Essay

Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education

The German Berufsakademie Work-Integrated Learning Program: A Potential Higher Education Model for West and East

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Received 12 April 2006; accepted in revised form 25 August 2006

In 1974 a Berufsakademie or 'university of cooperative education' in the state of Baden-Württemberg, Germany, was established to construct a model of cooperative education. This model practiced at the Berufsakademie is unique compared to that of German higher educational institutions offering work-integrated learning programs or work placements. In order to be accepted into the Berufsakademie, students must possess a university entrance degree and additionally must be contracted with a company or a governmental institution for three years. The participants of this cooperative education or work-integrated learning model are thus both students and employees. The purpose of this paper is to describe the Berufsakademie program, the international Berufsakademie partnerships in the west and east, experiences with the Berufsakademie model in India and Indonesia, and to reflect upon implications for the potential use for this work-related learning methodology higher education in both western and eastern countries. From a review of the literature it appears that greater interaction between industry and educational institutions (beyond say internships) can assist the academic sector in bringing experiences to students, and thus provides innovation to improve and strengthen work-integrated learning. (Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2006, 7(1), 16-21).

Keywords: Berufsakademie; university of cooperative education; co-op model; career enhancement; India; Indonesia; Germany.

The state of Baden-Württermberg, Germany, determined that there was a need for a new method of delivering cooperative education that would directly impact upon students attempting to learn the duties and responsibilities that employees should be able to perform in today's highly technical, increasingly global world. As described in the literature, within the last 20 years, cooperative education in higher education has become more and more important worldwide (see, e.g., Coll & Eames, 2004). Its increasing significance is evidenced by the proliferation of cooperative education programs implemented in many countries around the world (e.g., Aleisa & Alabdulahfez 2002; Coll, 2003; Kato 2005; Srisa-an 2002).

In 1974 the Berufsakademie consisting of eight universities of cooperative education in the state of Baden-Wurttemberg, Germany, was established to develop a model for cooperative education in the state (Göhringer 2002). At the time of writing the Berufsakademie is attended by more than 19,000 students. The model of study practiced at the Berufsakademie is unique compared to that of most German institutions of higher education offering work-integrated learning programs or work placements. Most importantly, in order to be accepted, students need a university entrance degree plus a work contract for the duration of three years with a company or a governmental institution. Therefore, the participants of this work-integrated study model are both students and employees at the same time. This way of studying, introduced at the cooperative universities in Germany, has proven to be successful.

The practice and role of cooperative education programs, is highly contextualized. In Germany, the context for this paper, unemployment amongst youth is of major concern. As a consequence cooperative education programs here have a strong focus on vocational training. When one considers an overall unemployment rate of 10% in Germany and a rate of 15.2% among young people between 15 and 24 years of age (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2006, p. 17), the need for this work-integrated study model cannot be overemphasized. In broad terms the model can be seen to be highly successful with over 80% of the students are already contracted with an employer by the time of graduation. Many companies supported the students' studies directly; in other cases they employed them prior to or upon graduation.

This paper also is concerned with the use of the Berufsakademie model in other educational contexts (namely India and Indonesia – see below). However, in order to understand how cooperative education might work in a given country, it is important to understand the country's economic background (Kato 2005). Compared to Germany, for example, India and Indonesia are countries in transition to a knowledge economy and in the case of Indonesia, a democratic society. Therefore, new skills and attitudes for work and social life in the information age are

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likely needed. The German government seeks to make a contribution to develop these skills in specially supported work-integrated learning programs within Indian and Indonesian secondary and higher education institutions. One effort is the development reported here; the use of the Berufsakademie model in Chennai and Jakarta. The experiences acquired in implementing and analyzing this study model may help to provide insights into differences between effective work-integrated learning programs in the east and west as well as to examine whether the model of the Berufsakademie can be introduced in other western or eastern countries. First, the Berufsakademie model is described in more detail.

Berufsakademie: A Cooperative Education Learning Model in Germany

In 1972 three world-renowned companies, Bosch, Daimler Benz and SEL, initiated a cooperation agreement with the Baden-Württemberg Chamber of Commerce, Germany. This agreement sought to develop an innovative and today highly successful system of academic study at the university level: the so-called University of Cooperative Education (UCE) in Germany (See Göhringer, 2002 for more detail of the history of Berufsakademie). The UCE, known as the Berufsakademie in Gernmany, expanded very rapidly within the state of Baden-Wurttemberg, and currently some 19,000 students study at 11 campuses. The model of studying at the Berufsakademie differs significantly from that of traditional universities in Germany. The Berufsakademie combines semesters of academic study at the university level alternately with phases of on-the-job training and work-integrated learning programs in companies and social institutions. A student enrolled at the Berufsakademie is both a student and an employee. Therefore, students must sign a contract with standardized clauses, which is, in fact, a prerequisite for enrollment. The second prerequisite in order to study at the Berufsakademie is a university entry qualification, called the *Abitur*, a high school diploma that allows students to enter a traditional university. Other diplomas in Germany only allow students to enter universities of applied sciences. A Berufsakademie student's studies are divided into two phases. Basic education and training within the fields of business administration, engineering or social work cover the first two years and lead to the first degree. The final degree (in German: *BA-Diplom*) is achieved after a third year of more specialized studies and work-integrated learning programs within areas such as banking, business information systems, electrical engineering, digital media, fair and conference management, insurance, real estate management, social management and tourism, and so on (Ministry of Science, Research & Arts, 2004). In the year 2000, the Berufsakademie of Baden-Württemberg was evaluated by the Open University from the United Kingdom, and was subsequently accredited. As a consequence of this accreditation Berufsakademie students now have the option of enrolling at the Open University in a bachelor honors program, and can receive a British bachelor's degree with honors. However, in 1999, European institutions of higher education decided at a meeting in Bologna, Italy, to establish a common European Higher Education Area by 2010. The central element of the plan, called the Bologna Process, is the introduction of a two-cycle study system consisting of bachelor's and master's degrees with comparable qualifications throughout Europe. As a result of this decision, the process to change the final degree from a diploma to a bachelor's degree, the internal and external evaluation process of the Berufsakademie has already started. By 2010, every student graduating from the Berufsakademie will receive a bachelor's degree. Another reason for implementing the bachelor's degree promptly is the follow-up Bologna conference in Bergen, Norway, 2005, where the conference welcomed Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as new member states in order to extend the common Higher Education Area toward eastern countries (German Ministry of Education & Research, 2005).

What makes UCE studies different compared to learning at a traditional German university and leads to student recommendations are supportive personal experience, small classes, a shorter period of study, work-integrated learning, the perceived limited positions available, and earning a salary whilst studying (Bresler, 2004). According to an exploratory study on what creates excellence in business education, some factors are identified to influence student evaluations on service quality of a university (Le Blanc & Nguyen, 1997). The "earning of a salary" is, of course, not mentioned because in any other study model of higher education, students usually do not receive a salary. Plus, students are guaranteed to achieve the necessary qualifications for success in their professional careers by the integration of companies as active partners. Their market employment ability is proven by an over 80% takeover rate in enterprises immediately after graduation (Ministry of Science, Research and Arts, 2004).

The UCE currently works with over 8,000 companies of varied sizes representing the most diverse fields mentioned above (German Ministry of Science, Research and Arts, 2004). The vast majority of large firms located in the state of Baden-Württemberg, both national and subsidiaries of international companies, work with the Berufsakademie as partners. Furthermore, enterprises from other parts of Germany also choose to contract and educate students at the Berufsakademie in Baden-Württemberg. Companies and social institutions thus play an essential role within the Berufsakademie educational system. They are equal partners to the state-run Berufsakademie on all decision- making committees. All companies involved that pay for the education of the students exert a strong, ongoing influence on curricula and course of study organization. Enterprises, in order to be accepted as partners of the so-called dual-learning system (Göhringer, 2002), must fulfill a number of requirements such as size of the company, qualified personnel and state-of-the-art training facilities. Having fulfilled these conditions, they are certified as a 'training enterprise'. To ensure the development of relevant, comprehensive skills of the student which partnering companies capitalize on following graduation, skills are matched to the curriculum of the Berufsakademie courses of

study. Due to this, graduates of the Berufsakademie enjoy a clear advantage in comparison with graduates from traditional German universities in terms of career development. A recent survey by the IBM Corporation shows that Berufsakademie graduates tend to have rapid career advancement immediately after graduation, earn more money and hold higher positions than similar colleagues of traditional universities (Leitl, 2001). Financing the studies of Berufsakademie students leads to multiple advantages for contracted corporations as well. Compact, intensive courses of study and work-integrated programs enable companies to educate highly qualified, young professionals with skills targeted to specific human resource needs. This outcome has also been revealed in six major empirical studies from the United States, which addressed the benefits to employers from participating in cooperative education programs. Positive features identified by companies involved in cooperative education programs are, for example, the screening of new hires or interacting positively with universities (Braunstein & Loken, 2004 and references therein).

International Partnerships Between West and East

From its inception, the Berufsakademie sought to share this work-study model with other countries around the world in order for them to take advantage of this work-integrated educational model. The partnerships described below demonstrate interest in the Berufsakademie model by other educational institutions worldwide and show the motivation of these institutions to acquire greater interaction with industry.

Based on the Berufsakademie dual educational concept as a perspective to a different understanding of the role of traditional universities, the Berufsakademie maintains exchange programs with universities in western and eastern countries. First, the Berufsakademie works within European countries with partner universities in Finland, United Kingdom, Netherlands, France and Spain. This is done partly through the Erasmus/Sokrates program, the main European exchange system. In North America, the Berufsakademie partners with institutions in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Cooperative university partnerships in South America include Chile and Brazil. Second, Eastern countries are also within the focus of the Berufsakademie. The range includes Birla Institute of Technology, in India, to the Nelson Malborough Institute of Technology, in New Zealand. These worldwide partnerships have led to the foundation of a range of new higher educational institutions based on the Berufsakademie`s dual educational concept. Such institutions include the European Business Academy (EWA) in Madrid, the European School of Management (ESM) in Tbilisi, Amenia, Cali, Bolivar, Bogota, Colombia, Shiyan and institutions in Malang and Jakarta Indonesia. They are either in the field of business administration and/or engineering. These partnerships focus on staff and student exchanges as well as implementing programs following the Berufsakademie model. In the field of engineering for instance, higher educational institutes were founded in Pilani, in India; in Tefen, in Israel; and in Malang, Indonesia. In the area of Business Administration, the institutions in Madrid (European Business School) and the European School of Management (ESM) in Tbilisi, Georgia, were established (Ministry of Science, Research & Arts, 2004).

The range of institutions within higher education being established based on the Berufsakademie model shows the acceptance and willingness to cooperate or accept this as a worldwide model. This is not to be taken for granted since, in comparison with traditional universities not two, but three, key target groups have to be focused and integrated: the lecturers, the students and the enterprises. The importance of this concept cannot be over emphasized. Perhaps, this is part of the answer to the question, as to why the Berufsakademie model in Germany has only been established in two out of the 16 German states, Baden-Württemberg and the state of Saxony? It is possible that other universities that already offer internship programs do not wish to 'complicate' their process by adding a requirement that all students must be contracted by a company.

Developments in the field of higher education seems to call for international cooperation. Cooperative learning usually means a more-structured, more-focused form of collaborative learning, but both cooperative and collaborative learning share a sense of community; learning is inherently social. Multiple traditional universities could be thought of as developing toward communities through cooperation. But the traditional approach in higher education can be characterized as focusing on doing research and teaching, neglecting the needs of industry rather than collaborating with businesses (Kronqvist, 2000). Innovative approaches often stress the importance of experimental study models. Development may be expected to take place through improvement in the profiles of university departments. Any professional and social expertise should be of relevance from the point of view of future working life, as many students, not only those from the behavioral sciences, are employed in duties which call for profound social and psychological expertise in addition to their professional expertise. Universities (besides Berufsakademie and say Harvard or St. Gallen) could consider opening themselves up to the outside world and consider redefining the basic purpose of universities. From an international perspective, the model of Berufsakademie and its variations, are already slowly being established in Western and Eastern countries. These could perhaps serve as a framework for a new perspective of cooperative education within higher education? Two case studies of how the Berufsakademie model has been introduced on Eastern countries are now presented.

Case Studies of the Berufsakademie Model in India and Indonesia

The State of Baden-Württemberg has been linked with the internationally known business areas in Chennai and Mumbai in India as well as Jakarta, Indonesia. For example, the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce was established

under the Indian Companies Act VII of 1913. This is a non-profit organization with its head office in Mumbai and offers a variety of businesses services. The German-Indonesia Chamber of Industry and Commerce (EKONID) is similar, and the Chamber advises its members on any types of business matters with special regard to the Indonesian economic environment. These chambers of commerce play an important role in the German secondary educational system because of the dual system in high school education, where every high school student must be contracted with a company in the Berufsschule (i.e., a vocational school). Chambers of commerce, for example, take responsibility for the content being taught in high school and also for parts of the exams. As might be expected, the Berufsakademie also works closely with chambers of commerce; therefore, it appears natural that all the initiative in India and Indonesia is due to their respective chambers of commerce.

The business and educational environment in the so-called Eastern countries is different from the West in many respects, but it is not immediately clear how the East differs with its business and educational perspective, and what impact these differences might have. To determine whether a cooperative education model of a Western country could serve as a model for eastern countries, it is suggested that 'business East' rather than 'geographic East' is a more useful perspective to adopt. It should be noted that the State of Baden-Württemberg is linked with the internationally known business areas in Chennai and Mumbai in India as well as Jakarta, Indonesia.

Next, based on observations in India and Indonesia, it is concluded that cultural differences are not especially important from an educational and business perspective. In both India and Indonesia government policies set formal and informal standards that oversee the types of business, educational activities, and the way business is conducted in a country. However, these do not appear to be significant when discussing the transferability of the Berufsakademie model. In addition, an inevitable feature of these governments is that policies continuously change. In other words, government policies are not immutable. It is rather the Eastern countries which share many economic, business, trade links, and business group operations with the West. The cities of Chennai and Mumbai, India, and Jakarta, Indonesia, both match these criteria. Economically, they are seen as wealthier cities within their countries, and are at economic stages similar to some of the advanced economies in Europe. These cities also have substantially different business environments than most of the big urban areas in India and Indonesia (Singh & Delios, 2005). Finally, although as described in presentations at a number of regional international conferences, cooperative education is provided throughout Eastern countries (Taylor, 2004), it is evident that there are some particular issues germane to economies represented in the cities mentioned above. To illustrate some of these issues, the Berufsakademie model at in Mumbai/Chennai and the one at the Universitas Negeri in Jakarta is now described.

In 1997, the German Berufsakademie model of cooperative education was introduced to India in the form of a Post Graduate Diploma in Business Administration at the Institute of the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce (IGTC) situated in Mumbai and Chennai. The Diploma is awarded by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), Germany. Each study phase of 20 weeks duration is divided into two parts—a theoretical phase of 14 weeks, and practical training of six weeks. Multinational companies such as Mercedes Benz, Daimler Chrysler India Private Limited, Bayer India, EPCOS India Private Limited, KSB Pumps Limited, Metttler-Toledo India Private Limited, Siemens Group India, all are participating countries. At the time of writing, 18 international enterprises are supporting the program. The 18-month, full-time Post Graduate Diploma in Business Administration is an intensive program which includes six months of work experience. The course establishes a topic-wise linkage between theory and practice by way of cooperating in participating companies. So far, the IGTC has an extraordinary record of 100% placements upon graduation. The benefits for the employing corporations appear to be similar to those reported in Germany (see Göhringer, 2002), and as is indicated by comments made by Mr. Stephan Gerlich, Managing Director, Bayer India Limited: "The selection process and the well-organized learning program ensure that student graduates are young ladies and gentlemen with outstanding skills and work ethics. For Bayer, India, IGTC are our preferred choice for the future management positions within the group" (Indo-German Chamber of Commerce, 2004).

Although running the program seems to be very successful, the question remains, why is the institution unable to contract more enterprises? Even if the policy of the institution is to remain exclusive, one has to consider that an average-sized Berufsakademie in Germany would need to contract around about 800 institutions and companies. Furthermore, the IGTC has not partnered with any of the larger Indian business groups. These are mostly family-owned and family-centered business groups, and play an important role in business networks, particularly in India and Indonesia. Business groups are considered to be collections of legally separate companies that are connected by common ownership, shared goals, cross-shareholdings, and commonalities in organizational structure. Examples in India include the Tata Group of Companies and Aditya Birla Group; and in Indonesia, the Berdikari Group, Bimantara Group, PT, Astra International TBK and PT, and Holdiko Perkasa.

The importance of business groups for the Indian economy and; therefore, for cooperative education programs is due to the tendency to build on competencies and value creation through size. The value creation for business groups in India is rooted in weaknesses in India's institutional environment. An institutional environment can exhibit strengths that facilitate the efficiency and effectiveness of business transactions, or it can exhibit weaknesses that impede business transactions. Particularly in India, weaknesses in the institutional environment can strike all enterprises in that economy equally, unless the strategy of a company can cushion it from the high costs of operating in that environment. One such strategy is to replace weak external institutions with strong internal substitutes. Firms may resort to developing an internal

Human Resource (HR) department if there is a lack of domestic institutions devoted to training managers. Weakness in the external HR market could stifle entrepreneurial initiatives through lack of knowledge in that discipline. The internal approach may be more effective than external agencies or institutions. Therefore, this 'inefficient institutional environment' may be one reason why establishing the Berufsakademie model could be very successful, particularly with the goal of recruiting educated staff that meet the needs of the companies.

The Vocational Education Development Centre (VEDC), Indonesia, seeks to educate its students and teachers within the 'teacher education' sector as well as in 'traditional vocational training'. The institution operates within the secondary education sector and is located in several cities in Indonesia, such as Malang and Jakarta. In October, 2002, the management of the Berufsakademie in Ravensburg was asked about their experience in order to establish a third business unit for the VEDC, named 'Joint Program of Berufsakademie'. The intention was to create a program based on the Berufsakademie model. It was also planned to cooperate with the State University of Jakarta, the Universitas Negeri, because the VEDC needs to partner with an institution of higher education in order to award bachelor's degrees to its graduates. In 2003, the VEDC started to establish the theoretical part of the program within the business management department at the institution in Jakarta. In Malang, they tried to implement a technically-oriented program according to German Berufsakademie model. A recent interview with the researcher, Agung Waspodo (November 13, 2005, Universitas Negeri), revealed that all of this effort failed due to "lack of agreement" between the VEDC and the State University of Jakarta. The remaining problem still seems to be the authority about which institution is allowed to award which kind of diploma. In 2005 the Universitas Negeri started wit two cooperative bachelor's programs, one called International Business Administration; the other with the main focus on accounting, was named Business Administration. These programs were set up in the department of economics under the supervision of Agung Waspodo and Yasser Arafat, both experienced with the Berufsakademie model when lecturing at the Berufsakademie in Ravensburg. At the time of writing, the theoretical course study has been implemented successfully, whereas the partners for on-the-job training out of industry have not been convinced to join the program.

Conclusions and Implications

The implications for this work-integrated learning model are enormous. If one considers the statistics quoted earlier in this paper that point to students in these programs receiving higher salaries than those in regular internship programs, it is obvious that universities in this increasingly global marketplace in both Eastern and Western countries should be evaluating the possibility of becoming involved. If the world is indeed flattening as Thomas Friedman suggests in his book, 'The World is Flat', it follows that this model of cooperative learning can be used by all cultures as is demonstrated by current outsourcing and insourcing that is taking place in many parts of the world.

The German Berufsakademie model, described previously, as well as two of its versions in India and Indonesia, indicate that greater interaction between educational institutions and industry can assist the academic sector with various issues. It is also seems reasonable from observing the institutions that programs based on the Berufsakademie model are able—no matter in which countries they are located—to provide an efficient way of producing graduates that are of great value to employers. Due to increasing international exchanges between universities all over the world and a more globalized economy, it is likely for any cooperative model to be implemented, particularly in eastern regions which tend to grow rapidly. Using China as an example, it is clear there is more industry, therefore, a far greater need for qualified personnel. In India the IGTC has collaborated closely with the country's 18 largest companies, most from the automotive industry. India has become one of the fastest-growing car markets in the world. Almost every big player from that industry, for example, Daimler-Chrysler or General Motors, is already situated there. In 2007, the German BMW Corporation will start producing cars in Chennai (Hein, 2005). For this reason, the options of expanding the UCE model are promising. This vision holds proof, particularly considering the fact that this process evolves under the roof of the German Chamber of Commerce, which has a long tradition in designing and supervising work-integrated learning programs. This appears to be the strongest assurance concerning the implementation of practical issues into higher education.

The Indonesian economy is still dominated by family centered business groups operating mostly in the market segments shoes, textiles and apparel industry. According to the cooperative program leaders Wagung and Arafat at the Universitas Negeri, the key to establishing cooperative education programs is to find supporting partners out of these industries first. The reason is that they significantly dominate the labor market. The main problem in this context is not only being able to balance the conflicting mission of academia and business and to create a synergy between theoretical and applied learning, but to publish the benefits of the Berufsakademie (or other cooperative education) model to potential partners out of industry first. The more quickly the program leaders are made more aware of this, the greater are the chances of success for implementing the Berufsakademie model.

In contrast to the situation in Berufsakademie traditional universities will be expected to react in a more complex way. Established professors may, for example, feel offended by the necessities of coordinating their teaching programs with the needs of industry. On the other hand, if academia can be convinced that stronger cooperation between traditional universities and industry partners can be beneficial for both sides, this problem might turn in to an advantage. The creative potential of established professors could clearly be of great interest for industry whereas stronger contacts between businesses and universities would offer the promise of greater options for developing the

individual careers and personal horizon of academics. This clearly applies to Eastern and Western countries accordingly.

In conclusion, this Berufsakademie model has the potential for substantially improving work-integrated programs throughout the world. The future path of research should be dedicated to revealing the corresponding advantages for both partners of the cooperative educational model within higher education in eastern as well as in western countries. We encourage engineering academics to consider the ways in which 'soft skills' can be developed throughout the curriculum. Professional competence involves the development of skills in posing and framing problems, which increasingly can be complex and multi-disciplinary, and need to be addressed in a global as well as a local context. The evidence is strong that both technical competence and well developed broad professional skills are needed for effective professional practice. The Professional Standards Council Report effectively endorses that vision.

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