

Models of Partnership and Collaboration in Work-based and -related Learning in Higher Education

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to report on findings from the UK based element of an EU funded project looking at models of partnerships and collaborations between external stakeholders and higher education institutions to deliver work-based and related degree-level programmes; or, what is termed Tertiary Lifelong Learning (TLL).

While the paper briefly engages with case studies from partner countries in order to provide a European level context, the focus will be on the three UK based case studies. Core questions addressed are the regulation of TLL systems within the national qualification systems, and, in particular the integration of labour market stakeholders in the design of Work Based Learning (WBL) programmes. The project was specifically concerned with the relevance of university provision for the impact on adult learners in the labour market and its influence on their work performance.

In the UK three distinct models or forms of university/external stakeholder collaboration, partnership and cooperation were selected involving higher education institutions and: public and third sector stakeholders in community development; a trade union and a major multinational aerospace firm; and, a more corporate approach between academia and a major multinational utility provider respectively.

We briefly review the UK institutional landscape and context, with a focus where relevant, on adult education and WBL in HE. We then present each of the case studies with details on the programme, the partnership or collaboration with external stakeholders, the learners and its impact. Finally, we discuss the potential opportunities, but also the constraints or barriers of cooperation, collaboration and partnership to advance the integration of WBL in higher education at not only the national but also at a European level; and critically engage with over 20 years of EU policy making in the field of lifelong learning with a focus on education and training policies.