

Results of the forum discussion at the LHB in Dortmund, 12th May 2015

Participants:

Raquel Sanchez, Teacher at the IES in Puerto del Rosario, Fuerteventura, Spain, Susanne Auer, teacher at the LHB, Dortmund, leading the German part of the project, Dennis Masuhr, trainer of apprentices at the DSW21 (company which provides energy, water and transport and carries out housing projects in Dortmund), Dominik Heinert and Felix Nase, apprentices at Mercedes Benz Dortmund, Mirva Muona, vocational teacher at the Ekami, Kotka, Finland, Keshav Shama und Mike Ritterswürden, students in class 11 of a three year course in Mechanical Engineering and A-Levels at the LHB, Dortmund, Kristen Sirel, Finnish student at a course as an Electrician at the Ekami, Kotka, Finland, Cosmin Neacsu, student in the A-level class at the IES, Puerto del Rosario, Ludger Maas, coordinator of all EU projects at the LHB, Dortmund, Monica Salinas, teacher at IES, Puerto del Rosario, Felipe J. Sanchez, teacher and film maker at IES, Puerto del Rosario, Philipp Lüttgens, German teacher at the LHB, Dortmund.

Guests: Kari Laitila, teacher at Ekami, Finland, Eetu Silvo, student at Ekami, students from IES, Puerto del Rosario, students from the LHB, Jochen Steier, teacher at the LHB and cameraman.

Aspects of employability with results of forum discussion:

1. Application process when applying for an apprenticeship at a company in Germany
 - for all apprenticeships you have to apply at the company with a **written application**
 - as Dennis Masuhr from the and the apprentices Felix Nase and Dominik Heinert at Mercedes Benz point out: at DSW21 and Mercedes Benz you have to pass an **online test** first
 - smaller companies look at your application and invite you to an interview
 - bigger companies have complex application processes in which you also show your abilities directly at the company (as Dennis Masuhr explains, at the DSW21 students can **have a look at the company** for 3-4 hours, get information about the company, work with apprentices, **talk with** them and inform themselves about the job and the company)
 - as the **apprentices** Felix Nase and Dominik Heinert at Mercedes Benz say, there is a long **assessment procedure** until you get an apprenticeship
2. Qualifications needed for working/being trained in Germany
 - it **depends** very much on the job you want to be trained at:
 - according to Dennis Masuhr, DSW21: If you want to work in business departments of companies it is much more important to **speak the required language(s)** very well than in a technical job, but it is also important there
 - If you want to work for Mercedes Benz or DSW21 you have very good chances if you have A-levels or GCSE depending on the field in which you want to work

- more important than a good school reports are **abilities tested in the companies own assessment tests**
 - Dennis Masuhr also points out that it is important to have **good reading abilities**, which may sound funny at first but he experiences that students only very superficially read instructions and other texts and therefore do not understand what they mean, ...
 - ... students rather watch a Youtube video to learn something but then realize that this doesn't help them to understand it, so he requires good **reading abilities which also help you to structure ideas and processes and methods** which are necessary in a job
3. Necessary skills for being successful in job search, in your job and when being self-employed
- According to Dennis Masuhr from the DSW21 **to be very motivated and interested in your job** is more important for a successful application than a good school report or special skills
 - the apprentices Felix Nase and Dominik Heinert at Mercedes Benz agree that a student's **personality**, his interest in the job and a strong motivation to work in that job are most important
 - Felix Nase, an apprentice at MB in Dortmund, lists up what is tested at MB: **technical and logical thinking**, and personal features like **honesty and taking responsibility** for mistakes
 - For Dennis Masuhr (DSW21), some important skills, however, are:
 - ... **team abilities**
 - ... **communication skills which also means speaking the language of the country where you want to work**
 - ... **being well-behaved**
 - ... **showing respect for your trainers, supervisors, boss**
 - Raquel Sanchez stresses that these soft or **social skills** are also important to become good co-workers in a company
 - Susanne Auer believes that a **strong self-confidence, belief in yourself and being flexible** are most important characteristics or soft skills to find a suitable job
4. What students can do on their own to gain these skills
- The German apprentice Felix Nase from MB says he didn't feel very well prepared for the working world at school, but that you can do some things yourself:
 - **read books** which help you to inform yourself about the applications process
 - everybody agreed that you can **improve your language abilities**
 - **inform yourself** about the required skills and qualifications
 - train yourself on the application tests of the particular company where you want to work
 - **train your communication abilities by meeting people**
 - Mirva Muona, a vocational teacher from Finland, says that students should be friendly and have the right attitude for the job and that they should deliver the willingness to show it
 - If they are not sure about the impression they make, students could **ask evaluations from others** about what others think of them, how they come across
 - answering Cosmin Neacsus' (a student at IES, Puerto del Rosario) question about the role

- of your outward appearance when trying to find a job, a Spanish, Dennis Masuhr from DSW21 says:
- if you work as a technician tattoos don't matter but piercings have to be safe so that they do not lead to accidents at the workshop
- whether you are allowed to wear jeans or have piercings or tattoos depends very much on the job and the size of the company, as Felix Nase, apprentice at MB points out
- if you go for a business job like working in a bank you have to be shaved and wear a suit, a shirt and a tie and you shouldn't have tattoos or piercings and leather shoes,
- so, make sure you **look suitable**

- Dennis Masuhr says about the necessary preparation for the working world in general:
 - o In order to find the right job that you would like to be trained at inform yourself about jobs on the internet
 - o Use the online tools which are offered by the job centres and the companies
 - o **Train the necessary skills on the internet**
 - o Do an **internship** in classes 7 – 9 which helps you to decide what you want to be and which makes you more self-confident about your skills
 - o Go to the chosen company and inform yourself there
 - o **Keep a good contact** with the company where you want to be trained

5. What schools can do:

5.1 The role of curriculums – teaching contents – school subjects

- schools should **train** their **students to become well-behaved**, and they already do in a way when they **train** the students how to behave in a job interview which is done in all schools, grammar schools and vocational schools, as the German A-level student Mike Ritterswürden points out, but not **all aspects of positive behaviour** are taught at school
- Cosmin Neacsu, student from the IES, Puerto del Rosario also points out that students should also be **trained soft skills** which they aren't sufficiently at present, he thinks teachers only give them qualifications
- Mike Ritterswürden, A-level student at LHB Dortmund, suggests to develop **a new school subject called "soft skills"** in which you learn these things and also how to behave in difficult situations
- Dennis Masuhr, trainer at DSW21, is of the opinion that 50% of the subjects should be like Chemistry and Mathematics and Physics and **50 % should be soft skills**
- Mirva Muona, a vocational teacher from Finland, says that teaching the students **theory and practical skills at the same time** is very important in order to find and keep the right job
- Raquel Sanchez from the IES in Fuerteventura puts a focus on soft skills rather than on more data which you can find on the internet anyway
- she thinks these soft skills are very important to be successful at your future job and to be a good co-worker – she **trains her students for life**

- she rather **teaches** her students technologies **how to find out what is important** and what isn't within all information you can find on the internet, because she believes that this ability is the future
- Dominik Heinert, an apprentice at Mercedes Benz, is of the opinion that vocational schools prepare students better for a particular job than ordinary comprehensive or grammar schools
- Kristen Sirel, student at the Ekami in Finland suggests there should be special courses which you can choose to learn the soft skills you need
- Dominik Heinert explains that the German school system offers classes for students who want to achieve an A-level qualification in order to be able to attend university during their apprenticeship (at a company) so that everyone – whether employed at a big or small company – can **improve his qualifications**
- Kristen Sirel says that in Finland you **get** all qualification at school
- Dominik Heinert, explains that general secondary schools do not help to prepare you for a special job and that it is difficult to do that because there are **different skills for different jobs**
- Susanne Auer emphasizes that these special skills can be gained at the company during the apprenticeship and that schools should therefore **concentrate more on** soft skills and **useful techniques**

5.2 The role of teaching methods

- **project-orientated teaching can reach the aims** mentioned above
- Mike Ritterswürden, the German A-level student, explains that international projects like this one help to develop “soft skills” and teach students to learn independently
- it also helps to learn a foreign language
- Raquel Sanchez, the Spanish teacher and leader of this project, points out that project-based learning is practised at the IES in Spain in order to give the students **independence**
- Ludger Maas, the coordinator of all EU projects at the LHB in Dortmund, explains that...
- ... friendliness doesn't necessarily have to be a new subject, but ...
- ... **teaching should generally work more like a company**: there should be a **product** that has to be created and which has to be evaluated at the end, because it supports the students' independence and could also inspire them to become self-employed
- he sums up: teachers should come together in order to **do more practical things** with the students
- Monica Salinas from the IES Puerto del Rosario explains that at the IES there is a department for vocational training that **teaches students how to** become their own boss and what it means to **be self-employed**
- She adds that there are institutions which help to start your own company so that your future ideas can be put into practise and which minimize the risks of self-employment
- Kristen Sirel, the Finnish student at Ekami, explains that in Finland there are little companies at the school you can join without any risk at all where you can learn how to **improve your self-confidence**, learn about company structures, realize your ideas and **learn how to take responsibility**

- Susanne Auer interposes that the LHB also has a little company in which students produce metal products which they sell publically
- Keshav Shama says how impressed he is by this “school firm” and the iron toy truck the students there are working on
- He thinks **coordinating theoretical learning** like drawing the truck **with** the help of CAD and then **building it practically** would be the best combination for gaining skills
- Dennis Masuhr from DSW21 underlines that such project-orientated teaching and learning should already start in primary schools in order to **integrate soft skills into learning as early as possible**
- Felipe stresses that the students should gain **tools for independent learning**
- on the basis of what Dennis Masuhr from DSW21 has said, Susanne Auer states that in our times of fast text perception on the internet via mobile phones and computers we have to go back to **showing and applying reading methods** with the students which enable them to read and understand texts thoroughly which is a necessary skill in any job

5.3 The role of teaching conditions

- Cosmin Neacsu, a Spanish student from the IES, Fuerteventura, points out that there shouldn't be too many students in one class
- according to Monica Salinas **there should only be 12 students in one class**, not 24, as she experiences it most of the time
- In Germany there are classes with over 30 students which makes project-orientated teaching hardly possible or totally impossible.
- **teaching conditions should enable project-orientated methods**

6. What companies (can) do

- According to Dennis Masuhr (DSW21) the **companies should present themselves** and the jobs and apprenticeships they offer at a “night of the apprenticeships” that takes place in Dortmund once a year on a day in June, from 5 to 11 p.m. to show school leavers what their company is all about, as the DSW21 does
- all companies should **offer internships** to students class 7 – 9 which helps them to decide what they want to be and helps them to reduce their fear and makes them more self-confident about their skills
- companies **should improve the required skills** in students at the companies
- at Mercedes Benz, as Felix Nase, apprentice at MB points out, a new apprentice learns everything in the company, all theoretical and practical knowledge a student needs
- Keshav Shama, a German student in the A-level class, suggests indirectly the companies should have **German courses for foreign workers** who need them
- according to Philipp Lüttgens, a German teacher at LHB, the companies should not only employ A-level students who then later on leave the company to study at university,...
- ... they **should level down their expectations with respect to school qualifications** and also give students with a lower qualification a chance to start an apprenticeship

- Dennis Masuhr (DSW21) explains that a very good school qualification doesn't only decide whether a student becomes an apprentice but also other skills – as mentioned above – so that it is a compromise, they employ youngsters according to the results of their own tests
- According to Felix Nase, MB, the companies **should reduce the working hours for older employees and employ more younger employees**

7. Role of EU projects in conveying the required skills

- Ludger Maas, the coordinator of all EU projects at the LHB in Dortmund, who is virtually present via video conference, underlines that **international projects** like the one he is just carrying out in Saragossa **convey exactly those skills** that have been mentioned in the forum:
- He gives examples of students in Saragossa who have to learn together, to solve problems (e.g. when someone's ill), how to communicate with people in another country, how to behave, how to be friendly, etc.
- He thinks that **project-orientated learning especially in another country can develop all necessary skills for being successful in the working world**

8. What governments can do

- Governments should **invest more money in education so that schools have more teachers to help the students acquire the necessary skills** and qualifications and personality traits
- Governments could also **minimize the risk of self-employment by supporting young businesses**
- Governments should **enlarge the training for school leavers at the job centres** because according to Felix Nase, apprentice at MB; the training at the job centers is helpful but much too short.
- **An extra number of teachers should support the students** in developing the necessary skills, Mirva Muona, vocational teacher from Finland suggests
- According to Dennis Masuhr, DSW 21, all educational institutions, also kindergartens and primary schools should receive **more teaching personnel** to be able to support children as soon as possible and as much as possible
- He adds, **this personnel should also be paid very well to be able to do a very good job**

These are all aspects that have been discussed (underlined) and are presented with their results, most important keywords are stressed (in **bold print**).

Susanne Auer, 15.06.2015