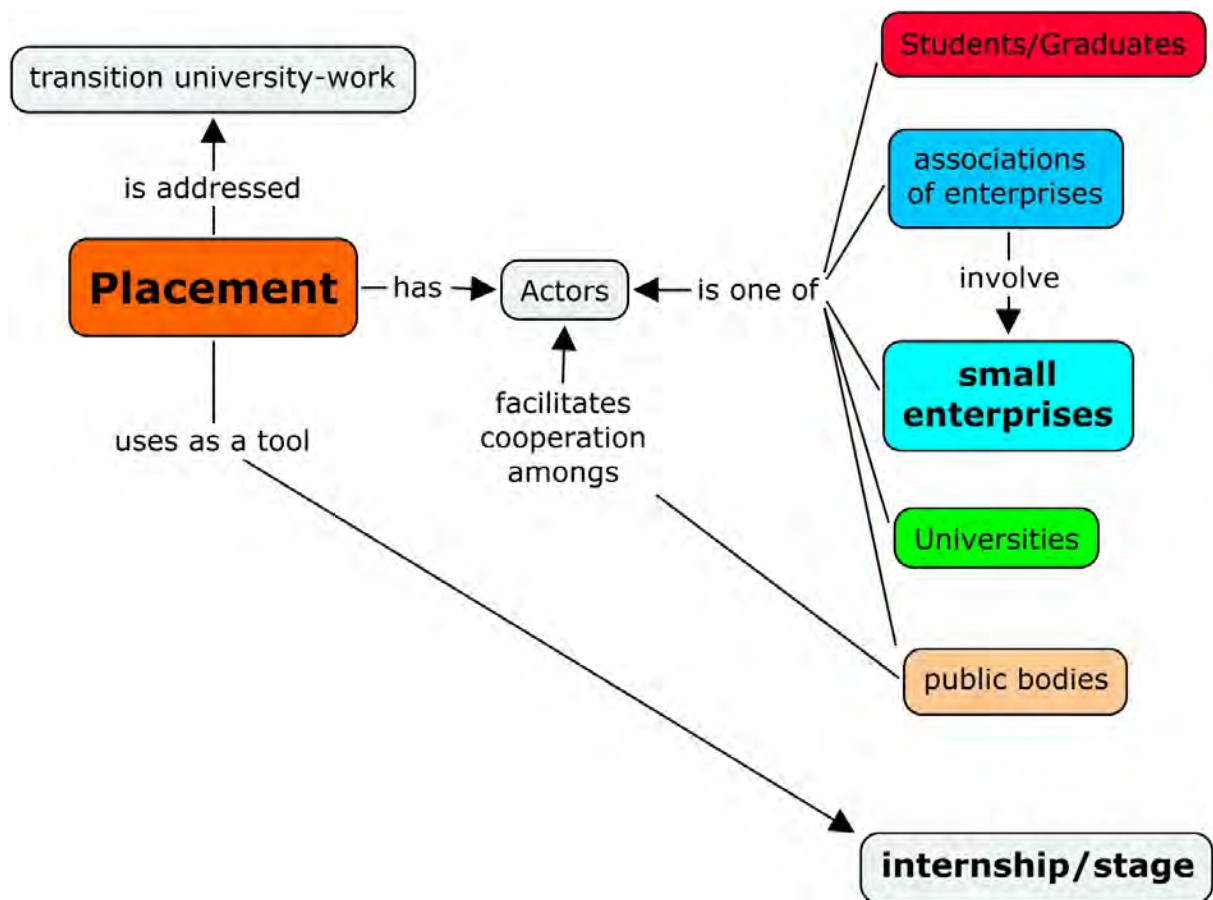


Figure 2

Universities and associations of enterprises have to cooperate in defining the *project templates* that are a cardinal point of our vision of PPS.

In order to make this real, the PPS process requires therefore:

- the active involvement of the *associations of enterprises*;
- *templates of projects*.

A *project template* is: a *general solution* for a specific *need* of the enterprises of a certain sector; the project template will become a real project - that is the base for the stage - thank to a cooperative work of adaptation made by the tutor, the student, the enterprise hosting the student.

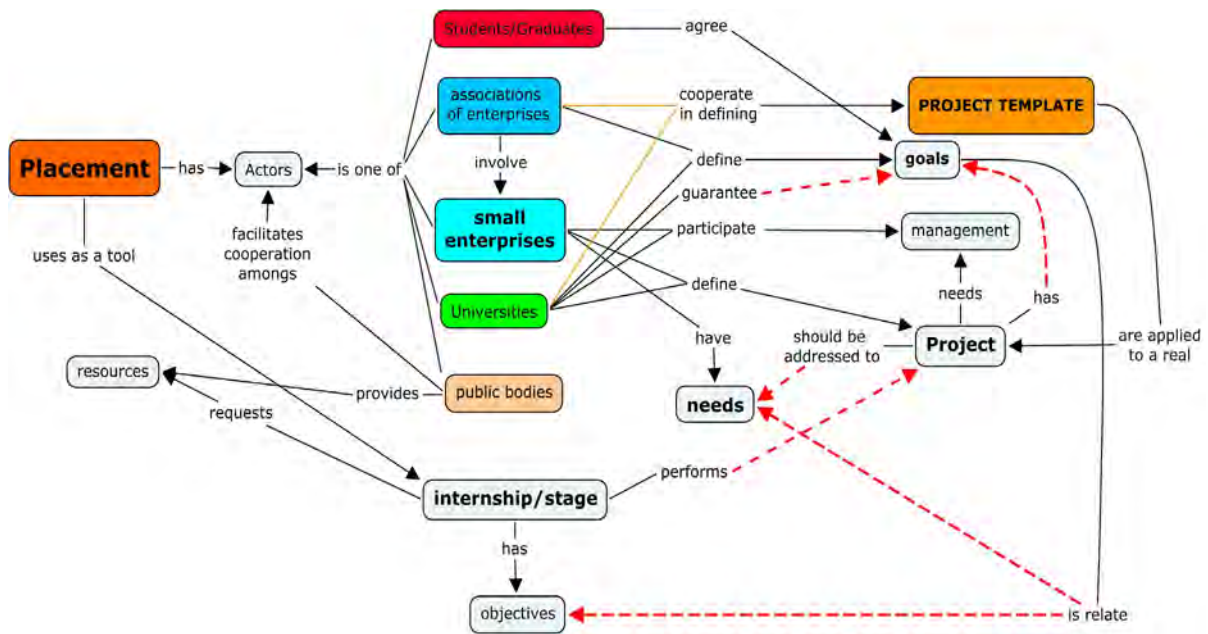


Figure 3

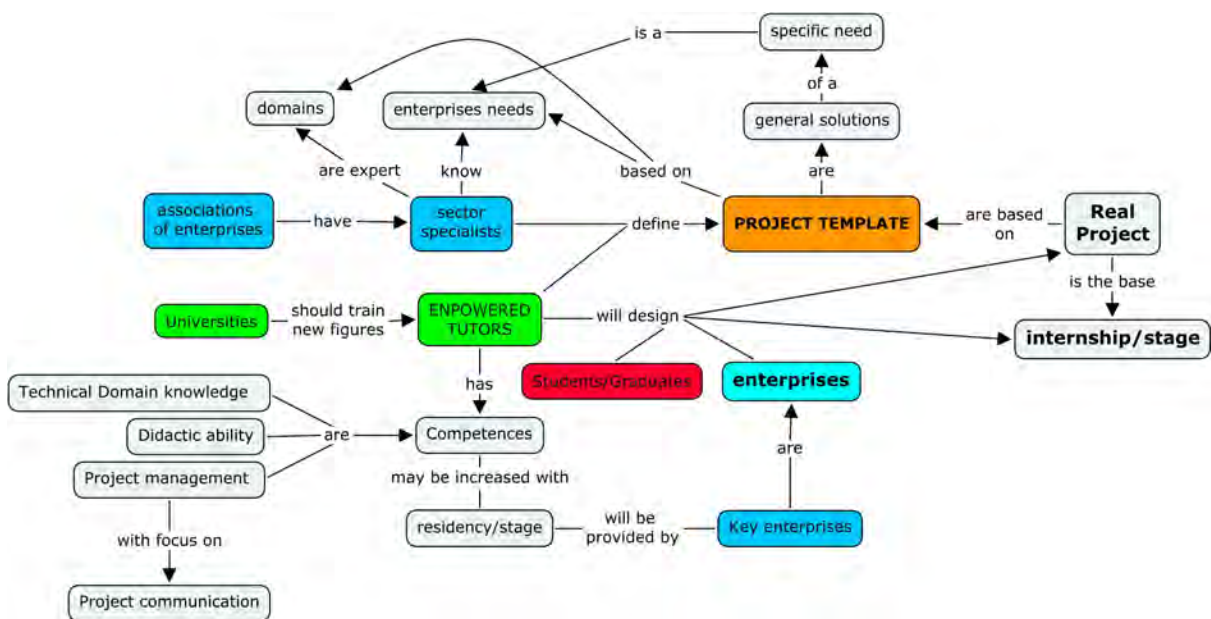


Figure 4

How to start and animate the process we've designed?

The associations of enterprisers have a contact/key person in each enterprises' domains so that they are quite expert in this domains and know well the needs and the problems of the small enterprises associated from their side, universities have to train a new professional figure, that is something we call *empowered tutor*.

This kind of tutor should have many competences as:

- technical domain knowledge;

- didactical ones;
- project management with a particular focus on the project communication.

These competences can be acquired thanks to a residency period / stage into some key enterprises, that can be seen as more representatives of the reality and the needs of all the other small enterprises of the same domain, so that the tutor can design a relevant number of projects' templates such a tutor, together with the sector specialist of the association of enterprises for a certain domain (for instance transportation) will be able to define a project template.

The *project template* will become a *real project* - that is the base for the stage - thank to a cooperative work of adaptation made by the tutor, the student, the enterprise hosting the student one of the most important competence that the tutor should acquire and improve is that of project management, because in our vision the stage itself is a meta-project that realizes the real project as it is seen/understood by the enterprise.

An effective application of the project management techniques should assure the good finalization of the stage and of course of the real project performed during it.

It is important that the project management process focus on the communication to the enterprise of the project's states of the art during all its duration.

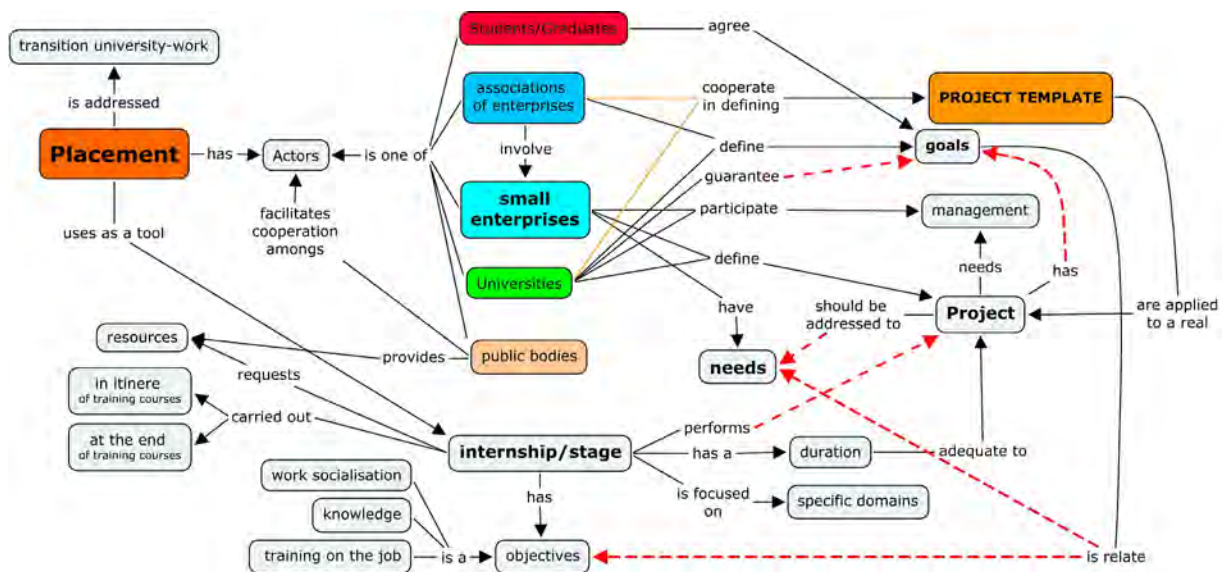


Figure 5

In all this process an important role is that of the public bodies, that should provide resources to support the realization of this kind of stage/internship and top facilitate the actors' cooperation.

In our model we can identify two level of internship/stage:

- 1- during the 1st level of degree (3 years course) for a period lasting from 3 to 4 months;
- 2- at the end of the 2nd level of degree (specialization or master degree).

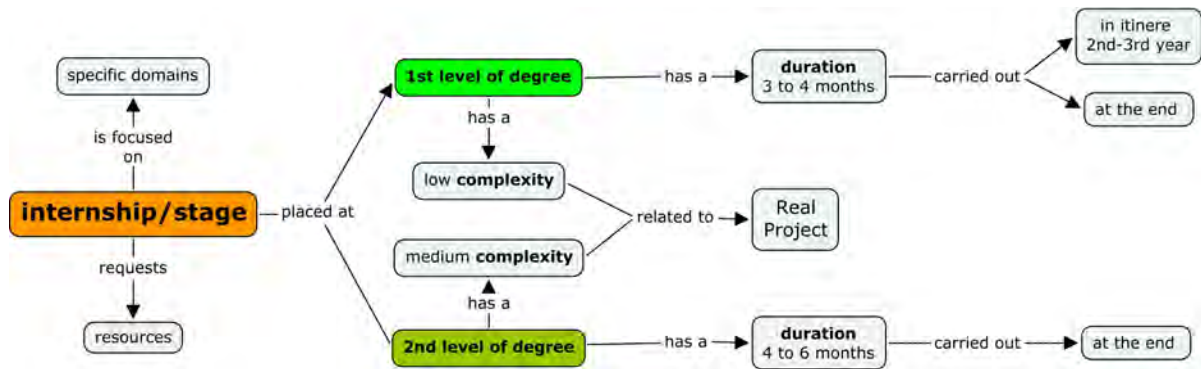


Figure 6

These two levels of stage/internship are different not for the process but for:

- ❑ the length;
- ❑ the complexity of the real project on which they are based;
- ❑ the placing during the course.

In this sense, for the 1st level of degree (3 years course) the PPS should be planned for a period lasting from 3 to 4 month in total: a first period could be planned between the end of the second and the starting of the third year (1 month minimum), a second one (around 3 months) in the second semester of the third year, in order to realize an experience inside the enterprise that can be analyzed and used with tutors and professors to better address the future training path of the student.

The main aim of the PPS at this level is to give students the opportunity:

For the 1st period (2nd – 3rd year)

- ❑ to wider their vision on the work world,
- ❑ to “taste” the work day life as an employee,
- ❑ to have a feeling of the culture and the climate into an enterprise, as well as,
- ❑ to understand how different is to manage time during the school career and at work and,
- ❑ to have a first approach with the logics of the enterprise.

For the 2nd period (end of the 3rd year)

- ❑ to become familiar with the work’s and enterprise’s reality,
- ❑ to apply and verify the applicability of concepts, theories, methods and techniques learnt at university,
- ❑ to demonstrate their competences and abilities to the enterprise where they have carried out the stage and get opportunities to be confirmed,
- ❑ to improve their background of knowledge and competences thus enriching their curriculum and becoming more suitable for the work market.

A second level of PPS can be located during the second cycle of university training path (specialization period, biannual master, etc.) with a longer duration (4-6 months), a deeper involvement in the enterprise's life, and a more complex typology of problems and projects to deal with.

In this case the ideal duration could be 6 months, even if not necessarily continuously, that is a reasonable length to have the right conditions for a mutual knowledge and exchange of resources between enterprise and student. At this level the PPS must provide a real work experience, where the graduated can have a on-field- assessment of his knowledge and achievements, as well as a clear vision of his chances in the work market and of his further training needs; on the other side the enterprise can test the students and experiment the added value deriving from their competences and university qualification.

In both types of PPS the enterprise should be put in the conditions to understand very well the real benefits that they can get by hosting students for a stage or an internship, in order to be motivated to invest time and internal resources in the experience: as a matter of fact, while the objective costs of the stage for the enterprise - in term of time devoted to assist and support the student as well as to train him/her or correct/remake the tasks assigned to him/her - can be easily calculated, it is not so easy to define the revenue the enterprise gains from the experience of the stage.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary not to consider the stage experience as an interruption or, worse, an intrusion into the every day work life, but to insert it inside the enterprise activity planning and to live it as a part of the strategy of the enterprise: that means to design, plan and live the experience together with the other actors of the process, in order to get the maximum from it. Therefore, the differences between the PPS for the 1st level of degree and that for students with a specialization or a master degree (2nd level) are not conceptual but mainly related to the total duration, the placing within the training path, the level of complexity of the projects to deal with.

The table below highlights these differences:

	1ST LEVEL OF PPS	2ND LEVEL OF PPS
TOTAL DURATION	3 - 4 months	4 - 6 months
PLACING DURING THE COURSE	1 month between the 2 nd and the 3 rd year of course 2 - 3 months during the 2 nd semester of the 3 rd year	At the end of the course, with short periods of debriefing and consulting at university
LEVEL OF PROJECTS COMPLEXITY	low	medium

6.2. Identifying the expectation and needs outsourcing a stage status. Match the needs and the expectation of the actors

From the enterprises' side, at the moment the situation is often that needs are more than expectations that means enterprises have generally speaking a low level of expectation from

the stage and a sort of disillusion and skepticism, while they have very clear needs related to some basic requirement of the enterprise:

- ❑ not to waste time and energy,
- ❑ not to invest money in something that cannot guarantee any concrete result,
- ❑ not to give its know how for free to the first coming student,
- ❑ not to make its organizational problem evident and transparent to people outside the enterprise.

This is particularly true for stages where the students are very young, with an insufficient level of motivation and of the knowledge, competence and flexibility requested to integrate them in the enterprise's environment. Therefore it's very important to plan a strategy aimed to modify these mind and attitude from the enterprise's side and from the students' one, as well as to invert the tendency, in order to:

- ❑ make the enterprises aware of the benefits, in a medium-long term perspective, they can get from hosting students for stages and internships;
- ❑ make the students aware of the great opportunity the stage represents for them, by motivating and giving them tools and addresses so that they can really get a lot, even only by observing the work reality inside the enterprise;
- ❑ really involve the university as an entity linked to the territory, so that the success of a stage experience is due to a well planned strategy of PPS, not to the good will of some tutors and few professors

Despite of the general attitude of poor availability showed by enterprises, they do need - to have creative and positive inputs from the environment, in order to be competitive and innovative in the market as well as to employee human resources flexible, really motivated and available to be involved, able to offer a new and fresher way of thinking and facing problems. Taking into account the difficulties to match these requirements with those of the unemployed people available on the work market, the stage is a unique opportunity to know new and young human resources, to test them for a reasonable period, to "use" (or, better, to address) their time, knowledge and competence (hopefully well qualified and guaranteed by the academic body) in order to analyze and solve one or more problems that the enterprise – mainly those small and very small - can't face properly because continuously and breathlessly involved in the everyday work routine, necessary to assure the incomes necessary to survive. Let's now imagine a different scenario:

If ...

If an enterprise had a need

If this enterprise had understood and rationalised this need

If this need could be satisfied by a project

If this project existed

If the enterprise recognised that its need can be satisfy trough the project's aims

If the project had a didactical interest

If the project had a duration from 3 to 6 months

If one or more graduated students (or students that are going to be graduated) could realize the project

If the graduated students (or students that are going to be graduated) looked at the project as a professional completion

If a University could guarantee the project's results

Then ...

We'd have a queue of enterprises asking for graduated or graduating students to be hosted as staggers and trainees.

6.3. Mating – identifying and optimal choice of the Enterprise (for each student?)

- a) List of activities, including OUTPUTS – formal and informal (Syllabus of the PPS)
 - ❑ List of projects
 - ❑ Identification of the enterprises
 - ❑ Selection of students to be matched with projects
 - ❑ Proposal of the list of projects to enterprises
 - ❑ Matching students-enterprises
 - ❑ Definition of the stage project for each student
 - ❑ Stage management by the university tutor with project management techniques
- b) Estimation of the necessary available places, enterprise profiles etc.

Taking into account the whole PPS process as we described above, as well as the wideness of the different domains covered by the small enterprises, it is very difficult to define in an abstract way the ratio between stageurs and employees for each enterprise. A reasonable estimation of this ratio could be 1:8 or 1:10; no more, otherwise the quality of the stage experience could be compromised.

As for the typologies of enterprises that can be interested and involved in this PPS process, we have to highlight that the enterprises profiling cannot be a starting point, but an intermediate step of the process to be achieved thanks to the cooperation between universities and associations of enterprises: as a matter of fact, the enterprise profiling is strictly related to the needs of the enterprises' domain, that identify the operational contexts of the projects to be proposed.

From the very peculiar point of view of our company - whose domain is that of innovative ways of training, e-learning, mobile learning, multimedia communication – we could be interested to more than one type of projects: for those related to technological innovation of

ICT for distance training we are able to host 1 or 2 people, taking into account our size (we're from 15 to 20), while for those related to contents production, we could be able to provide stage experiences for more than two. This means that the capacity of small enterprises to host stages is mainly depending on the typology of the needs and the problems more than on the size of the enterprise and the absolute number of its employees.

7. PLACEMENT IN MICROENTREPRISES AND SMEs. UNIVERSITIES REQUIREMENTS AND ENTERPRISES CONSTRAINTS

Contributed by
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7.1. Introduction

In order to analysing the practical placement issues we have decided to observe the Italian universities and enterprises collaborations, a situation we have directly experienced as private enterprise.

Even if we know that there are more developed realities in Europe, we have considered the Italian one as it is not still well-developed and it needs a closer collaboration between universities and enterprises. Our considerations may be generalised both for SMEs and μ -Enterprises.

7.2. Seeking host employers

With “seeking host employers” we mean the identification of the host enterprise prepared to offer students the opportunity to develop their practical skills and to gain an “on-the- job experience” according to the education and learning courses previously undertaken.

In this context, according to our experience as hosting employer, we have gathered that the first contact between university and enterprise take place trough the following actors:

1. Students
2. University- Enterprises networking events (career fairs, workshops, conferences et cetera)
3. University teachers and tutors
4. Chamber of commerce and associations of enterprises

Most of the university curricula, both in technical and humanistic subjects, require also a final practical placement to enhance students’ learning as a part of the training course. This element has prompted students to personally act in the hosting enterprise seeking frequently because of a lack of specialised people in charge of students orientation within the university.

Even if it could be considered a positive element due to the fact that it encourages students in directly facing the labour market and employers expectations, in evaluating local enterprises profiles and in choosing the most suitable ones, it remains a task the University staff should be responsible for.

Thus the student, the actor, that should be the beneficiary of the orientation, is looking for a vocational tailor-made placement and must have to orient himself/herself autonomously, not always with positive results.

Indeed, the student during the process of enterprise research and screening, is often negatively influenced by external elements such as: short time for searching, insufficient information regarding enterprises favourable in hosting a trainee, difficulty in matching requested profiles and students’

needs. Therefore, in order to overcome those problems, the tendency registered among students is to prefer enterprises known through personal contacts also if they do not perfectly fit with their training needs.

Moreover, in accordance with our experience, we have not registered a deeper involvement of University teachers that with the personnel of the Career Development Offices should be key actors in organising the placement. This because they know the most the learning contents of the courses as well as the students' level of preparation due to the fact that they have assisted the trainees during their learning.

Furthermore, often University teachers are freelance consultants and they could support Career Development Offices providing their professional experience and developing their direct contacts to facilitate the university staff in finding the most suitable hosting enterprises.

Other channels that are increasingly important for the first contact between training organisations and employers are career fairs and events promoting the university- enterprise dialogue. They represent a concrete opportunity for reciprocal confrontation on strategic issues linked to practical placement (i.e. explanation of policy and legislative context, description of the contents of the course attended by students, collection of entrepreneurs demands etc).

On the contrary, in this first stage of developing placement partnerships the cooperation between universities and chambers of commerce or associations of entrepreneurs seems to be quite weak.

Trying to identify possible solutions it could be interesting, on one hand, to develop synergies among universities and structures such as chamber of commerce, professional associations that, thanks to their missions and management structures, could be able to produce a multiplier effect in different sectors and in enterprises of different sizes.

On the other hand, universities should implement a sort of "placement advertising campaign" addressed to enterprises aimed at explaining them the importance of hosting a trainee in their structure. This could have a double effect: it would help enterprises to better comprehend that practical placement final objectives are the student personal and professional growth and the reasons because the trainees could be precious human resources that have not to be considered only as low cost personnel. This kind of information could help enterprises to better consider that a placement period could be a "test period" for potential employees having some formal training that could grow according to the enterprises main strategies and responding to internal needs. In their personnel selections enterprises often do not consider the opportunity of addressing their requests to universities and they proceed autonomously with significant internal costs. It could be interesting to promote this partnership university-enterprise specifically aimed to improve the performance about the recruitment of junior profiles with fruitful results for both sides.

Finally universities should improve their databases collecting job and placement opportunities for students. In order to assure the quality of these databases it should be really important to select carefully the placement and job opportunities before the advertisement. This could mean that Universities should invest more resources in Career Development Offices staff, it may be expensive but it could prevent from troubles and risks, both for students and enterprises, arising from a placement experience that does not fit with expectations.

7.3. Ex-ante evaluation

There is not a European standard for the acknowledgement of enterprises to universities but the more frequent procedure observed can be resumed in two cases:

1. Enterprise that has been acknowledged to university enterprise
2. Enterprise that has not acknowledged to university

An enterprise acknowledged for practical placement has already hosted some students in its own structure.

In this case the trainee has already evaluated the company reporting his/her feedback to the university tutor.

Often the evaluation consists in a multiple choice questionnaire that risks misrepresenting the real opinion of the student and anyway this control is made only at the end of the period.

The needs of communication and interaction between university and students and between university and enterprises is a key point in this first phase of coordination of the internship in order to define the expectations of the two parts involved in the practical placement and to match them together.

In this way the risk that the internship is not positive for one or both the actors involved is minimum.

An enterprise not acknowledged is introduced by the student that finds an opportunity of internship by himself/herself.

The accreditation consists in the requirement of company's data, enterprise tutor's data, period and aims of the activities that the student will carry on in order to control the relevancy of the practical placement with the formal preparation.

We want to underline the fact that that promoter of the contact between the university and the enterprise is the student and often the company doesn't know who is the reference person within the university.

Because of the distance between university and enterprises it seems to be a kind of superficiality to check the enterprises' characteristics necessary to host a student with a specific background. In this case the university does not understand which are the companies' real needs and the best student profile for them. Vice versa it is hard to estimate if the specific society is the best for the learning needs of the students.

The principal issue in this first phase of coordination is the difficulty to estimate the good result of the experience before the beginning of the practical placement.

This problem could be resolved if the university examines closely the learning activities and if the learning preparation of the student is suitable to the company's expectations.

The indexes that the university should consider during the evaluation of enterprises should be the turn over of students in a specific job, the job descriptions that the companies present to the university, how many times they present the same profile to check if the companies supply their human resource deficiency with students. In order to avoid students' false expectations the aim of

the period of internship has to be clear: there will be possibility to be employed after the internship or he/she will be part of a time limited placement program.

At the moment, the most accurate analysis of the practical placement proposed by the enterprises is done at the end of the experiences with no control on the added value for the student and for the enterprise.

In the coordination, the direct contact between universities and enterprises is scant. Often this link is limited by a filled out form with a short description of the activities that the student will have to carry on and with generic tasks.

The solution may be the presentation of an exhaustive program of activities for the student and an exhaustive list of the expectations of the enterprise by the student that the university tutor will check visiting the enterprise's tutor and discuss with him all the conditions.

This way to approach to the enterprises is more motivating both for the university tutor that will be able to check the quality of the placement and for the student that approaches for the first time the labour market.

7.4. Placement implementation and monitoring

With "placement implementation and monitoring" we mean the core phase when the trainee is involved in the practical placement experience.

In this context we have obtained that on one hand the most frequently issues faced by enterprises and universities are:

1. Take into consideration host organisation already acknowledged only;
2. Sharing of the learning programme contents by the enterprise and university tutors
3. Agreement on the period of the placement;
4. Coherence between the learning objectives and the activities effectively carried on by the trainee;

On the other hand the most frequently problems faced by students are:

- 1° Pertinence of the students competences to the activities proposed
- 2° Difficulty in understanding the assigned tasks
- 3° Supervision of the enterprise tutor on the overall procedure
- 4° Absence of the University tutor assistance

If on one hand it is quite easy to find the person that will be the supervisor in the workplace during the placement, the first problem to overcome by the university tutor is the agreement on learning programme objectives. Indeed, the enterprise tends to plan the trainee activities going by its internal needs in spite of respecting the aims of the placement objectives. This situation arises from the fact that enterprises often consider trainees an element to overwork instead of a human resource whose potentialities and skills should be developed and valorised.

Moreover it is quite difficult to settle the start and finish dates of the placement with the enterprise internal staff engagements (i.e. availability of the tutor), with the student engagements (i.e. exams)

as well as with the learning curricula requirements (i.e. deadline by which students have to accomplish their practical placement period).

From the students point of view the most important issue is the lack of competencies and skills to correctly carry on the proposed activities. In spite of the fact that they may have an excellent formal preparation acquired thanks to university courses, often they are completely lacking practical skills. Indeed, only few of them have had the opportunity to participate in laboratories or practical simulations during their university studies so that they arrive unprepared at the work placement.

This situation generates frustration both on the student side that feels unable to carry on the assigned activities and on the supervisor side that often has to reorganises the tasks with a lower level of difficulty.

Finally students often are not assisted by the university tutor that in any case should be the first reference point both for trainees and enterprise supervisor. Indeed the University tutor is often contacted only for administrative and bureaucratic problems and does not intervene in the monitoring of the practical placement and in the achievement of the learning objectives.

Among possible solutions there is creation common database internet-based aimed at facilitating the sharing of information between universities and enterprises on students' profiles, placement learning programme contents and objectives, enterprises' characteristics and needs, placement monitoring reports etc.

This common platform should be managed and control by a sub-contracting tutor on-line or by a national/European career development office.

7.5. Ex-post evaluation

The practical placement analysis is done by the company on the student performance and by the student on the company assignments.

The evaluation of the enterprise on the trainee is usually a short consideration on the results of the experience but it doesn't explain in particular what are the aspects that the company has appreciated the most and which ones has not been appreciated.

On the other side the student gives his impression to the university through a questionnaire as well, but it's easier for the university to be connected with the student and understands which are the problems, than to be connected with the enterprise.

This kind of evaluation, most of all the enterprises ones, is quantitative, emphasizing aspects like numbers of hours worked, punctuality and it doesn't pay enough attention to the quality aspects like commitment, flexibility, analytical skills.

The issues observed are the low involvement of the university tutor during the practical placement that means a high risk to misunderstand the analysis of the two actors involved in the internship.

For a right interpretation of the needs and satisfaction of companies and students it is necessary that the university tutor and the enterprise tutor confront each other on the student's formal preparation and any possible deficiency of it.

Thus, all aspects of the practical placement experience should be evaluated in order to improve the quality of the training activity and prepare human resources skilled and ready to enter to the labour market

7.6. Considerations

Taking in to account all the aspects analysed it seems to be clear that a more commitment both universities and enterprises side is needed.

Resuming the overall considerations we have carried on during our analysis based mainly on the observation of the Italian situation we can state that often:

- ❑ Students have to identify autonomously the host enterprise without any supporting orientation. In this case it is not sure that the enterprise characteristics and activities fit with the students' learning needs and the practical placement learning objectives.
- ❑ There is no pre-emptive quality control on enterprises' characteristics in order to check their capacity to host a trainee.
- ❑ There is not a close collaboration between the University tutor and the enterprise supervisor (i.e. the sharing of information that take place almost always via e-mail)
- ❑ Only few universities carry on monitoring activities before, during and after the placement.
- ❑ There is not score resuming the placement results that would help employers in evaluating candidates performances
- ❑ There is no link between the different placement activities

Therefore, in order to overcome these problems we have studied a possible organisational model, called "Practical Placement Platform" that systematizes standard procedures that could provide possible solutions and prevents possible risks.

In particular, this system that may be held by an external actor such as an on-line tutor or a central career development office should:

- ❑ Control the orientation carried on by universities
- ❑ Collecting student's profiles provided by universities at least three months before the scheduled placement starting date
- ❑ Collecting enterprises' profiles (activities description and profiles needed) at least three months before the scheduled placement starting date
- ❑ Insertion of students' profiles and enterprises' profiles in a common database that automatically makes the match between the more suitable students' and enterprises' profiles.
- ❑ The enterprise that wants to be acknowledged and then inserted in the database has to demonstrate a good competency orienting, assisting and assuring a high level of training for the hosted student.
- ❑ Only enterprises acknowledged should be entered in the common database
- ❑ The university tutor at the beginning and at the end of the practical placement should submit to the student a test on the level of competencies in order to monitor the student training achievements.

- ❑ The practical placement learning programme should be conceived as a concept note describing premises, objectives and planned actions, expected results, evaluation index that will consider the commitment of the student and his/her innovative contribution to the enterprises activities.
- ❑ The results of the evaluation index should give to the practical placement a numerical value that on one hand will attribute a different quality level to single placement according to the achieved results and on the other hand it will motivate the student.

In the Italian context an effort has been made by the Italian Ministry for Labour and Social Policies through the promotion of the programme ” *FixO- formazione e innovazione per l’occupazione*” (training and innovation for occupation).

The programme started in 2006 and its purpose is to promote students placement in enterprises.

The FIO programme connects enterprises, university and students through an on-line database that collects job offers and demands in order to help them to match together: students may find internship offers that the enterprises advertise in the web site, and the enterprises may find students of the universities that are partners in the programme.

At the moment sixty-one Italian universities have joined the programme and they are working with enterprises to develop the university placement services and to improve students chances to enter successfully the labour market.

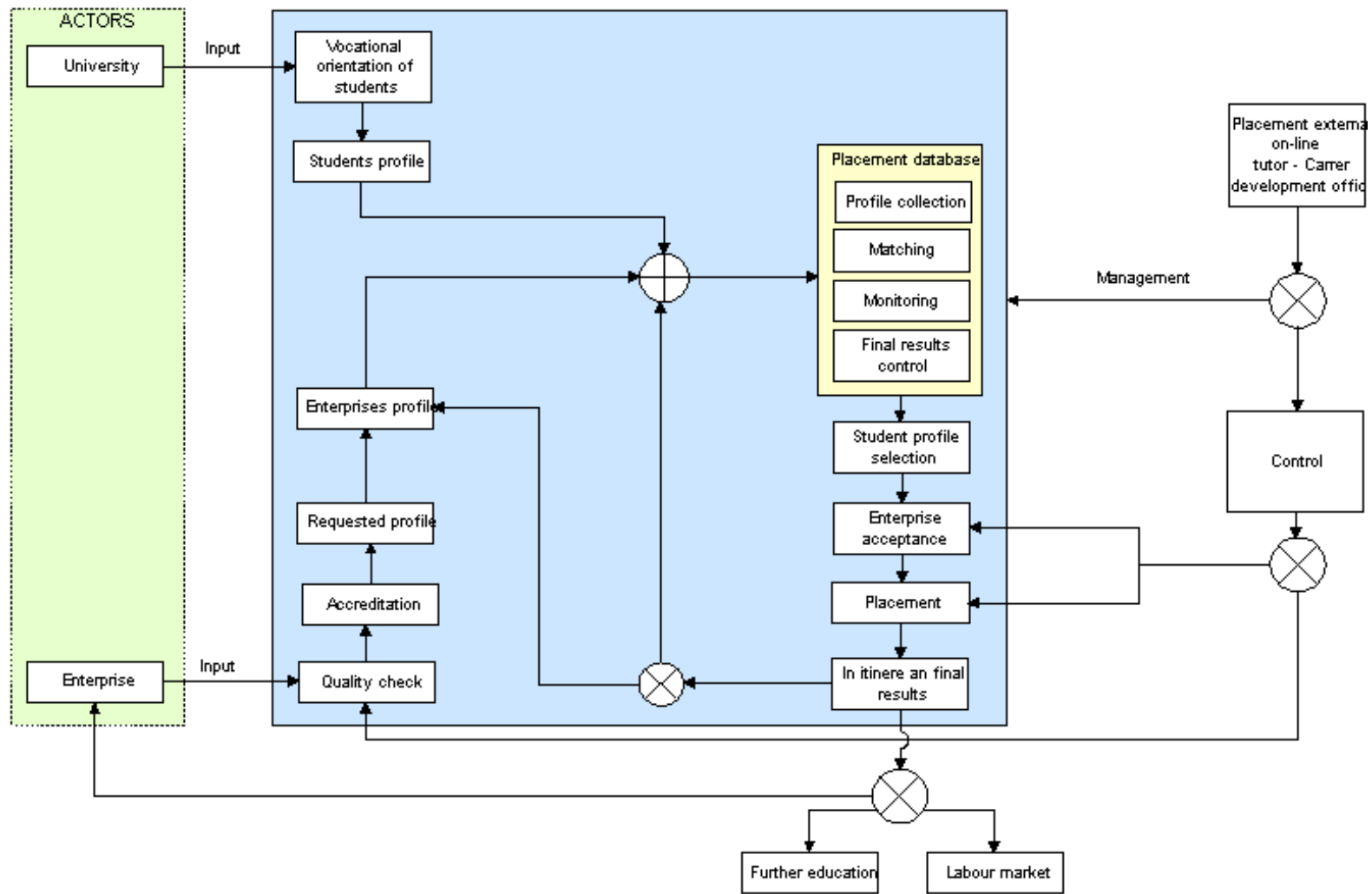


Figure 2 Practical Placement Platform

8. GUIDELINES FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF PPS. CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ACTORS, CREATING A LOCAL NETWORK OF ENTERPRISES FOR STUDENT PLACEMENT

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8.1. Creating the Network

Student placements are suited to gain practical work experience in a professional environment. The European Union gives grants to these placements in a wide range of professional areas and the promoters (contractors for mobility projects) need different levels of networks to run the projects effectively.

Quality standards for academic work placements in industry need to be guaranteed. The role and importance of regional, national and transnational networks is of strategic importance. The needs of partners and participants show the big challenges of networking and common ways to initiate a high quality of individual measures.

Specific networks are very helpful for the realization of mobility projects. Networks cover the needs in mobility projects considerably, as gaps can be closed by co-operations – redistribution of grants, placement offers and placement enquiry. The establishment of networks in mobility projects increases quality of individual measures and of the project in total. They extend and take care for partnerships, shorten information distances and improve the opportunities for disseminations of results. They also increase the flexibility of promoters in preparation, realization and attendance of project measures (examples: forum DAAD¹, LEO-NET²).

Networks offer opportunities for effective installation/application of project data management (Databases => dissemination of information, application procedures, finance management, report requirements, statistics).

The networks can be distinguished according to the field of efficiency between regional, national and international and with regard to the content by sectorial and regional ones.

8.2. Types of networks for mobility projects

To run the projects the contractors need different kinds of networks to realize the mobility activities. These are in detail as follows:

¹ Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst DAAD: www.eu.daad.de.

² Leveraging Education into Organisations - Network is a network of more than 145 dynamic partners from universities, colleges and intermediate organisations in 32 European countries, all of them involved in Academic Mobility within the European Lifelong Learning Programme. LEO-NET was founded in 1999 and was initiated at the EAIE in Maastricht, The Netherlands, the same year. In 2000 at EAIE in Leipzig, Germany, LEO-NET was set into operation by its members. The idea was to establish a kind of platform for discussion of common problems and difficulties, as well as the development of strategies for improvement in the field of higher education. Stimulation and facilitation of internationalisation of higher education in Europe is a major goal of the network.

- A local network at university level: financial aspects, integration of faculties, partners in local industry and administrative matters. A contractor has to be identified. Can be realized by local initiatives: university as a contractor / career center with limited working radius.
- A regional network to integrate the enterprises, regional ministries for co-financing aspects and make influence on the own region and make lobbying. It is useful to develop partnerships in a region to run projects together with efficiency. Practical examples are university-enterprise- partnerships like type UETP/AUEF, career center, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, sectorial associations (for instance IT, material sciences etc.).
- A national network to co-operate with other contractors of a country to optimize the project(s) and to develop synergies within a country. The contractors/promoters can share experiences and integrate national/regional or sectorial associations for new levels of lobbyism and interests.

The university-enterprise-network offers newcomers active support and exchange of experience to support the implementation and integration of new countries and regions.

By such co-operations the simplification and unification of rules and conditions can be progressed, obstacles can be removed and combinations between different strands and programs can be developed, e.g. synergies between student and young graduate mobility, staff exchange (target groups) and thematic networks / pilot projects. Close connection can be made to vocational education when universities train in this area as well (administration, craftsmen in workshops etc.). At the same time new concepts and professional profiles for new technological development and requirements can be developed.

European networks to share experience between the projects and to build the necessary platforms for partnerships (to get the letters of intent LOI) and to guarantee a high level of quality of the placements and conditions. The efficiency of running the projects, the increased flexibility to take care for the applicants and participants bidirectional and development of mutual trust and understanding are essential factors for the successful realization of an European programme.

National Agencies shall support the establishment, running and extension of networks by means of conferences, meetings of promoters and events to publish best practice. The co-operation with National Agencies leads to trustful work in a country by respecting the different role the players play. This can cover the needs for use of all grants given and earned by a country when all partners help each other. It is in the real sense of the European dimension.

8.3. Partners to the Network

All partners in mobility projects have specific needs or expectations to optimize the project conditions and the success factors:

- Contractors:
 - high degree of flexibility to place the students in the target areas – companies;

- additional money when the needs exceeds the budget of the project;
- open minded partners and high degree of acceptance of the applications from the sending region/country;
- real needs analyses of a region – can not be done within a mobility project alone; help and assistance of associations like Chambers of Commerce and Industry is needed;
- open minded host companies to give supervision to students and young graduates, to hand out references and to contribute by means of additional money or money in kind;
- additional grants from local authorities like ministries (public contributions);
- platforms to exchange experience like international conferences or workshops;
- understanding for the necessary administrative conditions (delivery of LOI, reports of participants, references from the hosts etc.);
- supervision for the own students done by promoters in the target country (as a part of a general network);
- long term stability for running projects.
- Students/ participants:
 - simple application procedures;
 - high level of funding for subsistence and travel costs;
 - references for the labour market;
 - to gain skills for the professional life;
 - little requests with reports and evaluation sheets;
 - support at problems and finding accommodation;
 - academic recognition at home university.
- Sending universities within a network:
 - participation in European programmes;
 - high reputation by internationality;
 - establishment of bridges between R&D and production at international level.
- Host enterprises as receiving partners:
 - permanent contact points to co-operate with;
 - flexibility with time and requirements;
 - short term decision opportunity;
 - easy procedure to participate in European programmes;
 - students as ambassadors from other countries and later employees or contact persons abroad – networking strategy.

Structured partnerships with the business community (including SMEs) bring opportunities for universities to improve the sharing of research results, intellectual property rights, patents and licences and increase the relevance of education and training programmes through student placements in business.

To secure these benefits, most universities will need external support to make the necessary organisational changes and build up entrepreneurial attitudes and management skills. International offices are often not in the position to take care for these co-operations as they do not have the direct connections to industry.

Here below we develop a communication strategy based on new tools and methods that are more closed to those used by companies than universities. It is of significant importance to take into consideration the economic background of the regions involved and the characteristics of the business sector of the area in question.

The creation of mutual trust among universities and business relies on a network of contacts supported by regular meetings with the people in charge of human resources within the enterprises.

In order to convince business to take part at the student placements procedure, there is the need to communicate into a business language. Universities and business have different cultures. A successful approach towards business sector requires to be familiarised with the activities sector of an enterprise.

8.4. Step-to-Step Procedure for the Creation of the Network of Host/Providers Organizations

FIRST STEP: how to create a database of potential host organisations?

Organisations that dispose databases of enterprises

- Chambers of commerce and industry
- Chambers of professions
- Chambers of Employers
- Unions of professionals
- Unions of directors of human resources
- Associations of local development
- Centres of Young Entrepreneurs
- Offices of consultation and communication
- National Agencies
- Regional representations of Ministries of Research and Industry
- Innovation centres and centres of technology transfer
- Database of enterprises-partners of faculty departments within the universities

- Database of enterprises available within other organisations that develop an activity close to the one of the student placement in question
- Database of enterprises established by other organisations that are dealing with student placements
- Press

SECOND STEP: communication strategy – promotion of the university student placements to the business

Attractive documentation about student placements (description of the programme, benefits, success stories) delivered with a questionnaire of interest:

- Internet
- Forums, exhibitions

THIRD STEP: direct contact with business

Who to contact within the enterprise?

- First contact:

SMEs: the owner

Big enterprise: the director of human resources; the technical director in charge of the technical profiles.

- Second contact:

SMEs: the owner or his/her assistant

Big enterprise: the person in charge of internships or the person in the service of interest.

FOURTH STEP: selection of the enterprises interested to host student placements in order to create the local network

Once a database of enterprises that are willing to participate in the project has been created, there is the need to proceed to the selection of the most suitable ones for a student placement, taking into consideration two factors:

- The activities of the enterprises
- The profile of the students to be placed.

Questions to be asked for defining a suitable enterprise

- Which is the activity sector of the enterprise?
- Which is the strategy of the enterprise? How students' placements can be integrated within this strategy? Is there any financial or commercial interest that has been clearly defined?
- Which are the aims of the enterprise (development of a specific project, development of new competences...)?

8.5. Quality Procedure for Student Placements for the Host/Providers Organizations

In order to ensure that all parties gain maximum benefit from the work placement, the Host Organisation undertakes to:

- Negotiate and agree a tailor-made Training Agreement (including the programme of the placement and the recognition arrangements) for each student and the adequate mentoring arrangements;
- Assign to students tasks and responsibilities (as stipulated in the Training Agreement) to match their knowledge, skills, competencies and training objectives and ensure that appropriate equipment and support is available;
- Draw a contract or equivalent document for the placement in accordance with the requirements of the national legislation;
- Appoint a mentor to advise students, help them with their integration in the host environment and monitor their training progress;
- Provide practical support if required, check appropriate insurance cover and facilitate understanding of the culture of the host country;
- Provide a safe workplace where the student is able to develop and practise their skills or observe work activities;
- Ensure that the student is appropriately inducted into the organisation.
- Inform relevant staff members of the presence of the student, and the reasons and purpose for the placement;
- Make available to students written administrative guides such as policies and rules, procedure manuals, equipment and directions for use of such equipment;
- Inform the student of the organisation's occupational health and safety requirements and procedures;
- Provide emergency care for students in case of accident or illness whilst on placement and contact a nominated University staff member as soon as practicable;
- Allow visits by University staff to assess and monitor the student's progress;
- Provide adequate public risk insurance cover in relation to loss, damage or injury suffered by students as a result of acts of and omissions by the host organisation, its employees and third parties;
- Acknowledge that the contribution of University staff and students is supernumerary for the purposes of determining the staffing resources of the host organization;
- Participate in evaluation of the student's performance as required.

8.6. Evaluation of the Global Procedure (Creation of a Scoreboard)

Indicators:

- Number of student placement
- Number of new enterprises within the network
- Number of activities' sectors
- Percentage of trust
- Percentage of failure

Questions to be asked for the evaluation of the local network

- What is the number of the student placements that took place?
- Is there any progress concerning the number of enterprises interested in receiving students?
- Have all the sectors of activities been represented?
- Did the placement drove to the establishment of a cooperation of mutual trust between university and companies involved?
- What is the appreciation of the partners (enterprise, student, university)?

Maintain the relations with enterprises

Establishment of a strong cooperation with the enterprises participating in the network and the enterprises that have already hosted a student by taking into consideration the new needs of the market during the design of student placements.

8.7. The Code Of Practice - Introduction³

For the organization of Practical Placements for Students we need to adopt a “Rule Book”, otherwise what we will call the “Code of Practice” concerning the procedure, the approach and the main principles underlying this cooperation.

The “rule book” should be developed in a two-fold character; on the one to cover the needs and the modus of operation of the enterprises, and on the other to be able to respond to the needs of higher education establishments.

This “contract” should be binding for both sides and the liaison for this is always the student undertaking the placement.

Part of the organization of a placement network is the development of a “Code of Practice” for all related stakeholders.

At the following chapter we will examine the challenges, arising during the creation of such a Code.

³ This following document is based on the second edition of a code of practice for work-based and placement learning in programmes awarded by UK higher education institutions. It is one of a suite of inter-related documents, which forms an overall *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) for the guidance of higher education institutions subscribing to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

8.8. Challenges

Developing a Code of Practice means to define the conditions in order to apply, being accepted and remain in the network. Also it means to develop rules, modus of operation between the tutor and the mentor, the enterprise and the university, etc.

A Code of Practice identifies a comprehensive series of system-wide principles covering matters relating to the management of student placement and standards during the implementation of the placement. It should assure the quality and standards of the programmes, and qualifications for the student..

Of course a Code of Practice should take into account that each institution will have its system for the verification and valorization of the system and its effectiveness.

Where a section of the Code of practice is related to legislative or similar obligations, efforts have been made to ensure compatibility with them. Another challenge is to make sure that the principles fundamental to the implementation of the PPS has to be understood in the same way by all stakeholders. For this a Code of Practice should not only provide the guidelines and the approach, but also to explain them in a comprehensive manner.

Individual institutions should be able to demonstrate they are addressing the matters tackled by the precepts effectively, through their own management and organisational processes, taking account of institutional needs, traditions, culture and decision-making. The accompanying explanations show why the precepts are important.

Institutions may find the explanations useful for developing their own policy and for allowing some flexibility.

Academic staff does not necessarily need to be familiar with the detail of all of the various sections of the Code of Practice, although they might well be expected to be familiar with the institutional policies it informs and any parts which are particularly relevant to their own responsibilities.

8.9. The Common Understanding of the Code of Practice

The *Code of practice* is concerned with arrangements made for learning, that is a planned and intended part of an academic programme, which typically takes place outside the institution and often involves the support and cooperation of a work-based or practical placement provider. The *Code of practice* is not intended to cover learning outside an institution that is not a planned part of a programme of study.

The Code should recognise the considerable developments that have taken place in recent years in the opportunities available for people in the workplace. It should also recognise opportunities for students to gain experience and learn through the work environment or to undertake a period of placement, including overseas placement. Although a planned period of placement in the programme is currently a part of many higher education programmes, future opportunities are likely to enable students to integrate work and study in a

more flexible way in the form of work-based learning. Foundation Degree programmes, for example, require the integration of some work-based learning.

Practical placement is regarded, as a planned period of learning, normally outside of the institution at which the student is enrolled or generally engaged in learning, and where any learning outcomes are an intended part of a programme of study. It includes those circumstances where students have arranged their own learning opportunity with a placement provider, with the approval of the awarding institution. It is learning which is usually achieved and often demonstrated through work and is intended to meet both educational (skills oriented) and personal development objectives.

An effective practical placement opportunity is one in which the aims and intended learning outcomes are clearly defined and understood by all partners, are integrated into the programme, and where the responsibilities of the awarding institution and the partners are made explicit. The responsibility for setting any intended learning outcomes, and ensuring that a work-based or practical placement opportunity provides adequate opportunities for them to be achieved, rests with the awarding institution.

Practical placement serves a variety of purposes. Intended learning outcomes set for a work-based or a practical placement opportunity may be highly specific. For example, they may embrace the development of practical skills and competencies that are required for practice in professional or other employment; or they may be more general, as in the development of an understanding of the cultural or employment context of an academic discipline. The workplace is also a locus for knowledge transfer and there are frequently opportunities for ensuring that the relationship between an academic programme and the work-based learning is generally interactive. The awarding institution clearly identifies and approves any intended learning outcomes that it sets, often in negotiation with all partners, and ensures that they are shared with

The types practical placement opportunities available to students take many forms and are defined in relation to the award being sought (for example, short, extended; full-time, part-time; paid, unpaid; assessed, non-assessed; formal learning, experiential learning; studying or working abroad). The awarding institution's relationship with a work-based or practical placement provider may also vary with the nature of the learning opportunity. This may, for example, be a practical placement opportunity with a single employer; the enrolment of students on a UK award with a programme of study at an overseas university; a student-negotiated, work-based project or placement opportunity; or a student in employment on a work-based learning qualification. It may also depend on the purpose a partner has for engaging in the provision of work-based learning or placements. For example, an employer offering passive consent to an employee undertaking a work-based learning programme may have a different attitude and involvement to one that is using work-based learning as a means of improving the skills and knowledge of the workforce.

The ways in which awarding institutions discharge their responsibilities to ensure that practical placement provides appropriate learning opportunities will vary according to the nature of the practical placement. In all cases, however, responsibilities should be clear, well documented and understood by all involved, with awarding institutions identifying those

aspects over which they retain control. It may be of benefit to involve the partners so that their needs and responsibilities are considered. Where institutions use an agency to secure the work-based or practical placement opportunity, they will need to assure themselves that their responsibilities for the opportunity are being met by the agency.

There will sometimes be a need to address the general principles of this section of the *Code of practice* in relation to the academic work and cultural conditions of the host country, which may require careful judgement in the interpretation and application of the precepts with regard to different national and regional contexts.

Practical placement, wherever and however organised and delivered, should widen the learning opportunities without prejudice either to the academic standard of the award being sought or the quality of what is offered to the student.

Furthermore, the arrangements for assuring quality and standards should be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those for programmes provided wholly within the institution and through conventional class-based modes of teaching and learning.

Work-based learning and placements usually involve collaboration with other partners.

8.10. General principles

a) Where work-based or practical placement is an intended part of a programme of study, awarding institutions ensure that:

- responsibilities for academic standards and quality are clearly defined;
- the intended learning outcomes contribute to the overall aims of the programme, and any assessment is part of a coherent assessment strategy.

The design of work-based or practical placement as part of a higher education programme can involve a number of partners in addition to the awarding institution. However, setting the academic standards of a higher education award and assuring the quality of student learning opportunities is the responsibility of the awarding institution. Practical placement can take many forms

An awarding institution may, in negotiation with partner(s), delegate responsibility for aspects of the programme, where it has confidence that the partner has the capacity to accept and discharge that responsibility. A partner may also jointly support the student's learning in the work place or placement with the awarding institution. Such shared responsibilities can work well as long as there is clarity about who is responsible for what.

An awarding institution, together with its partner(s), may consider how devolved or shared responsibilities can be clearly organised and identified; this may be achieved through, for example, memoranda of understanding, service level agreements, the provision of handbooks for students, employers, providers, and staff, and learning contracts.

8.11. Intended learning outcomes

The setting and testing of intended learning outcomes is an integral part of programme design. It is normally the awarding institution that is responsible for setting the intended learning outcomes for a programme or module.

Intended learning outcomes are often negotiated between various partners and need to be flexible, depending on the particular circumstances or environment. In common with other elements of an award, it may not be possible for all students in practical placement situations to have exactly the same learning experiences. It is important however, that they all have the opportunities to achieve the required set of learning outcomes. In circumstances where a student, who is based mostly in the workplace, is not able to meet all of the required learning outcomes from their work, it may be necessary for that student to undertake some additional tasks in another placement.

Learning outcomes can be set so that they contribute to the proper integration of work experience into a programme. In setting learning outcomes for programmes with practical placement, an awarding institution considers the extent to which that part of the programme contributes to the overall learning outcomes of the programme. This may include:

- whether the learning outcomes for the practical placement are broad enough to reflect the range of the student's experience;
- whether the student has had adequate/appropriate opportunities to achieve the intended learning outcomes during the practical placement and;
- what impact the optional or compulsory nature of a practical placement component has on the intended learning outcomes of the programme as a whole.

The purpose of a practical placement opportunity can vary and it may not be appropriate or desirable, to set formally identified learning outcomes for this part of the programme. For example, detailed learning outcomes may not be appropriate for an overseas placement where the main purpose of the experience is to gain a general appreciation of the culture of another country.

Successful work-based and placement experiences are often those where the intended learning outcomes are set in a manner that is flexible enough to accommodate a diversity of students and learning opportunities, and have been written with the overall aims of the programme in mind. Careful consideration of the intended learning outcomes within the whole programme can contribute to the integration of learning derived from the experience within the award.

A practical placement may also need to include outcomes aligned to specific professional practice-based standards and requirements.

8.12. Assessment

Awarding institutions, normally in consultation with their partners, determine the type(s) and frequency of student assessment in work-based and practical placement. Assessment strategies which include an emphasis on supporting student learning, as well as measuring achievement of academic standards, can improve students' learning experience.

Well designed assessment can help to reinforce the relevance of the practical placement to other parts of the programme and vice versa, giving students a range of opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes in a number of different modules. In designing a strategy for assessment in contexts where the learning and/or the assessment is 'off campus', it is important that the assessment tests the intended learning outcomes accurately and fairly. Consideration should also be given to the impact that failure or non-completion may have and how successful completion can be achieved.

External examiners play an important part in assuring the standards of awards and the quality of the learning opportunities. Awarding institutions consider, in discussing with their partners, the role that the external examiner(s) may have in assuring the standards and quality of the work-based or practical placement. It may be important to ensure that standard institutional practice takes into consideration the needs of an award that includes practical placement.

8.13. Responsibilities for the Placement Partners

b) Awarding institutions have in place policies and procedures to ensure that their responsibilities, and those of their partners, for practical placements are met and that learning opportunities provided are appropriate.

Individual awarding institutions and their partners give careful consideration to the development of work-based and practical placement in their programmes.

Clearly-defined policies and procedures for securing, approving and/or allocating practical placements will ensure that, where applicable, the partner providing the learning opportunity can deliver appropriate opportunities and has the capacity and capability to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Successful practical placement generally depends on the full commitment of all partners. Sometimes, however, the work itself may not provide the learning opportunity, for example, where students are using their existing workplace principally as the 'site' for their work-based learning and their employer may not demonstrate much interest in the programme. Such circumstances need to be considered by the awarding institution and the student, to ensure that any intended learning outcomes can still be achieved.

It is sometimes necessary for a partner to terminate an arrangement. To prepare for such possibilities, awarding institutions need to plan alternative arrangements to ensure that students continue to have opportunities to achieve any required learning outcomes.

c) Awarding institutions assure themselves that practical placement providers know what their responsibilities are.

Partnerships that provide practical placement opportunities for students can be structured in various ways. However, it should be clear where responsibility lies for, among other things, the provision of appropriate learning opportunities, the health and safety of students and, where delegated by the awarding institution, any assessment of students, in all cases.

Partners providing the practical placement need clear information from the awarding institution about the objectives of the work-based or practical placement, their particular roles and responsibilities, the nature and scope of the activity involved and how responsibilities are to be fulfilled. For example, the format, frequency and mechanisms that enterprises should use for informing the awarding institution about a student's progress should be made clear, along with details about the mechanisms used for providing feedback to the student(s). Similarly, clarity about the mechanisms to provide feedback to the employer or provider from the institution is also important to ensure a successful partnership.

Clarification of how the awarding institution expects the responsibilities associated with each work-based or practical placement experience to be undertaken and achieved; for example, that there is adequate supervision and/or mentoring of the students, through liaison between the employer/provider and educational provider, during the work-based or practical placement. The mentoring role is an important one and any training that the awarding institution or a delegated partner could provide for mentors in the workplace is best discussed with the learning providers.

Practical placement partners need to be able to demonstrate their ability to fulfill their responsibilities under relevant health and safety legislation, taking into account the level of skills and experiences of the students. The nature of the placement setting, and the student's employment status with the partner, may have a bearing on the applicable legislation and whether the awarding institution or the partner(s) is identified as the 'responsible authority'.

Awarding institutions will need to identify and clarify these responsibilities and duties with their partners and seek legal advice if appropriate.

d) Awarding institutions ensure that students are made aware of their responsibilities and rights throughout their placement.

Students undertaking work-based or practical placement have responsibilities and rights as individuals, as well as obligations and responsibilities towards the awarding institution and also towards the practical placement provider. For example, any student undertaking a programme of study leading to an award of a particular institution is a representative of that institution and has a responsibility to act appropriately and in accordance with the expectations of the institution. At the same time, students undertaking practical placement have obligations towards the provider and its customers, clients, patients, and other employees. Students have a responsibility to meet the norms and expectations for professional conduct in the particular field of work that they are undertaking through the work-based or practical placement. For students using their existing workplace for their work-based learning, such norms, expectations and responsibilities may be more obvious than for students joining a workplace to undertake a placement, and are often covered in a contract of employment. It is helpful for student(s) if these norms, responsibilities and expectations are clearly stated at the

outset of the work-based or practical placement. This may be done at the same time as students are made aware of their rights to work in a safe environment and to be treated in accordance with applicable legislation, together with their responsibilities under statutory legislation such as the *Freedom of Information Act*.

It is likely that during the work-based or practical placement, students will take on, to an increasing extent, the responsibility for managing their own learning and professional relationships, and for recording their own progress and achievements. Awarding institutions can help students to fulfil these responsibilities by providing advice on the negotiation of any learning agreements. They can provide clear information about the level of autonomy expected and nature and scope of learning support available from the awarding institution and its partner(s), including educational providers, at different times throughout the work-based or practical placement. For example, students will want to know which partner(s) is responsible for providing academic guidance to support their learning, perhaps through a structured and supported programme of personal development planning. This may not be the same partner that is able to, has the means to, and is responsible for, formally recording students' achievement of specific learning outcomes. To help in the process of managing their own learning, students may consider personal development planning and learning logs as a way of supporting reflective learning, and may have already started this practice under guidance in the institution.

Early warning of potential problems that may prevent a student's progress or satisfactory completion of the experience is helpful to all partners, and students will be more confident if they are aware of the procedures that they should follow and whom they should contact if such circumstances occur.

8.14. Information, support and guidance

e) Awarding institutions ensure that students are provided with appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to and throughout their practical placement.

Students benefit from receiving appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to undertaking, during and following work-based or practical placement. It is the responsibility of the awarding institution to specify the respective responsibilities of the partners in providing this.

There is a wide range of work-based or practical placement opportunities and so the type of information, support and guidance may differ according to a number of factors that can include:

- the nature of the practical placement opportunity; for example, students taking a qualification through a flexible and distributed learning route, or undertaking a placement overseas, may benefit from clear instruction, guidance and support in the use of virtual learning environment technologies, in order that they make the best use of these and can maintain effective communication with their home institution. Students on a health-related placement may need information on particular occupational health considerations and ethical and legal aspects such as client or patient confidentiality;

- the type of support and guidance: students studying while in employment may need information about the guidance and support available to them, how they can access it, who will be providing it, and the frequency that such support may be available. This may differ according to whether it is academic or personal support and guidance. Academic support can include guidance on academic performance; personal support may include technical support, counselling and, for overseas placement students, advice on the culture of the overseas location, on finding accommodation and travel information.

An awarding institution and its partners will wish to ensure that the range and type of information, guidance and support is appropriate for both the nature of the opportunity, the stage within the programme at which the opportunity is available, and the type(s) of student involved.

The needs of students differ depending on whether they are yet to begin practical placement, are undertaking it, or have completed it. For example, regardless of whether the responsibility for securing a placement rests with the students, they can find it particularly helpful to receive timely information about writing a curriculum vitae. Students nearing the beginning of their work-based learning programme or placement will benefit from information about the amount, type and frequency of support and guidance throughout the experience. Campus-based students returning to their programme after a period of work-based learning or a placement overseas may experience difficulties and benefit from support and guidance to assist their return to the programme. Information gained from any debrief may at this time be useful for future students entering the same work-based or practical placement situation.

Information, support and guidance materials that are developed in consultation with practical placement providers are more likely to fulfill the students' needs, reduce duplication and ensure that appropriate, consistent and timely information is available to students at all stages of their work-based or placement experience. Similarly, how support and guidance will be provided can be discussed and agreed between the awarding institution, any delivery partners, the work-based or practical placement providers and, where appropriate, the students themselves.

Students may also benefit from having information provided by the awarding institution about the procedures they should follow if they have a problem or complaint about their work-based placement.

f) Awarding institutions assure themselves that practical placement partners are provided with appropriate and timely information prior to and throughout the students' practical placement.

The amount and range and the format and timing of information and guidance an awarding institution provides to its partners is important. Such information may include, for example, the awarding institution's policies and procedures for securing, approving and maintaining work-based or practical placement experiences, and regulations to which students are subject. For postgraduate students particularly, this may also include clarification of the rights to intellectual property developed during the placement. Information may also include

the nature and timing of any support that the awarding institution will make available to the work-based or practical placement partner, and/or to the students during the work-based or practical placement experience, as well as clear procedures for the periodic review of the progress of students, the responsibilities for informing students of the outcomes of assessment, and sources of advice and guidance on progression opportunities.

Partners providing the practical placement find it helpful to have clear information about the action to be taken if they are no longer able to offer a practical placement opportunity, as well as knowing the procedures for reporting information about students' progress to the awarding institution or delegated partner. It is good practice for an awarding institution or delegated partner to inform the work-based or placement provider about visits from the academic or support staff, and any change(s) in the students' circumstances, in advance of the programme.

Practical placement providers need clear guidance about what and to whom they should report at the end of the work placement, this should include whether and how they report on the performance of the students, as well as providing feedback on the overall experience from their perspective. Such reports typically contribute to the improvement of future relationships between partners.

8.15. Staff development

g) Awarding institutions ensure that:

- **Their staff involved in work-based and practical placement are appropriately qualified, resourced and competent to fulfil their role(s) and**
- **Satisfy themselves that, where applicable, practical placement partners have effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of their staff involved in the support of practical placements.**

Staff of the awarding institution, educational partners and those employed in the practical placement setting, all have crucial roles in identifying, developing and maintaining appropriate learning opportunities and supporting students. They need to be informed about the awarding institution's policies and procedures for assuring the quality of learning intended to be derived from the experience.

The level and mix of staff expertise required to identify, develop, maintain, monitor and evaluate an awarding institution's work-based or practical placement policies and procedures, are important. In considering such factors, awarding institutions also need to work out how their staff will be adequately informed, appropriately trained and supported to undertake their role(s), and also satisfy themselves that appropriate and equivalent arrangements are in place for staff based in partner organisations.

All staff associated with supporting students during the work-based or placement experience work better if they have clearly and explicitly defined roles, and are given appropriate training to undertake these effectively. Such training may include updating staff knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation, institutional policies and practices.

8.16. Monitoring and evaluation

h) Awarding institutions ensure that their policies and procedures for securing, monitoring and administering practical placement are effective and regularly reviewed.

Practical placement opportunities can be dynamic and flexible, and contribute significantly to a student's learning experience, the programmes offered by the awarding institution, and the activities of the work-based or placement provider. Regular and effective monitoring and review of work-based and practical placement opportunities helps all involved to gain maximum benefit from them.

Clear procedures which allow feedback on the quality and standards of the work-based or practical placement to be available to, and used by, all parties, enable institutions and work-based learning or placement providers to identify and take appropriate and timely action, where necessary, and provide opportunities to note effective practices.

Feedback about the arrangements and effectiveness of a work-based or placement experience may be obtained from providers in a number of ways. These can include, for example, regular meetings between the awarding institution and any delivery partners, the employer representative(s), and the students, and through questionnaires and reports on student progress. Discussion allows awarding institutions and partners to agree the most effective and appropriate methods of obtaining and providing feedback; these are likely to be most effective if undertaken at the beginning of any new work-based or placement agreement and are periodically reviewed.

Feedback from institutional staff engaged with work-based and practical placement, and also from supervisors/mentors, external examiners and students is valuable in monitoring and reviewing both the effectiveness of the institution's policies and procedures for work-based or practical placement, and also about the quality and standards of its provision.

Encouraging the supervisors, mentors and students engaged in work-based and practical placement to provide feedback on progress, and communicate any concerns in a timely way to the institution and work-based or placement partner as appropriate, enables an institution and its work partner(s) to address concerns at the earliest possible opportunity.

8.17. SUMMARY

General principles

Where a practical placement is an intended part of a programme of study, awarding institutions ensure that:

- responsibilities for academic standards and quality are clearly defined
- the intended learning outcomes contribute to the overall aims of the programme, and

any assessment is part of a coherent assessment strategy.

Responsibilities

Awarding institutions have in place policies and procedures to ensure that their responsibilities, and those of their partners, for practical placement are met and that learning opportunities provided are appropriate.

Awarding institutions assure themselves that practical placement providers know what their responsibilities are.

Awarding institutions ensure that students are made aware of their responsibilities and rights throughout their practical placement.

Information support and guidance

Awarding institutions ensure that students are provided with appropriate and timely information, support and guidance prior to and throughout their practical placement.

Awarding institutions assure themselves that practical placement providers are provided with appropriate and timely information prior to and throughout the students' practical placement.

Staff development

Awarding institutions ensure that:

their staff involved in practical placement are appropriately qualified, resourced and competent to fulfil their role(s) and satisfy themselves that, where applicable, practical placement partners have effective measures to monitor and assure the proficiency of their staff involved in the support of practical placement.

Monitoring and evaluation

Awarding institutions ensure that their policies and procedures for securing, monitoring and administering practical placement are effective and regularly reviewed.

9. PLANNING EXECUTION AND CONTROL OF PRACTICAL PLACEMENTS FOR STUDENTS IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

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9.1. Introduction

The fundamental objective of Practical Placements in Internship for Students is that university students achieve an integral education through a parallel education program combining theoretical study at the University and volunteer training through internships at different *Entities: enterprises, Public Administration institutions or others(NGO, universities, etc.)*. The objective of this action is to facilitate the incorporation of students into the workforce while supplying them with professional experience in addition to knowledge and abilities with respect to practical course content. It is also an objective to allow and promote that university students from any European country could participate in Practical Placement Programs organized by any university from another European country.

It is not the aim of this chapter to justify the benefits of this Practical Placements as they have already been discussed in other chapters of this book. It can even be argued that many European countries have established **Cooperative Educational Programs** between Universities and external Entities regulated by national laws to either provide legal frameworks as well as to promote them.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss practical issues related to the planning and implementation of Practical Placements for Students in an International Context. The chapter includes a brief theoretical presentation that introduces the main issues concerned in the form of trade offs that need to make decisions. It also includes an example of a Procedure implemented in a particular case with the documents involved.

The issues to be addressed are:

1. Different types of Practical Placements
 - Compulsory vs volunteer Practical Placements.
 - Different types of academic fields: Health sciences, educational studies, experimental sciences, technical studies (architecture, engineering), other professional studies (law, business), humanities, art.
 - Short vs long Practical Placements.
 - Type of Entity that receive the student: *enterprises, Public Administration institutions or others (NGO, universities)*.

- Practical Placements for foreign students.
2. Planning the Practical Placements:
 - Definition of educational objectives
 - Search of Entities that will receive students
 - Initial requirements for students.
 - Publication of the positions offered and selection of candidates
 - Duration of the Practical Placement
 - Period of the year in which to carry out the Practical Placements
 - Actors:
 - University: Vicechancellors
 - School: Deans, vicedeans, tutors, students
 - Entity: Representatives, instructors
 - Legal framework: labour situation, compensation, duration, insurance, confidentiality.
 - Agreements
 3. Practical Placement execution
 4. Practical Placement Evaluation: Entity, Student, University
 5. Certification.

9.2. Different types of practical placements depending on different types of studies

The first issue to be addressed has to do with the obligation to do a Practical Placement in an Entity external to the university, the duration of this placement and the type of entity in which this placement should take place. All of these items depend on which is the type of studies that we are considering

9.2.1. Compulsory placement

There are some studies like Health Sciences (Medicine, Nursing), or Educational Studies in which the Practical Placements are compulsory and scheduled and credited in the Program of Studies in virtually every country university system. The type of institutions in which these Practical Placements should take place are also well defined (primary, secondary or tertiary education schools, Hospitals, Health institutions, etc.). These type of placements are usually the issue of general agreements at national (or state or lander) level between Ministries of Education and Ministries of Health, Labour or others involved in Social Welfare.

9.2.2. Volunteer placement

There are a second type of studies like technical studies (architecture, engineering) or other professional studies (law, business) in which the Practical Placements are not necessarily compulsory but volunteer, although this situation can vary between different countries and educational systems.

The Practical Placements periods for students of studies such as engineering or architecture are not compulsory in every European university system. It depends again on the type of institution and the type of studies that was considered.

In countries like Germany and studies like engineering in Universities of Science and Technology (former Fachhochschulen) it is compulsory to spend a semester in practical work in a company (a manufacturing or construction or engineering company). But in Technical Universities it could be not the case, though it would be compulsory then to spend that period in laboratory work. It can be the same situation in the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. In France graduation in engineering requires a compulsory practical placement in several periods and companies during the studies.

In the Latin countries it is not compulsory to spend that Practical Period in internship but many students do them on two different situations:

- A short period, two or three months (300 to 450 hours), usually in summer holidays after the student has passed more than 50% of the study program credits. These period can or can not, it is a decision to make by the school, to be used to amortize study credits for elective subjects.
- A long period, a full semester, that can be used, also a decision to make by the academic authorities in the school, to prepare and read the Diploma Project.

For engineering students it is obvious that the Entities in which to spend these periods are manufacturing or engineering companies. For architecture students, it would be appropriate construction companies or architecture firms. But for other professional studies not of technical fields but social sciences, like business or law, the Entities in which to spend these periods can not only be private companies but public administration institutions, non government organizations or even university departments or institutes.

It seem a trend in many European countries that government departments of education and business representatives are coming together to consider desirable that all university students of technical studies, and by extension all university students, spend these Practical Periods in institutions external to the university. So the frameworks to execute these practical placements for this type of studies are becoming more and more regulated in many countries under the so called **Cooperative Educational Programs**.

It should not be a problem to accept or even to encourage that university students do these Practical Placements periods in Entities abroad. Nor should be a problem for a particular university to

organize and manage the Placements of foreign students following the same procedures as for Erasmus-Socrates exchanges.

9.2.3. Research work placements

There are finally, other type of studies like experimental sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, etc.), humanities (Philology, Philosophy, Geography, History, Classical studies, etc.) or art. The type of Practical Placement desirable for these type of studies, probably, is much more related with work in research projects and or field or lab work and much less, although always possible, in private companies.

What it is to be considered in this chapter is much more related with the Practical Placement for students in technical or professional studies. But obviously some of our recommendations could be useful for the other type of studies as well.

9.3. Planning the practical placements

9.3.1 Definition of educational objectives

The obvious educational goal of Practical Placements in external Entities is to help the students to acquire and/or develop competencies like: to apply knowledge in practice, to learn what particular knowledge that could have or have not learned in the School would be necessary for the work, to work in teams with people of different areas and levels in the organization, to communicate with people of different areas and levels in the organization, to understand how the organization of an enterprise works, to understand the economic and social responsibility of engineering or business decisions.

To make sure that the Entity provide that type of education and that the student acquire the required competencies, the School should state to the Entity and to the Student the **objectives and the contents** of the Practical Period. This can be made with different levels of formality depending if it is a short period volunteer placement, a long period compulsory placement or a placement to prepare a Diploma Project.

9.3.2 Search of Entities that will receive students

This can be a two input process. Either the School has to make a prospective job looking for Entities suitable or eager to accept students for Practical Placements with special characteristics (type of work, duration, etc.). Or enterprises approach the School offering positions for Practical Placement of students. Depending upon the economic development of the country and the economic cycle situation, the second situation will be common or the opposite.

In the second case, the School has to define a clear frame for the type of work, duration of the total placement and of the working day, tutoring.

9.3.3 Initial requirements for students

All students who complete a degree may participate in a Practical Placement program on different modalities with the following requirements:

- Short Practical training period: Minimum two and maximum three months (300 – 450 hours) period in a company, usually in summer, when the student has completed 50% of the credits from the courses necessary to obtain their degree. Usually enterprises are not interested in students for less than two months period and students need at least two months to capture the nature of the work that is required from them.
- Long Practical training period to prepare a Diploma project: Six months period in a company if the student has completed all the credits from the courses necessary to obtain their degree

9.3.4 Publication of the positions offered and selection of candidates

Either individually at the demand of an Entity or collectively at the request of the School in the case of compulsory Placements, the School will publish the existent positions for Practical Placements and a procedure and schedule to apply for them. The School will have to devise a procedure with the criteria to select candidates when there were more than one request for a position or to reject unsuitable candidates.

In the case of foreign students they should send their requests to the chosen School through the correspondent International Relation offices in the same schedule that in Erasmus- Socrates exchanges and they should be considered candidates to some of the existent positions.

9.3.5 Duration of the Practical Placement

As mentioned in the paragraph 2.3, it can vary between 300-450 hours to a full semester. It is important to put a limitation to the duration of the placement because as long as the students receive a scholarship from the enterprise it easily can turn into abuse either from the enterprise or the student.

9.3.6 Period of the year in which to carry out the Practical Placements

In countries and systems with compulsory Practical Placements the periods in which to carry out them are fixed, 4th semester or 8th semester for instance, that means January till July. This put some stress on the organization of the placements.

If the Placements are not compulsory, they could be carried out any time on the year, as long as the students meet the requirement of the paragraph 2.3 and there are offers from enterprises.

9.3.7 Actors

- University: Vicechancellors for Academic Affairs and/or International Relations
 - The Vice-chancellor of Academic Organization will determine the general proceedings concerning cooperative education programs carried out by the University students in the various Entities

- School: Deans, Vicedeans for Academic Affairs and/or External Relations, tutors, students
 - The “Head of the Internship Programs” (hereafter HIP) is the person responsible for the organization, coordination, and management of the internship program. Sign the Agreement on behalf of the School with the Entity and the Student. Sign, on behalf of the Vicechancellor for Academic Affairs, the certifications to the Students, the Tutors and the Instructors. This person can be the Director or Dean of the school that offers the degree program or a member of the Board of Directors (Vice- dean) of the school.
 - The “Head of the International Relations” (hereafter HIR) is the person responsible for the organization, coordination, and management of the exchange of students with other foreign universities. This person can be the Director or Dean of the school that offers the degree program or a member of the Board of Directors (Vice- dean) of the school.
 - The “Tutor” is the professor, member of the University, that is in charge of supporting the student that is carrying out an internship with a business/institution. Each student is assigned a tutor at the onset of his or her internship.
- Entity: Representatives, instructors
 - The Representative of the Direction of the Entity: Makes the offer of a position for Practical Placement to the School, accept the student, appoint an Instructor to the Student, sign the Agreement on behalf of the Entity with the Student and the School
 - The “Instructor” is a member of the Entity in which the internship takes place and the person who organizes the educational training in accordance with the educational institution.

9.3.8 Legal framework

- **Labour situation:** Such Practical Placement programs do not establish a contractual relationship between the student and the Entities as, by their nature, they are strictly academic and not labour related. But this should be clearly stated in the agreement signed between the Student, the Entity and the School.
- **Compensation:** There is not obligation on the Entity to pay any compensation to the student for their work as they are an educational action but most Entities pay for the travel and subsistence expenses of the student an amount that usually equals the minimum inter-professional salary for a full working day established in each country.
- **Duration:** It should be clearly stated in the agreement signed between the Student, the Entity and the School
- **Insurance:** As Practical Placements are part of the educational process of the students and these are not employees, universities establish a civil responsibility policy to cover

injuries that the intern may suffer in relation to his internship and students are obliged to sign for that insurance policies.

- **Confidentiality:** Students are obliged to keep strict confidential care of the data and information that they could gather about the Entity during the placement and this should also be clearly stated in the agreement signed between the Student, the Entity and the School

9.3.9 Agreements

There should be at least two agreements signed:

- **A certificate signed by the Academic Secretary of the School and the Student to guarantee that the student is currently enrolled in the School. (Example in Annex 2)**
- **An agreement signed between the Student, the Entity and the School (Example in Annex 3) to establish the items already mentioned like: content of the Placement, Duration, Compensation, Name of the University tutor, Name of the Entity instructor, etc.**

9.3.10 Management Information System

The University should establish a Management Information System to handle all the process. It is most interesting that this was a web based system that could be used also to manage the contacts with Entities and students either to exchange and/or to publish information.

9.4. PRACTICAL PLACEMENT EXECUTION, EVALUATION AND CERTIFICATION

9.4.1 Practical Placement Execution

The sequence of the Practical Placement process is:

- Offers Reception
- Offers Publication
- Students application to Offers
- Students Selection
- Students Acceptance
- Agreements signature

Then the Student begins his Placement in the Entity.

During this period the Student should communicate periodically with the Tutor in the School. It can be devised a document to track the development of the internship. (example in Annex IV).

9.4.2. Practical Placement Evaluation

After the Placement, it is necessary to evaluate its results from both the academic and the management point of view and from the Student, the Entity and the School point of view. This can be done through questionnaires filled by the Student, the Instructor or Representative from the Entity and by the Tutor. There are examples in Annexes V and VI. These questionnaires can be very exhaustive (and very difficult to be answered) or less exhaustive. It is important to think about what is important to know from student and employer and what use is going to have this information.

The individual results from each Placement could feed a data base with all results to be analysed and draw conclusions for continuous improvement.

9.4.3 Practical Placement Certification

The process ends with the correspondent Certification for:

- Students: compulsory or elective credits, diploma project, etc.
- Tutors
- Instructors: The instructor may be interested in receiving a *venia docendi* or a free use of resources from university or other types of recognition.

Annex I

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT: AN EXAMPLE OF A MODEL OF REGULATION AND ORGANIZATION

Preamble

Probably all European countries have established Cooperative Educational Programs between Universities and external Entities regulated by national Law. It should be stated in the preamble of the Regulations of each particular University the reference to this Regulation. What follows is an example of a model of organization that could be used in a general way but should be adapted to the particular Regulation of each country.

Normative Regulations

Article 1: Field of Application

1. These normative regulations apply to the educational training activities (internships) in operative areas of the Entities that, through agreement, the students of the University of XXXXXXXXX may carry out in order to become professionals with a real vision of problems and their interrelations, preparing to incorporate themselves into the workforce.
2. All students who complete a degree may participate in a cooperative education program on two modalities:
 - Practical training period: Minimum two and maximum three months period in a company, usually in summer, when the student has completed 50% of the credits from the courses necessary to obtain their degree.
 - Diploma project: Six months period in a company if the student has completed all the credits from the courses necessary to obtain their degree
3. If the student's plan of studies so establishes, the hours the student dedicates to the internship at the Entity while he or she is enrolled in his or her degree program may be counted as academic credit hours. The total number of academic credit hours that the student may amortize through his or her internship will be that which is established by the regulations that are in use. In order that those credits be valid, they must be authorized by the Academic Organization Commission of each school before enrolment and payment of the

corresponding fees on the part of the student, realization of the application, and proof of favourable references as to the results of the internship emitted by the Head of the Internship Program.

Article 2: Regarding the Students

To participate in a cooperative education program, the student:

- 2.1. Must be enrolled during the academic year in which the cooperative education program takes place.
- 2.2. Must have an open academic record for the degree program in which he or she is enrolled by the signing date of the agreement of the cooperative education program with the company or institution where the internship take place.

Students that want to participate in a cooperative education program in an Entity of a foreign country will follow the same regulations as to participate in ERASMUS-SOCRATES programs.

Article 3: Definitions

The following define the terms within this normative:

- (a) The “tutor” is the professor, member of the University, that is in charge of supporting the student that is carrying out an internship with a business/institution. Each student is assigned a tutor at the onset of his or her internship.
- (b) The “instructor” is a member of the Entity in which the internship takes place and the person who organizes the educational training in accordance with the educational institution.
- (c) The “Head of the Internship Programs” (hereafter HIP) is the person responsible for the organization, coordination, and management of the internship program. This person can be the Director or Dean of the school that offers the degree program or a member of the Board of Directors (Vice- dean) of the school.
- (d) The “Head of the International Relations” (hereafter HIR) is the person responsible for the organization, coordination, and management of the exchange of students with other foreign universities. This person can be the Director or Dean of the school that offers the degree program or a member of the Board of Directors (Vice- dean) of the school.
- (e) The “Entity” is a business or institution that has the capacity to participate in cooperative education programs with the University.

- (f) An “internship” is the voluntary educational training that takes place in the Entity with the explicit purpose of reinforcing and complementing the student’s university education while preparing him or her for the workforce.

Article 4: Regarding the Schools of the University

- 4.1. The Deans or Directors of the schools of the University are responsible for the organization, coordination, and management of the activities defined in the preceding paragraphs.
- 4.2. Each school of the University must rely on one HIP who may be a member of the Direction, and will be in charge of their organization, coordination, and management.
- 4.3. The designated HIP in collaboration, must promote the elaboration of the necessary agreements or documents so that the students may carry out their internships. He will offer support and, when necessary, coordination between the school and the corresponding Entities.
- 4.4. Each school of the University must rely on one Head of International Relations (HIR). He will offer support and, when necessary, coordination between the school and the corresponding foreign universities and students.
- 4.5. Each school must determine the procedure for assigning a tutor to each student who participates in a cooperative education program. This tutor must be a professor who teaches in the school in which the student is enrolled.
- 4.6. The school’s secretariat will certify the number of internships tutored by each professor throughout the academic year to recognize those tutors for their merit.

Article 5: Regarding the Departments

In accordance with the procedures established by the schools, the departmental directors will propose to the HIP the distribution of the students in internships among the academic staff of said department.

Article 6: Regarding the Vice-chancellor of Academic Organization

- 6.1 The Vice-chancellor of Academic Organization will determine the general proceedings concerning cooperative education programs carried out by XXX University students in the various entities.
- 6.2 The Vice-chancellor of Academic Organization will establish the form, method, timeline, and type of information that the HIP of each school must remit about the results of the internships carried out in the Entity by the students enrolled in their

schools. The use of said information will be restricted, and only the global data reflected in the memoir of the University will be publicly presented.

6.3 The Vice-chancellors of Academic Organization will send certificates of completion of the internships to their respective students for the schools and departments.

Article 7: Regarding the Tutors

7.1 The Schools of XXX University will name a tutor for each student who carries out an voluntary internship by means of the proposals of their specific departments.

7.2 Recognition of the teaching responsibility of the professors who participate in cooperative education programs as tutors will be determined as follows:

- (1) The recognition of the professors' teaching time will be the result of two factors: one which considers the number of tutees the professor works with and the other the number of total hours tutored by the professor.
- (2) The factors of consideration are 0.05 for the number to tutees and 0.01 for the number of hours tutored, divided by 30.
- (3) The maximum recognition per tutor per academic year is three credits.
- (4) The application of said recognition will be effective in the academic course following the one in which the activity occurred.

Article 8: Regarding the Instructors

8.1 XXX University will recognize the instructors of the collaborating Entity automatically, the *venia docendi*, and honorary consideration as a collaborator without pay by means of the corresponding appointment which will be performed by the Vice-chancellor of Academic Organization at the proposal of the university center and the Director of External Relations.

8.2 The instructors will have the right to access all the University facilities and services that may contribute to their continuing education (libraries, seminars, etc.).

Article 9: Carrying out the Internship

9.1 Either at the demand of an Entity or the request of a School, XXX University will establish an internship and activity program according to the students' studies. Said program will specify at least the following details: (a) The objective of the internship, (b) preplanned internship activities, (c) the criteria used in selecting the students, (d) the criteria used in appointing tutors for the students, (e) the preferred calendar and schedule of the internship, (f) the system of evaluating the students' work as an intern.

- 9.2 The school will publicize its cooperative education program to the students in the established manner so that those students who are interested in participating may fill out the corresponding application.
- 9.3 The School will send the eligible candidates' application information to the Entity, and the Entity will select its intern(s).
- 9.4 The internship schedule will be established based on the characteristics and the Entity's availability. The schedule must be compatible with the students' class schedule. Compliance with this regulation will be assured by the HIP.
- 9.5 The Entity will guarantee access to its installations and resources that are necessary for the student(s) to carry out their internships and will determine the number of interns that it is able to attend to based on its resources and its proposed objectives.
- 9.6 The Entity will name an instructor for each intern. The instructors' functions will be at least the following:
- a) To receive the intern(s)
 - b) To organize the intern(s) activities during his/her/their internship(s) at the Entity
 - c) To inform the intern(s) about the Entity's organization and operation
 - d) To impart the corresponding practical education
 - e) To supervise the intern(s) activities
 - f) To coordinate the carrying out of the internship activities established in the program with the tutor that the University designates
 - g) To inform the HIP as to possible incidences during the internship
 - h) To emit the obligatory final report(s) regarding the work carried out by the intern(s) at the Entity
- 9.7 The internship must take place during an academic year in which the student is enrolled in the University.

Article 10: Evaluating the Internship

- 10.1 Each student's tutor, in coordination with the instructor named by the Entity, will be responsible for his or her tutee's continuing education and evaluation.
- 10.2 The students will carry out their internships under the control of and supervised by their tutor and the instructor named by Entity.

10.3 In order to evaluate the quality of the internship, the HIP will gather the students', tutors', and instructors' evaluations of the respective internship.

Article 11: The Relationship of the Entity and the Intern

11.1 The students who participate in cooperative education programs will have no work relation with the Entity, so no labour contract may be created during said educational period.

11.2 Unless expressly stipulated otherwise in the agreement, if at the end of the intern's studies he or she were to begin to work for the Entity, the time spent as an intern at said Entity would not be counted for matters of tenure nor would it make the intern exempt from a test period at the Entity.

11.3 The intern will not receive a salary; however, the agreement may include some financial aid given to the student on behalf of the Entity.

11.4 Said financial aid may not have the same concept and may not be of the same quantity as that established in the Entity's labour payroll system.

11.5 The intern must abide by the norms and functions of the collaborating Entity at all times. In addition, the information about the Entity that he or she obtains during his or her internship should be kept private.

Article 12: Accident Insurance and Civil Responsibility

12.1 XXX University has agreed on a civil responsibility policy to cover injuries that the intern may suffer in relation to his or her internship.

12.2 Neither the University nor the intern will be responsible for injuries that occur during internship activities or based on instructions given by the instructor from the Entity.

12.3 It is compulsory that each intern has insurance apart from that provided by the University. This insurance may be the collective accidents policy provided by Cum Laude insurance, which cooperates with XXX University, or any other insurance policy that covers no less than that which is covered by the Cum Laude insurance policy.

12.4 Students from foreign universities that have an agreement with XXX University and carry out internships in an Entity should have an accident insurance policy that covers no less than that which is covered by the Cum Laude policy.

Article 13: Consultation Committee

13.1 A consultation committee has been created to resolve technical questions with respect to the application of these regulations. This committee is made up of the HIP

of the different schools and the Vice-chancellor of Academic Organization and Coordination presides over it.

13.2 Said committee will have regular meetings once per semester and additional meetings when necessary.

13.3 The actualization of the Annexes found in this normative is the responsibility of the Consultation Committee. The Committee will send them to the Schools, Departments, and Organizing Units of the University as general information.

Article 14: Negotiation of Cooperative Education Agreements

14.1 The willingness and compromise surrounding collaboration between XXX University, the Entity, and the student will be made by means of the signing of the following documents:

(a) A document emitted by the school that states that the student complies with the requirements herein, and, concretely, with those states in Article 2 such that he or she may participate in a cooperative education program, along with the conformity of the student that said document will be turned in to the Entity. (Annex 2)

(b) An agreement for each student who will carry out an internship. (Annex 3)

14.2 The HIP will initiate the negotiation of the agreements and will reach a consensus with the collaborating Entity with respect to their content. To that effect, he or she will use the Agreement for Carrying Out Cooperative Education Programs, Annex II of this normative, as a model and for reference. If the agreement to be employed were to differ from said annex, at the request of the HIP the w Vice-chancellor of Academic Organization and Coordination would verify that its content fits that of the current regulation by means of express resolution.

14.3 The agreement will be signed by an eligible representative of the Entity, by an eligible member of the Direction and by the student that will carry out the internship upon evidence of agreement.

Annex II

SCHOOL OF ENROLLMENT CERTIFICATE

I, Mr./Ms. Academic Secretary of

Certify:

- (1) That(student's name)....., with national identification number (DNI) Is enrolled in(degree name)..... for the ...200_/200_..academic year.
- (2) That on the day this document was created, said student had(number of credits)... credits pending to finalize the studies necessary to receive the aforementioned degree.

IN ORDER TO FORMALIZE THE AGREEMENT TO CARRY OUT VOLUNTARY INTERNSHIP TRAINING, I SIGN THE PRESENT DOCUMENT

IN(place where the student is enrolled in the degree program)....

ON(date of printing of document)....

Signature of secretary and seal of the school in which the student is enrolled

Signature of student in agreement

Annex III

AGREEMENT FOR CARRYING OUT A COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM BETWEEN THE SCHOOL OF XXX AND THE ENTITY

Mr./Ms., professor responsible for internships in the school, and Mr./Ms. person responsible for (business)

subscribe to the present Cooperative Education Agreement, in concordance with that which is established in Royal Decree 1497/1981 of the 19th of June, modified by the Royal Decree 1845/1994 of the 9th of September with respect to Cooperative Education Programs, just as in the regulating normative of cooperative education approved by the Government Council.

- (1) Student participating in the program: Mr./Ms.
- (2) Business Instructor: Mr./Ms.
- (3) School Tutor: Mr./Ms.
- (4) Head of the Internship Training Program: Mr./Ms.
- (5) Carrying out the internship: The internship must comply with that which is established by Article 8 of the Regulations of Volunteer Internships in Companies for First and Second Cycle Students.
- (6) Place where internship will be carried out:
- (7) Duration and hours dedicated to the program:(hours).....
- (8) Student scholarship:Euros per month
- (9) The business' contribution to XXX University for administrative expenses:Euros
- (10) With respect to the rights and obligations of all parties involved, in all cases, the cited normative approved by the Government Council should be consulted.
- (11) The use of this Cooperative Education Agreement must coincide with the period of the academic internship, which in no case may exceed the academic year noted in Annex I.
 - a. The internship must comply with that which is established in the corresponding article of the regulating normative of Cooperative Education Programs approved by the Government Council.
 - b. Based on the financial aid received by the student, the Entity must retain the corresponding taxes (IRPF), along with any other legal financial retentions according to the current legislature, and will expedite the corresponding certificates of said retentions to the intern.

- c. In the event that the Entity neither contributes to the intern’s financial aid nor to administrative expenses on the part of XXX University, points (8) and/or (9) must be marked “not applicable.”

FOR THE SCHOOL

Signature and seal

FOR THE BUSINESS

Signature and seal

STUDENT

Signature

Signaturea:

Signature

3^a Interview: _____ Date: _____

Remarks: _____

Signature:

4th Interview _____ *Date* _____

Remarkas: _____

Signature:

5th Interview _____ *Date:* _____

Remarks: _____

Signature

6th Interview: _____ *Date:* _____

Remarks: _____

Signature:

7th Interview _____ *Date:* _____

Remarks: _____

Signature

8th Interview: _____ *Date:* _____

Remarks: _____

Signature

REMARKS: _____

<p><i>This Project can be presented</i></p> <p>DATE: _____</p> <p>Sin.: _____</p> <p>TUTOR</p>	<p>Academic records on order</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Sin.</p> <p>ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBLE PERSON</p>
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Annex V

STUDENT EVALUATION OF THE PRACTICAL PLACEMENT

Name:

University

School:

Enterprise

Evaluations (1- 10 points)

- 1) Adequation between the placement and the offer
- 2) Assistance from the enterprise
- 3) Contribution to the student's education
- 4) Management of the practical placement process
- 5) Interest of the practical placement for the student
- 6) Give an average evaluation of the placement
- 7) For this practical placement did you need some skill or knowledge that you did not have?
 - Yes Which one?
 - No

Annex VI

ENTERPRISE EVALUATION OF THE PRACTICAL PLACEMENT

Enterprise

Student's name

University

School:

Name of the practical placement

Evaluations (1- 10 points)

- 1) Contribution of the practical placement for the enterprise
- 2) Adecuation between the student and the offer
- 3) Management of the practical placement process
- 4) For this practical placement did the enterprise needed some skill or knowledge that the student did no had?
 - Yes Which one?
 - No
- 5) Overall student's capacity
- 6) Work capacity (laboriousness)
- 7) Work quality
- 8) Interaction with fellow workers
- 9) Collaborativeness
- 10) Initiative
- 11) Adaptability

AN EXAMPLE OF THE PROCEDURE

1) All year round Entities (enterprises, Public Administration institution, ONG, other university services, etc.) place offers of positions for university students of any degree. These offers could follow two patterns:

- A practical period of at least two months and maximum three months.
- A practical period that could be used to write the diploma project, that would take maximum six months.

Alternatively, the HIP could manage with some Entities placement for students in an individual or a collective pattern.

2) The Entities and the offers are checked by the HIP and if they follow the regulation they are validated, recorded in the database of the School System and published for the students to know them.

3) Students interested get in touch with the HIP that check if the student fulfill the requirements: is enrolled in the School in the academic year, has an open academic record, has received the required amount of credits (50% for a two-three month internship period, 100% for six months internship period and a diploma project).

At this point, foreign students interested could have access to the offers of any particular University. This could be managed through a normal Erasmus exchange:

- The student make an application to the HIR in his School that passes it to the HIR in the foreign School selected.
- Both HIR sign a Learning Agreement that states that the student is going to spent a practical period in an Entity agreed with the receiving university.

As many universities do use a web based system to manage these placements, it could be possible (and desirable) that all Schools in the network (EUE Net) could have access to a one common database of placements. Or at least, that the two Universities concerned in this particular case could share or exchange the placements offered in a particular time.

4) Students fulfilling the requirements are accepted and registered in the database. Then the students could send CVs to the Entities concerned.

5) Students being approached and accepted by the Entity should choose a Tutor in the School and be accepted by him. Then they should fill four documents:

- Annex 1: Certification of Student's enrollment in the School
- Annex 2: Agreement between the School, the Student and the Entity

- Annex 3: Control Sheet signed by Student, HIP and Tutor. It should be used to record the contacts between Student and Tutor and should be presented when the internship period is over.
 - Cum Laude insurance
- 6) Annex 2 is signed by the Entity, the Student and the School (HIP). The internship period begin
- 7) When the period is over:
- Entity and Student should fill a questionnaire evaluating the internship (Annexes 4 and 5). These questionnaires will feed the School databases for quality assurance purposes, reports and continuous improvement actions.
 - The tutor will write a Report evaluating the internship
- 8) The School gives the Student a Certification of the completion of the internship period. If it is the case the Student gets the permission to read the Diploma Project, through the Control sheet signed by the tutor, and if this is satisfactory he or she get the Certification of his Degree.

In the case of foreign students, they receive the same Certification via the HIR who send it to the counterpart in the foreign University, following the Erasmus-Socrates procedures (Transkript of Records)

10. TRANSNATIONAL VS LOCAL STUDENT PLACEMENTS

Contributed by
Frank MARCH, Ilmenau University of Technology

10.1. General aspects and back ground of PPS

The study at an university - especially in engineering - is mainly orientated to practical experience and skills. The labour market requires young graduates with a high degree of practical work experience to bring them into the typical work atmosphere without any delay. Here time is really money and in industry and in enterprises there is no time to waste. That is why many curricula integrate shorter or longer periods of practical work experience in companies. By this the training body university follows the needs of the later customer of the graduates and many success stories show that a close connection between training institution and labour world by research co-operation is helpful for third party money in university and the added value for the students to know and understand the practical field much better by a stay in a company or a research institution.

The German Dual system in vocational education is a remarkable example for the best practice. In some countries and for instance at German Fachhochschulen (Universities of applied sciences) students can attend these higher education institutes with a certified period of work experience either by practical stay in a company or a vocational training inside a company only. And additionally there are further periods of practical work inside the curriculum of the studies.

Driving forces are here the needs from the so called practice, the needs of the training bodies to co-operate with industry and to hold the practical knowledge up to date there and not to forget that the companies profit from the research activities in close connection with the H.E.I.s. It is or can be a "business" of reciprocity. BUT - this is a matter of mutual trust and understanding of the procedures and regulations. Both sides have to invest human resources for supervision, working places and equipment/materials, challenging tasks for the participants, curricula, insurance agreements and working contracts and many many things more. The variety of "problems" is nevertheless manageable and in most of the cases a win-win-situation.

10.1.1 Specific aspects to be covered in connection with a PPS independent from local or trans-national placement:

Motivation of students to get maximum of experience – break in daily living environment

Development of open-mindedness at all levels

Application and assessment procedures

To prevent the risk of using PPS as a source of cheap labour force for trivial works

Supervision at both sides of PPS – company and H.E.I.

Contracts and regulations, insurance regulations / risks
Financial contribution / salary or grants
Quality control and standards of quality management systems
Optimum of duration of PPS
Regulations of intellectual property
Academic recognition of the results from PPS
Individual initiative of the participants to get a placement offer

10.1.2 Aspects of trans-national PPS:

Local and trans-national PPS – added value
Language and socio-cultural aspects / preparation => training offers and help
Group or single placements – requirements and benefits
Academic recognition across borders
Integration into curricula to prevent loss of time in the study courses
Preparation of scientific work (for instance thesis) in another language
Defense of the results and working methods at host institution and at the home H.E.I.
Quality control across borders – mutual trust of the partners
Full integration into the working environment in another culture
Grants / salary / contributions in kind
Working permission in some countries
Social status of PPS is not clearly defined in many countries
Help and support from regional or trans-national network in mobility
International references and certificates / Europass Mobility,

10.2. European PPS policy since the eighties in 20th century

The development of student mobility is a long term target of the European Union. Many promoters have specialized for more than 20 years to motivate students to go abroad for a specific time within their studies. The number of participating countries increased rapidly and so does the number of contractors. It was a dedicated focus of European policy to bring the two sectors of education and so called practice or practical world together to learn from each other, to understand the needs of both sides and to bring two obviously different worlds together. It was aimed to realize the transfer of knowledge through brains or heads by individual mobility activities accompanied by financial means. From 1986 until 1995 the COMETT program (COMmunity action program in Education and Training in Technology) set the fundamentals for the LEONARDO DA VINCI program in the late 90th early 2000th in ERASMUS with a big variety of strands and initiatives. Former strands fixed target groups right within the program's names but under LEONARDO DA VINCI the target groups are

described within the action lines. It is the fundamental interest of students and companies to get closer to each other - but how to be done? A good stimulus is the European initiative to bring both parties together and bridge the gap between them by grants and promoters who provide placements as companies do not have neither the time nor the human capital to recruit placement students inside their company. The European Union provides help and grants to develop the motivation on all sides of the partnership for a progress in this process.

Big efforts were made to stimulate this sector of education to become the world best educated part in the competition to the challenging world in Asia and America. The EU Commission uses a lot of tax money via the DG Education and Culture to gain mobility of students to influence the employability of the further graduates and to improve by the competitiveness of the companies in Europe. Mobility in educational sector is political strategy in Europe! Even networks are established to optimize the work for the PPS.

10.3. PPS – local or trans-national?

Of course the student placements can be organized by individuals themselves but the risk is considerable related to the a.m. factors and arguments. It is not only the question of salary but as well the aspects of specific supervision, preparation, insurance, academic recognition and social company and integration into the curricula, help to find accommodation and other practical aspect to optimize the placement as such. New quality standards and regulations make the placements attractive for a wide group students and after the engineers in the 1990th PPS became more popular for students in nearly all study courses PPS are possible and as possibilities considered from the students.

The added value of a placement abroad is the transnational character of the education abroad consist of the expectations and benefits from the parties involved:

General goals of student placements

- New learning and working methods and a transnational way of thinking are to be stimulated and developed.
- A focus is to be made on the stimulation of competitiveness of small and medium sized enterprises SMEs, a contribution to knowledge provision in the field of university education and to the employability for the beneficiaries (students and young graduates).
- Technology transfer between participating partners should be stimulated and supported. Student placements are mainly realized in the sector of engineering. So these placements help to deepen / extend theoretical knowledge, to become acquainted with new technologies and to develop new skills in socio-cultural and language competence of the prospective graduates. By this student placements give support to the technology transfer between the regions of Europe.
- The transnational exchange of people helps to build-up a network, that make a high efficiency of co-operation within international projects possible.

Benefits for students to participate in mobility projects

Related to long term experience the following benefits of students can be identified within mobility projects:

- Curiosity to international experience
- Lower-cost stay abroad, as grants are provided
- Challenging working tasks within the vocational training period
- Extension of the individual cultural horizon – socio-cultural skills
- Development/acquirement of a „career brick“/ references
- Pronounced interest for support, help in orientation, counseling and offering of a student placement and a financial contribution to the stay abroad
- Extension of language competence
- Search for a potential prospective employer
- Closing the gap between theoretical training and the „real“ professional life

Benefits of companies acting as hosts for the students

- To gain experience with international project work
- Acquirement of language competence for all people involved
- Technology transfer between universities and enterprises by application of latest scientific knowledge from teaching and research at universities and practice/labour world
- Solution of internal problems with calculable risk but without prejudice
- Increase of motivation of internal staff by new experience in co-operation with „international“ people
- Unique opportunities for public relations for the host enterprise in the home country of the placement student
- Placement students can be prospective employees in their home countries and thus contribute to the entrepreneurial success of a region
- Placements can be part of staff development strategy and contribute to the internationalization of business
- Pre-selection of applicants by a counseling office with regional and European orientation (projects).

Benefits for the sending universities

The sending universities benefit from the participation of student and graduate's mobility by:

- Attractiveness of a university increases by international co-operations
- The labour market chances of graduates increase considerably (employability), the motivation of graduates to be self employers increases as well
- New international co-operations are developed

- Transnational exchange of experience „through the heads“
- Influence on curricula and quality of education is possible and targeted at this area
- Additional financial means for mobility actions within the sending universities
- Participation in network activities – new partnerships and scientific co-operations are established
- New ways of recognition of academic and labour market relevant study records (diploma supplement, Europass Mobility, certificates / references)
- Influence opportunities on European education and training policy
- Bridging function between regions and countries
- Technology transfer opportunities, new individual partnerships between universities and enterprises with the “European dimension” – here it is meant the added values of a placement abroad instead of doing it in the home country or region

Aspects of needs of the partners involved in mobility activities in Europe:

All partners in mobility projects have specific needs or expectations to optimize the project conditions and the success factors:

Contractors – here it is meant the contractor of European mobility projects

- high degree of flexibility to place the students in the target areas - companies
- additional money when the needs exceeds the budget of the project
- open minded partners and high degree of acceptance of the applications from the sending region/country
- real needs analyses of a region – can not be done within a mobility project alone; help and assistance of associations like Chambers of Commerce and Industry is needed
- open minded host companies to give supervision to students and young graduates, to hand out references and to contribute by means of additional money or money in kind
- additional grants from local authorities like ministries (public contributions) or from the faculties of the sending universities, grants coming from industry
- platforms to exchange experience like international conferences or workshops
- understanding for the necessary administrative conditions (delivery of LOI, reports of participants, references from the hosts etc.)
- supervision for the own students done by promoters in the target country (as a part of a general network)
- long term stability (sustainability) for running projects and contact points

Students / participants

- simple application procedures
- high level of funding for subsistence and travel costs
- references for the labour market and the individual professional career of the participants

- to gain skills for the professional life
- little requests with reports and evaluation sheets
- support at problems and finding accommodation
- academic recognition of the results of the work abroad at home university to prevent any loss of time for the students

Sending universities within a network

- participation in European programs
- high reputation by internationality
- easy combination between ERASMUS and LEONARDO / study and work abroad
- establishment of bridges between R&D and industry at international level

Host enterprises as receiving partners

- permanent contact points to co-operate with – long term competence / experience of project contractors
- flexibility with time and requirements
- short term decision opportunity
- easy procedure to participate in European programs
- students as “ambassadors” from other countries and later employees or contact persons abroad – networking strategy

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11. CURRENT MODELS FOR QUALITY CONTROL OF TRANS-NATIONAL PPS

Contributed by
Frank March, Ilmenau University of Technology

11.1. Quality aspects in mobility projects

Currently there is no definition, no common standard in the EU countries in the field of quality, only a quality charta (a very general one that regulates the rights and obligations of the partners involved in mobility projects) that has to be accepted by the partners within mobility projects BUT many people have different opinions and there is no legal regulation and no quality assurance system QAS!

All activities within mobility measures have to have a quality assurance system QAS. Such a QAS is still to be developed as at present all project contractors and the European Commission have different ideas and understanding of quality in the mobility sector.

Aspects of quality are as follows:

General conditions:

- Views/expectations from the specific clients
- Quality and clearness of calls and forms
- Structured time schedule, fair for all
- Academic recognition of results of mobility
- Integration into curricula of studies
- Legal agreements/contracts – role of National Agencies and EU Commission
- Stimulation of promoters to do max. possible efforts
- Social status of the participants, taxes, ...
- Preparation phase – application/motivation, cultural and linguistic preparation
- Level and extent of supervision from all bodies involved
- Role of networks of project coordinators
- Insurance aspects – health, accident and legal liability – who takes care, how is supervision done, risks ...
- Rights and obligations of participants
- Evaluation of projects and recommendations = feed back from the actors

Financial aspects

- Level of grants for the participants / month and in total for the whole placement
- Obligations / recommendations for the host companies
- Cofinancing part of the contractor

- Stimulation to maximize the outcome
- Volume of overhead, free handling
- Differentiation between the member countries and regions?
- Status of grants – social contributions, public grants from the country or region
- Mutual acceptance of the partners
- Duration of placements – requirements and expectations, needs from companies, curricula
- Role of networks of promoters / contractors, consortia regional or sectoral
- Platforms of communication and meetings
- Certificates and references for participants and hosts, networks, quality reference centres
- Lobbyism for the co-operation university-enterprise

... and may be many more that still have to be identified by research within Thematic networks of the European Commission – currently under preparation within EUE-Net project (www.eue-net.com run by Transilvania University Brasov / Romania.)

Conclusions and vision for quality assurance in mobility activities:

- To do an analysis about relevant factors of mobility
- Development of a European standard of quality assurance according to the real needs of many of the people and institutions involved
- Recommendations about quality assurance system in individual mobility of students for practical work experience/placements
- Stimulation instruments for all bodies involved – overheads to cover staff costs, international recognition etc.

11.2. Practical examples of quality control mechanisms and platforms of discussions

11.2.1. LEONARDO-Office Thuringia / Germany as an example for a regional consortium.

The consortium operates since more than 15 years in mobility projects. There is a closed circuit of quality control starting from:

- the development of the consortiums itself,
- the development of the annual project concepts with close identification of the real needs of the participating H.E.I.s in the region
- the establishment and care of the necessary trans-national network
- clear information policy for the applicants
- design of clear application forms and procedure
- numerous information events in the region

- supervision of the participants before, during and after the placements abroad
- hotline in nearly all questions of daily live
- clear overview about reports and documents the participants have to deliver after the placement
- evaluation of the individual placements inside the office
- feedbacks from the host companies
- feedback seminars with the participants twice a year to learn how to improve the mechanism and conditions
- optimisation of the financial contribution from the project, the host institution and other sources of money and money in kind
- annual report to the regional Ministry of Education, meetings to discuss current developments and requirements
- evaluation of the host companies
- activities to develop a mobility label and promotion for placements
- support for the participants to get certificates and references
- the office operates as a contact point in the region and shares experience to develop mobility project for the benefit of a broad variety of target groups

The decision to run the activities as a consortium is related to the idea to minimize the efforts to participate in European mobility projects (1 project for the need of a whole region – Thuringia = 9 H.E.I.s - but only 1 competence center for all as a measure of common interest – saves money, human resources and accumulates experiences).

The consortium is driven by a board consisting of representatives from all participating H.E.I.s, the regional Ministry of Education, regional SMEs and research institutions and Technology parks. The LEONARDO-Office as such has the obligation to report about its activities, the budget, the evaluation and from these conclusions the strategy of further development is agreed.

Furthermore the LEONARDO-Office is part of several initiatives to develop itself. It works actively in thematic networks at EU Level, communicates with the whole network of contractors in Germany via a forum driven by the National Agency in Germany (DAAD) and shares experience with LEO-Net (www.leo-net.org) an association of European universities and mobility associations. Inside the forums the partners inform themselves about bad experiences in host institution and evaluate by this the situation to prevent any further problems.

Reference: rank 2 in European Quality in Mobility award 1996, Graz / Austria

contact: www.leonardopraktika.de, mail: frank.march@tu-ilmenau.de

11.2.2. Transnational example – LEO-Net

(source: LEO-Net files at)

This network is located as an European wide operating association in Vienna / Austria and has currently more than 150 members.

The main focus of LEO-NET -Network for academic mobility:

- facilitates day-to-day operative input on student and graduate industry placements;
- network support through quality reference centre approach
- strategic issues support taken onto decision makers on Programme level
- training courses, i.e. quality in company placement organisation; project management, networking
- members' interaction on policies and national actions

LEO-Net strongly supports the focus of the European Commission on quality aspects regarding H.E.I. co-operation. The network also is involved in various discussions on how to strengthen new and existing partnerships in mobility actions.

Based on the recommendations of the Lisbon paper on “Quality aspects” the following is under discussion with the members in more detail:

- Framework for the future H.E.I. / industry co-operation and partnerships;
- Company involvement – European Quality Charta – Projects;
- Framework for the future H.E.I. / industry co-operation and partnerships.

The network suggests to make use of already existing university-enterprise-partnerships with their infrastructure built within the COMETT and LEONARDO periods. Typical structures are technology transfer units, career services, regional LEONARDO-Offices, International Offices at universities and other regional bodies and intermediaries in the field of education and training, research and knowledge transfer, to establish so called **QUALITY REFERENCE CENTRES**. These bodies are well embedded in the regional entrepreneurial infrastructure and accumulated experience and reputation to run projects in the interaction between H.E.I. and industry. They already know the requirements and prerequisites of local industry and universities. Therefore Quality Reference Centres can act as local partners for all enterprises and universities in the respective region and additionally as a contact point for their transnational counter parts.

The regional bodies should be united in an European Network of Quality Reference Centres, responsible for the quality of the H.E.I. / enterprise co-operations. The set-up of such a network can be organised BY THE LEO-Net members.

The Quality reference centres would be one-stop-shop for any set of questions regarding partnerships and searches, project implementation plans, quality issues, monitoring and dissemination.

Furthermore, within their activities of the recognition of quality placements and being a clearinghouse for legal and social issues, they can also be responsible for the valorisation of the results and the accreditation of enterprises, which offer placements and want to achieve the Erasmus label. Only those enterprises that receive the label will be able to participate in projects and/or host Erasmus placement students, graduates and staff. The **Erasmus Enterprise Label** must be based on a “European Quality Charta” and should include indicators for a company’s commitment towards quality, commitment and dedication.

- **Company Involvement – European Quality Charta – Pilot Projects**

Allowing a wide variety of content coming from industry could lead to excellent possibilities for enhanced European co-operation on initiatives and actions.

For example:

- Curriculum development
- Know-how transfer and entrepreneurship
- Skills competences
- Pooling of new innovation knowledge
- Training and professional development

Projects involving industry partners show individuality and have to be considered tailor made the needs of a certain industry sector or an industrial region. Therefore, they have to involve the “matching” departments within the university structure. In order to guarantee industry’s participation in the first place, an easy to use framework, based on high quality standards and clear guidelines has to be established. Furthermore, clear targets and foreseen outcomes of a project are necessary at the start and the dissemination strategy has to be known.

Finally it must be said that a lot of research and analysis still have to be done at the sector of quality assurance in mobility projects and activities. Here thematic networks can deliver fruitful help in the development of an European Quality Assurance System.

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12. THE NETWORK MODEL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TRANSNATIONAL PLACEMENTS

Contributed by
Edmund ZIRRA, University of Applied Sciences Karlsruhe KOOR-BEST

12.1. The background

Current surveys among enterprises regarding the key qualifications of graduates show that international practical experience ranks on top of all criteria.

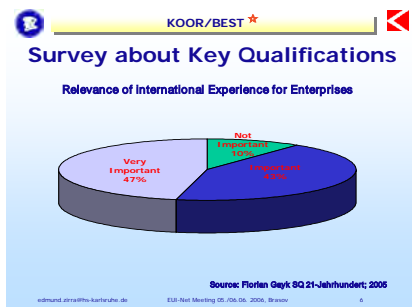


Figure 1: International experience in enterprises

In addition, Practical placement of students can be seen as a typical form of cooperation between universities and enterprises. At the same time it is an important part of the current university curriculum with direct influence on employability of future graduates because the placements facilitate the first contacts of students with the real work environment through a small scale professional exercise. In a number of European countries good practices and valuable experience in organizing this typical activity of university-enterprise cooperation can be found. These good practices usually

result from a strong regional cooperation between universities and enterprises that form the necessary bridge between the two sectors and make practical placements profitable for both: a quality educational stage valuable for the study programme and a small contribution to the enterprise activity.

In contrast to best practise examples, the curricula with integrated practical placements are still rather rare. To follow the needs of Enterprises shown in several surveys and to improve the employability of graduates

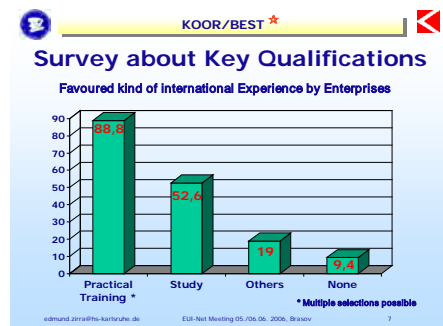


Figure 2: Practical Placements abroad

Requirements in the Future		
Development: International experience moved to the first place	Relevant criteria in future	Grade
	International experience	1,63
	Social competences	1,66
	Languages	1,75
	Practical experience	1,77
	Practical orientation of study	1,79
	Academic knowledge	2,24
	Study Majors	2,31
Extra University activities	2,35	

Figure 3: Requirements for graduates

the number of

students taking a practical placement abroad should be further increased. To reach this goal companies and students use more and more the Internet in order to get in contact and to arrange the placements directly between them. Already today a quite high and raising number of placements are found that way, and the placements arranged through the more or less

permanent partnerships are decreasing. The fact that the outgoing placements are provided with grants, is on its part strengthening this development.

In this situation, it is a disadvantage that contrary to study periods abroad, there is no quality assessment for transnational placements in enterprises .

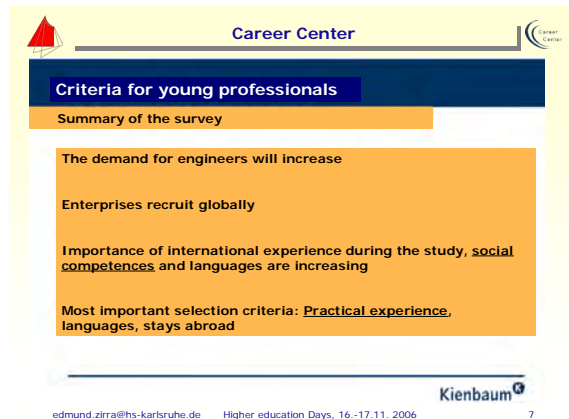


Figure 4: Criteria for Young Professionals

The growing number of participating countries in the European mobility programmes, at present 32 states and even more in the future, makes the question of quality even more critical. It has to be taken into account that placements are served all over Europe in all regions with very different or in some cases quite limited experience in placements as an academically recognised part of the curriculum. No individual university is able to know millions of companies in the EU, especially

small and medium sized enterprises, neither to check the placements prior to the start of the placements that take place in a far distance. In terms of time and money, it would not be possible to permanently visit all the students taking their placements in all regions throughout Europe. It is most obvious that quality control from the sending organisation alone is often most difficult, at least very impractical, extremely time consuming and never definite.

For study courses at universities, quality control mechanisms are in use at certain levels. There are national ministries responsible for supervision of higher education institutions in the receiving country. The universities have to supply the University Charta and what is most important; they have to provide a description of all study courses where the ECTS points are given.. Thus, the students interested in a special study course can check the content of it in advance. All relevant information regarding the host university are at hand in the sending the organisations. The already implemented systems of Accreditation Agencies for universities provide a further control system of the contents and in particular the level of study courses. This sentence I do not understand: This gives the opportunity to refer to a specific subject and the accreditation of the study course to assure the quality of a study period abroad. Nothing comparable exists in case of placements but is increasingly demanded by Accreditation Agencies.

12.2. The Basic Concept

It is obviously difficult to know and check the placements in the host enterprises in all regions in the enlarged Europe. Whereas there are always actors at universities with a permanent relationship and interaction between them and the companies in the target region, such as Technology Transfer Units, Career Services or individual departments and lecturers. These contacts could form a regional network of universities and enterprises, where the

partners involved are known by each other and easily approached. Consequently, all the relevant requirements for international student exchanges could be easily checked locally. It would also be easy to visit the regional companies with the aim of proving the quality of the placements and supervision of the international students when necessary.

The implementation of the new Erasmus-placement programme gives a good chance to establish a new and innovative element for solid and permanent quality control of placements, as well as to support higher education-industry cooperation.

To avoid multiple visits to companies for the same purpose, a regional quality Reference Centre for Practical Placements (RCPP) for students could act as the body responsible for such quality checks, as well as for providing adequate information for recruiting a student from abroad, promoting mobility of students in the industry and disseminating the results.

This new model includes several further elements and steps towards a **Quality Placement Network (Q-PlaNet)**

12.3. The European Quality Placement Standard

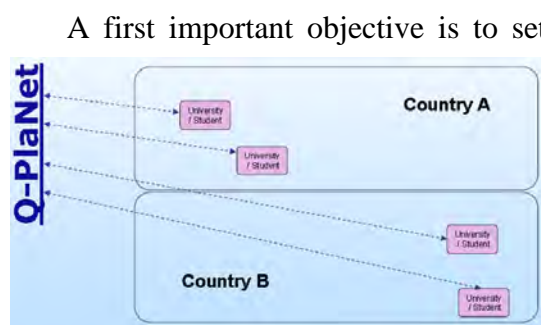


Figure 5: Development of EQPS

A first important objective is to set up quality standards for practical placements in enterprises by an expert group of representatives of universities, experienced placement coordinators and enterprises leading to a **European Quality Placement Standard (EQPS)** as a reference system for quality placements in enterprises. To define and agree about those quality standards is a necessary prerequisite for a quality control system. But to

define a quality standard is also vital for a wider acceptance of placements as a compulsory part of study courses taking into account the special aspect of the accreditation process of university study courses.

Those standards have to be developed by the university as they are part of the curriculum and credit points are given for the practical periods. But the same time the content and goals have to be discussed in close cooperation with enterprises because the practical study periods take place in enterprises.

The EQPS has to define the conditions for a quality placement in a way which gives the opportunity for standardised methods for the quality control. Thus, it goes beyond the present scheme of a voluntarily signed Charta but gives the opportunity for comparable quality checks which will lead to improved quality of placements.

The quality model for practical placements of students is the missing piece in the European University Quality Assurance system currently well advanced for study courses under the Bologna process which is on the way of European acceptance and implementation. Therefore, the University sector will largely benefit from a clearly defined European wide standard for placements, but also their stakeholders, especially the Enterprises and last but not least the

students. The concrete benefit will be a better practical training of student through a more detailed curriculum development and an enhanced quality of the adjacent processes for the part of practical placement.

12.4. The Compulsory Practical Placements

The same time guidelines for curriculum development must be developed to provide different models and ideas, to integrate practical training for students in enterprises in different length and forms as compulsory parts of study courses having in mind the goal of a better employability of university graduates. Especially in the more structured courses in the Bachelor/Master system under the Bologna Process, it is less possible for students to add to the regular study courses voluntary practical experience. Furthermore, those placements are not under any

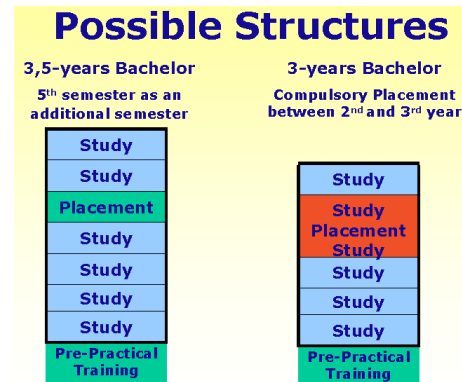


Figure 6: Integrated Placements

quality control. A quality control process is only possible if the placements are compulsory part of study courses and certain rules like length of the placement, content, learning outcome, supervision are described and fixed in the examination regulations. In addition, only then it is possible to include the placement in the ETCS if this is part of the curriculum. As the Bologna system is flexible with the length of he bachelor and Master courses different options are possible. The placement could be integrated as a complete additional Semester with the result that the Bachelor takes 3.5 years or to rearrange the terms in a way that an at least 4 months training period, which is the minimum length especially for international placements is possible.

12.5. The Quality Reference Centres for Placements

In parallel it should be created regional partnership networks between enterprises and universities in order to implement (what means implement here?) quality standard for placements in enterprises and to work on curriculum development in cooperation between enterprises and universities. These networks as **Quality Reference Centres for Placements (QRCP)** are contact points for the enterprises in all questions of placements like recognition, insurance, quality standards and transnational exchanges.

The reference centres form and maintain a local network and database with enterprises labelled as “Quality Secure” from the point of view of universities. Their task is to

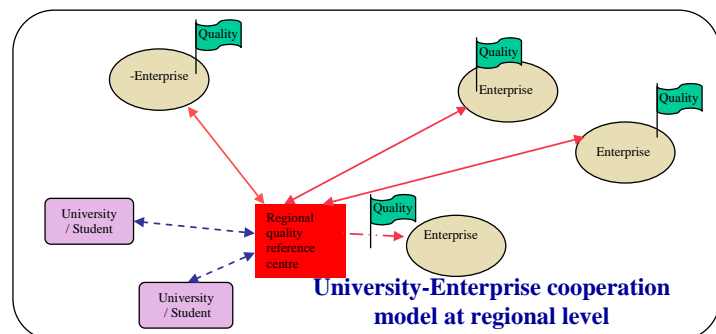


Figure 7: Quality Reference Centers for Placements (RQC)

mediate if the practical placements fulfil the standards for quality practical placements both from the curriculum viewpoint and the Enterprise needs.

Furthermore, such regional contact points serve universities and enterprises as Centres of Excellence in questions of practical placements, whether national or international. The QRCP forms the bridge between the academic world and business to bring them in closer cooperation than at present by setting up concrete standards and solid structures for quality assurance with the aim to provide a secured basis for European wide comparable and assessed work placements.

In addition, the network is a perfect instrument to promote target oriented information for the universities, students and enterprises, especially SMEs which are not yet optimally involved in student mobility. Such a regional contact point would serve as a valuable source of information and advice for SMEs which lack know-how and knowledge of mobility and the options the European programmes offer. The centres could also help in practical questions for example regarding social security of trainees that are regulated only on national level.

To integrate enterprises in the whole process is a key factor for the success of the implementation of a quality standard for placements. In the current economical situation companies are looking for employees all over Europe. In Germany, for example, they have started with recruitment campaigns like “Fair Company” (for student placements) and “Employer of the Year” in order to attract competent students and employees. This situation should help to implement the EQPS as a brand for placements which are assured by criteria known by universities, students and enterprises.

The model of Quality Reference Centres for Placements is based on the principle that an enterprise signs up for taking part in the programme by accepting the requirements and standards set up for recruiting students from abroad. If the RCPP approves the request, the company will obtain a status of an Erasmus-Enterprise which is eligible to offer Erasmus-Placements for Erasmus-Students. For this reason, the RCPP should have the qualification and capacity to perform a **certification** task with respect to the Enterprises.

In the course of this process there should be developed guidelines for the organisation of placements. These include information how to write a good application for international placements as well as information on necessary preparation for students regarding intercultural communication and languages. They should include time tables and checklists for the practical implementation of the placement exchange process as well as information on insurance, financial contribution, taxation and possible programmes for financial support.

12.6. The Quality Placements Network

The model of Quality Reference Centres and Quality Standards has to be transferred to a pan-European initiative to set up Quality Reference Centres in all regions in the EU and eligible countries as regional contact points for quality assurance of placements. The Quality Reference Centres should then form a European Quality Reference Network which certifies the companies where students take a practical placement supported by the Erasmus-Placement programme. Through this European Quality Reference Network a general standard for

integrated practical training periods could be developed, even for those placements, which are not financially supported by a European programme.

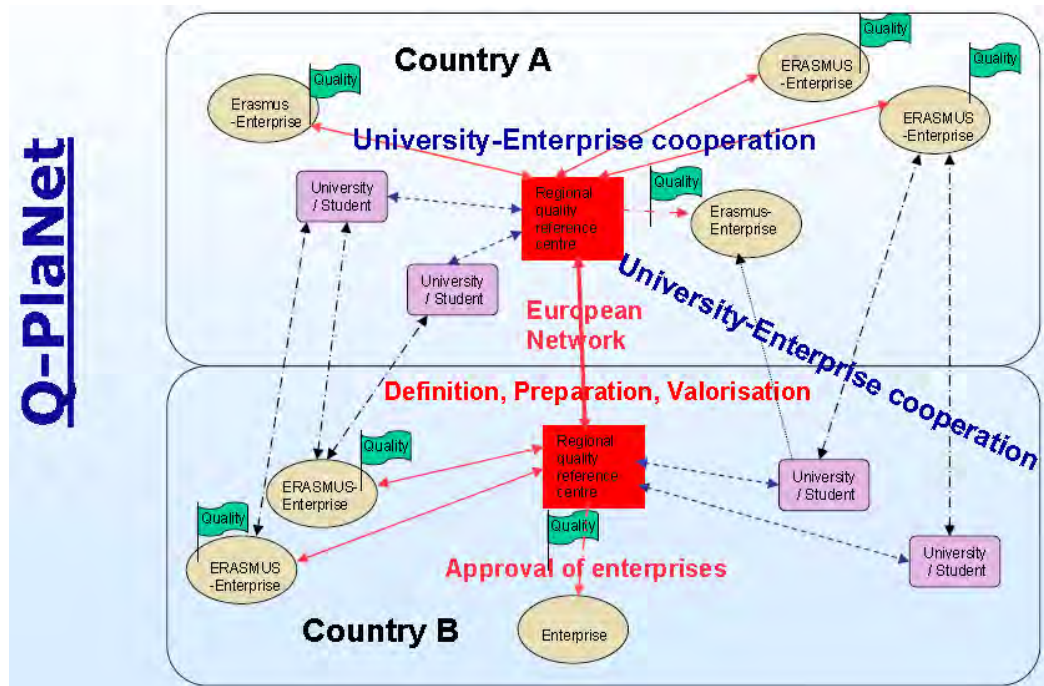


Figure 8: The European Quality Placement Network (Q-PlaNet)

Such a Pan European Quality Reference Network will be an efficient tool for the improvement of the quality of placements and assembly all the efforts across Europe to increase the volume of student mobility, capitalising and creating synergies between the various regions. Work experience abroad from practical placement periods will positively effect the reception of the Erasmus-Placement programme, improve considerably the employability of graduates and be encouraged at European scale with specific instruments. Thus, the mobility of the workforce will be fully enabled and even stimulated with inestimable positive impact on the global European economy, heading towards the Lisbon goals.

12.7. The Beneficiaries

The long-term beneficiaries are all actors involved: students, universities and enterprises that will be integrated in well structured environment for practical placement. The anticipated impact on them will be enormous, by establishing a trusting system for the organisation and quality control of practical placements at European scale. But the European network of quality reference centres aims not only to improve the basis for mobility within European countries but also to attract students from outside Europe to do their practical training in European enterprises.

Out of these, the European Network of Quality Reference Centres as a completely new and innovative element in student exchanges for practical placements will notably improve the quality of placements abroad.

This means for example the improvement of learning opportunities of students during work periods in companies in order to gain new experiences, skills and qualifications for domestic and international job market.

It also enhances cooperation between universities and enterprises through advanced communication and common quality standards for placements. Such a regional and European network and contact point offers as well a special platform for SMEs to address their needs for recruitment of young professionals. It is a well known fact that in the international exchanges big companies receive a great number of applications for placements while SMEs as "unknown employers" are hardly approached. Thus, the network can also facilitate the participation of SMEs in European activities. The network offers an excellent forum, on both regional and European level, to present good practices for placements, as well as for university-enterprise cooperation in general.

Finally, the real beneficiaries are the students and enterprises who have available a reliable contact point they can directly address questions regarding practical placements. The companies will benefit from the improved performance of well prepared trainees, and the students will have better opportunities to improve their skills and competences through recognised high quality placements.

13. VALIDATION, ECTS, QUALITY CONTROL

Contributed by
Simona LACHE, Transilvania University of Brasov

When speaking about practical placement validation and quality assurance we have to keep in mind the overall system in which this process is carried on: the university, on one hand and the enterprise, on the other hand. Both are organizations where the quality management system is implemented; therefore, at least theoretically or from the formal point of view, the quality assurance of practical placement should undergo smoothly.

From the higher education point of view, the problem of quality appears as specific issue on the university agenda since the '80s, focusing on management, research and teaching activities. The Bologna process displaced the focus of such efforts from quantitative aspects (like increase access and diversification of study programs) to qualitative ones. In fact, the Bologna process made a paradigm shift so that the European Higher Education Institutions entered into the 'quality age' [1].

However, by studying different models of quality systems in the European universities the first conclusion came out: while the enterprises adopt a unique standard in quality management (ref. ISO9001) the quality management of HEIs differ very much from country to country. For example, France introduced in 1984, at national level, instruments for bureaucracy minimization; the same process took place in Great Britain and Nederland, one year later, aiming to improve the relation between universities and the labour market and to diminish the universities elitist attitude [1]. Other countries followed this idea: Denmark in 1990, Belgium in 1991, Portugal in 1994 or Sweden in 1995. The differences of the systems consist in:

- the focus of the quality assessment: institutional or study programs
- the way it is done: ones or periodically
- who does it: external or internal evaluation or both.

This diversity is related to the fact that universities tried not to formalize too much the quality process, by excessive standardization. The consequences of such a process would be the conformism, mimicry, formalism, that would make heavier the quality changes relieve. The change mimicry, copying insufficiently validated models and inappropriately adapting them to the local situation, the excess of conformism due to unifying and 'normalizing' standards are only some of the drawbacks that could finally lead to limiting of diversity, while diversity represents the core of the culture of quality [1].

13.1. Concepts and Principles of QA

The present debates carried on in Europe reveal more and more that the centre of gravity should be gradually moved from *quality control* and *quality assessment* to *quality enhancement*, which would be the major aim of a quality assurance process. In this respect, the QA process should be guided by three main principles [2]:

- Peer review process;
- Evidence based process;
- The centre of the process is the student and its training outcomes, according to the qualification framework and the attended study programme.

In this respect it is considered the practical placement of students should be seen, as well. The notions of ‘standards for practical placement’ and ‘quality of practical placement’ are to be clarified in the first place, as starting point in this approach:

Standards for practical placement *are predetermined and explicit levels of achievement that must be reached for a student within the practical placement training to be granted a qualification [2].*

Quality of practical placement *is a way of describing the effectiveness of everything that is done or provided (the ‘training opportunities’) to ensure that the students have the best possible opportunity to meet the stated outcomes of their study programs and the academic standards of the awards they are seeking [2] – from the practical training point of view.*

The experience in applying quality assurance procedures revealed the fact that standards and rules are not accepted by the academic community if a up-bottom approach is used, whereas the process becomes feasible if it is based on peer review: the assessment is performed by quality assurance teams consisting of colleagues from different departments (but from the same domain or a close one); external evaluators and/or students may be included in the team. The external evaluator may be a person from a company (different to the one in which the practical placement took place but that has cooperation agreement with the university, as well).

The peer review should not be seen at all as an ‘inspection’ aiming to point out the bad things, but more as a constructive activity, everyone can learn from - the reviewed company as well as the review team – since the process could identify good practice examples that are shared and sometimes implemented. Only if this approach is applied it will work and the quality of practical placements can be assured.

13.2. Validation criteria for PPS – on the enterprises

Requirements regarding the practical placement:

- **Integration within the curriculum:** the placement content is compatible with the study programme. It ensures the skills and competences foreseen in the syllabus of practical placement.

E.g.

- To **apply the knowledge** acquired in the University
- To **acquire new skills** relevant to the student’s area of study

- To confront the student with situations and **problems of a professional nature** environment
- To **analyze the conditions of the work environment**
- To **analyze their own experience** of immersion into the work environment
- **Tutorship:** the enterprise assigns a person responsible for the student(s) practical placement, to assist the student(s) during the whole process.
- **Evaluation:** the enterprise evaluates the student activity and validates the practical stage by issuing a certificate.
- **Financial reward:** the host organization may reward the student in a financial form, which may represent a plus of responsibility of both sides regarding the activity carried on during the practical placement.
- **Contract:** administrative rules and duties of each partner are defined in a tripartite placement agreement.
- **Confidentiality rules** of the company are respected.

13.3. Validation of practical placement in the university

- *Validation of PPS by the enterprise:* a certificate will be delivered, based on the student activity report and the oral presentation of the work performed during the placement.
- *Validation of PPS by the university:* it is done after the student evaluation by a board of academics, that may involve the mentor and the tutor (or another representative of the enterprise).
- The practical activity is awarded with ECTS credits – according to the curriculum of the study programme, only if it is carried on in an enterprise acknowledged by the university (from the QA point of view).

The student evaluation has to rely on qualified experts, taking into account at least some minimal methodological rules:

- by defining a so-called system of reference (making explicit the elements checked in the evaluation);
- by defining criteria giving credibility to the system of reference;
- by measuring the value of criteria;
- by drawing up a synthesis reporting understandable conclusions.

Evaluation has a strong link with quality policy: all efforts which are made for evaluation may be considered as elements of a quality policy, which is quite often built around an evaluation procedure.

13.4. Quality assurance procedures

13.4.1 *Quality issues to be addressed:*

- University institutional context

- Enterprise context
- Training staff: tutor in E/ mentor in U

- **Tutoring**

- There are appointed tutors in the enterprise where the practical placement takes place. They are not belonging to the HR department but to the department where the student is going to carry on the practical training.
- The tutor is assigned according to the following criteria: expertise in the field of activity the student will be trained in, experience in tutoring young people, previous experience with foreigners (if the practical placement is international).
- Periodically meetings will be organized between the tutor and the students, for discussing and advising about the activity carried on in the enterprise, the life outside the enterprise, free time plans, etc.
- The tutor will provide contact information (telephone, e-mail) for each student, in case of urgent matters.

- **Mentoring**

- There are appointed mentors in the university where the student belongs. They are academics, in charge for PPS.
- The mentor will permanently keep contact with the students all along the PP period (via e-mail). Recommendation: the communication will be developed at least once per week between the mentor and one of the assigned (on rotational bases). Moreover, the mentor is available for special/ emergency problem of each student and together with the contact person from the enterprise will try to solve these special cases, if they occur.
- The mentor will provide contact information (telephone, e-mail) for each student, in case of urgent matters.
 - Training process: legal framework, duration, content, curriculum, validation through ECTS,
 - Students (Student Learning outcomes)
 - Training facilities

13.4.2 Instruments for QA:

- feedback from students related to the training process, training staff (tutor/ mentor)
- feedback from enterprise: the university curriculum for practical placement satisfy their needs, the results for student evaluation (may be consultative for the professor in allocating the credits and marks)
- feedback from graduates: to which extent the PPS performed during university studies helped in getting a better job.

13.4.3 Procedure:

- The local Reference Centre for practical placement is responsible for the quality assurance process.
- The reviewed enterprise with positive result is added to a database – available for the network of Reference Centres in Europe.
- The assessment is performed by quality assurance teams consisting of academic staff from different departments (but from the same domain or a close one); external evaluators and/or students may be included in the team. The external evaluator may be a person from another enterprise (that has cooperation agreement with the university and has passed the quality assessment process).
- The quality assurance process for practical placement of students obeys the general principles mentioned in paragraph 2: peer review process; evidence based process; the centre of the process is the student and its training outcomes, according to the qualification framework and the attended study programme.
- The practical activity of students in Europe is developed under the provisions of the ‘Quality Commitment’ document [3], presented below:

13.5. QUALITY COMMITMENT

For practical placement of students in Europe

This Quality Commitment replicates the principles of the European Quality Charter for Mobility.

- **THE SENDING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION UNDERTAKES TO:**
 - Define the **learning outcomes** of the placement in terms of the knowledge, skills and competencies to be acquired.
 - Assist the student in **choosing** the appropriate host organization, project duration and placement content to achieve these learning outcomes.
 - **Select** students on the basis of clearly defined and transparent criteria and procedures and sign a **placement contract** with the selected students.
 - **Prepare** students for the practical, professional and cultural life of the host country, in particular through language training tailored to meet their occupational needs.
 - Provide **logistical support** to students concerning travel arrangements, visa, accommodation, residence or work permits and social security cover and insurance.
 - Give **full recognition** to the student for satisfactory completed activities specified in the Training Agreement.
 - **Evaluate** with each student the personal and professional development achieved through participation in the practical placement programme.
- **THE SENDING INSTITUTION AND HOST ORGANISATION JOINTLY UNDERTAKE TO:**

- Negotiate and agree a tailor-made **Training Agreement** (including the programme of the placement and
- the recognition arrangements) for each student and the adequate mentoring arrangements
- **Monitor** the progress of the placement and take appropriate action if required
- **THE HOST ORGANISATION UNDERTAKES TO:**
 - Assign to students **tasks and responsibilities** (as stipulated in the Training Agreement) to match their knowledge, skills, competencies and training objectives and ensure that appropriate equipment and support is available.
 - Draw a **contract or equivalent document** for the placement in accordance with the requirements of the national legislation.
 - **Appoint a mentor** to advise students, help them with their integration in the host environment and monitor their training progress.
 - Provide **practical support** if required, check appropriate insurance cover and facilitate understanding of the culture of the host country.
- **THE STUDENT UNDERTAKES TO:**
 - Comply with all **arrangements** negotiated for his/her placement and to do his/her best to make the placement a success.
 - Abide by the **rules and regulations** of the host organisation, its normal working hours, code of conduct and rules of confidentiality.
 - **Communicate** with the sending institution about any problem or changes regarding the placement.
 - **Submit a report** in the specified format and any required supporting documents at the end of the placement.

Reference

- [1]. Paun, E., Barlogeanu, L., Ulrich, C., Ion, G., *Ghidul de bune practice pentru asigurarea calitatii in invatamantul superior*, ARACIS, 2008.
- [2]. King, G., *Presentation of Quality Assurance Agency*, Gloucester, UK, 2008, unpublished.
- [3]. University of Bristol, UK, *Quality Commitment*.