

ED 3 – Learning at Work (Memo)

Vocational Teacher Education in Austria

This year (academic year 2010/2011) Sonja and me are completing a “full-time-study” at the “Pädagogische Hochschule OOE” in Linz / Upper Austria – we will finish our study in June 2012 with the Bachelor of Education (BEd) – but we will only be entitled to teach at Vocational Colleges in Austria.

The qualification system for Vocational Teachers in Austria differs a lot from the education system of – for example – a primary or secondary school teacher.

According to our legislation Vocational Colleges in Austria have to offer lessons in three professional groups – and therefore it's necessary to acquire qualified persons with long years of practical business experience and train them as Vocational Teachers.

Below you find a short description of these professional groups:

- Group I: Teaching subjects with general education value and business/economics-related (i. e. accounting, civic education aso)
- Group II: Theoretical subject related training – according to the selected profession (i. e. transport logistics, sales and marketing aso)
- Group III: Practical subject-related training – according to the selected profession (i. e. Vocational Colleges put up their own workshops, where the trainees get the possibility to practise their knowledge from the specific theoretical training – for example in a rebuilt carpenter's workshop)

If somebody has now the intention to apply for a Vocational Teachers Job – the following prerequisites are needed:

- Group I & II: Matriculation and afterwards 3 years of respective professional practical experience
- Group III: Master's certificate and afterwards – as well – 3 years of respective professional practical experience

According to these requirements it's only possible to become a Vocational College Teacher in Austria with a so called “second-chance education”.

Sonja and me have successfully worked in several companies and only after a couple of years we decided to go this new professional path.

After successfully passing through the hurdles of intake the education can start! It takes totally 6 semesters and happens partially additionally to the normal work at school and partially as “full-time-study” – but organisational requirements (from the Vocational College, from the “Pädagogische Hochschule OOE” or from our employer – the Federal State of Upper Austria) could make a prolongation up to 10 semesters possible.

Overview of our education:

- First part of study: 2 – extra occupational – semesters that means teaching 4 days a week at the Vocational College and being taught 1 day at the “Pädagogische Hochschule OOE” in Linz.
- Second part of study: 4 semesters – the 3rd and 4th semesters are dedicated to a Full-time-study at the “Pädagogische Hochschule” in Linz and the 5th and 6th semesters are trained again extra occupationally => graduation with the title Bachelor of Education (BEd)

Sonja completes the education for professional group I. I worked in the forwarding and transport business for a really long time (17 years) – and – due to this – my education is agreed for group II.

In the next days Sonja and me will start our 4th semester – and in this part of the study all students get the opportunity to absolve a 3-month study abroad. In our opinion this is a fabulous possibility to gain a lot of new experiences, to meet foreign people etc. – Sonja and me gladly decided to complete this semester in Finland and explicitly in Helsinki.

That kind of education has advantages as well as disadvantages:

Advantages:

- Graduation of education in minimum 3 but maximum 5 years
- Fixed termination of study – both pro and con
- Salary is also paid during our “full-time-study” through our employer (= Federal State of Upper Austria)
- Trainees benefit from our profound knowledge

Disadvantages:

- Start in this job in general – a so called “leap in the dark”
- Teaching without appropriate pedagogical qualification at the beginning
- Fixed termination of study – both pro and con
- Enormous workload at the beginning – as the education proceeds additionally to our ordinary work as teachers – with 4 days a week teaching at school and 1 day being taught.

Some facts:

- There are 26 Vocational Colleges in Upper Austria with around 1.200 vocational teachers giving lessons.
- The average age of a vocational teacher starting with this kind of study is 36 years!

For Sonja and me that type of education system is a very precious one – in our view only one point of criticism has to be mentioned. Starting in this kind of professional life is very difficult as you start without or only with few pedagogical experience – you stand in the classroom in front of young trainees confronted with several situations unaware or only instinctively aware what to do. Experiences with own children could be helpful – but it’s not a guarantee.

Everything else is – in our opinion - very relevant to our job – especially the 2 semesters of “full-time-study” with the option for a study abroad – is a brilliant form of education and further education.

Since the costs for this kind of study are taken over for the most part from the Federal State of Lower Austria that way of career is nearly open for everyone!

The dual education system does not only take place in the education of vocational teachers in Austria but also our trainees get this kind of education.

[For better understanding we will now point out some basic facts concerning Austrian Vocational Colleges.](#)

In Austria the apprenticeship happens at two different – but complementing each other – learning places – at the company that takes on trainees and at the Vocational College. Due to that fact this system is defined as “dual education system”.

Depending on the profession the education lasts between 2 and 4 years and the trainees have the **obligation** (!!!) to visit the Vocational College.

It's in the responsibility of the Vocational College to train general knowledge, specific and theoretical-related subjects as well as extending and deepening the specific and practical-related subjects.

[Vocational Colleges mostly offer two kinds of education system:](#)

- All-the-year lessons – with minimum 1 school day a week or
- Block-release-lessons – in our school in Braunau we mainly offer blocks for 10 weeks

[Statistics:](#)

- Even though the total number of apprentices has been falling since 1981 – 42 % of the Austrian Youth still start an apprenticeship in one of our 40.000 companies that take on trainees.
- 132.000 trainees get skilled in those companies.
- The most popular profession for girls is becoming a trained retail saleswoman followed by an office clerk, hairdresser and stylist.
- For boys the profession as a motor mechanic, an electrician or an engine building engineer are on top of the popularity scale.

The system of the Austrian apprenticeship training is a traditional and as well a modern and future orientated education scheme, the Austrian publicity and above all the Austrian public authorities ascribe that kind of education system a high significant value and furthermore it features a very high acceptance from foreign counties.

We hope our memo is a brief and interesting description of the Austrian education system – for (vocational) teachers as well as for trainees.

For any further question / information don't hesitate to contact us – we are looking forward to discussing with you soon. See you in Helsinki shortly.

[Sylvia & Sonja](#) from “[Pädagogische Hochschule OÖ](#)” in Linz / Upper Austria