

# Introducing corporate social responsibility as component in cooperative education: Results from a student research project in Germany and the United States supported by Intel Corporation

KARIN REINHARD

Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University, Markstrasse 28, 88212 Ravensburg, Germany

THOMAS OSBURG

Corporate Affairs Europe, Intel Corporation, Dornacher Str. 1, D-85622 Feldkirchen/München, Germany

ROSEMARY TOWNSEND

Durban University of Technology, PO Box 1334, Durban, 4000, South Africa

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This paper explores the nature of *Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR) and its relevance to industry and education. As more organizations are showing interest in adopting CSR practices, academic institutions such as the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg are exploring approaches in which CSR can be included in their curriculum. Therefore the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg has studied selected organizations to determine their current practice related to CSR and based on their findings found that it is important to include CSR into their curriculum. More organizations internationally and nationally are showing concern for adherence to the ethical dimension of business, and with the new focus of the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University towards conducting academic research; this study becomes even more valuable. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2010, 11(1), 1-12).

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, partnership within cooperative education, cooperative state university, communication by companies, student research.

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Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a concept more and more common to organizations across the world. Therefore, universities and other institutions of higher education are researching strategies in which organizations can approach CSR. However, this concept has not been undertaken at a larger scale at universities of cooperative education, neither in research nor in teaching. To foster the development of including CSR topics in student learning, the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University, the Johnson & Wales University in the US, and Intel Corporation embarked on a project that enabled students to do practical research and thus get closer to CSR topics through learning-by-doing.

The goal for the students in this research project was to explore the current ways in which corporate social responsibility is being addressed by companies in the United States and Germany. Based on this research, the analysis provided below situates the project within the context of the present ethical climate as well as within the recently transformed institution, Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University.

## CHANGES IN GERMAN COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University, with its main head office in Stuttgart, is the first university in Germany to integrate academic studies and work experience. Like other universities, it is a legal entity of public law and simultaneously a state institution. Its trademarks are the structural characteristics of the university of cooperative education; in

particular, the participation of training companies and institutions and the dual learning principle of studies (Reinhard, 2006). The eight main locations and three branch campuses with their areas of responsibility and close networking with the regional economy are the pillars of the cooperative state university.

The German state of Baden-Württemberg changed the legal status of the universities of cooperative education on 1 March 2009. The institution is now called *Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University*. Among other things, this includes a more rigorous research component. Also following the US state university system, the eight main locations of the former universities of cooperative education merged into one institution. This merger is intended to ensure the national and international recognition of the university (Müller, 2009). As the new Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University, Ravensburg (formerly Berufsakademie Ravensburg, or University of Cooperative Education Ravensburg), there are ever increasing opportunities to do research through international partnerships.

Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University offers a broad spectrum of bachelor degree programs in the fields of business, engineering, and social work. All the degree programs are worth 210 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits and count as intensive programs. The students have an employment contract with companies, and throughout the entire period they receive a monthly salary and have the insurance status of employees. Applications are submitted to the dual partners in the various locations. Enrolment at the university is only possible after an employment contract has been signed. Small classes of at most 30 students guarantee close supervision. In addition to the professors of the cooperative state university, lecturers from other universities and technical colleges, as well as experts with specialized knowledge from various fields, all contribute to teaching at the university. This ensures a high level of academic studies as well as practice-oriented teaching. While the former situation was primarily teaching-centered, under the current conditions the new challenge is to develop research. Along with this comes the opportunity to do joint research with other companies and/or institutions.

One example that is described in this contribution is the corporate social responsibility project of student research, a venture between Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg, the Johnson & Wales University, Providence, US, and Intel Corporation this international “cooperative research project on CSR” serves as a best practice on how cooperative research can be done. Most significantly, it is seen as a CSR project in the field of education by Intel Corporation itself.

#### THE CONCEPT AND DEFINITIONS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The concept of *corporate social responsibility* or *corporate citizenship* (CC)<sup>1</sup> is gaining momentum across the world. Newspapers report about CSR activities of companies daily, and those get great attention from the consumer.<sup>2</sup> Especially the win-win potential of this type of community engagement is highlighted. The core reasons for this can be seen in the increased requirements for companies from a critical audience to live up to their citizenship responsibilities and to communicate it to the various stakeholders of the firm (Habisch, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> CSR and CC, as well as Corporate Responsibility (CR), are not necessarily the same; however, they are used commonly to describe the same attitude and activities of companies. In this paper, they should be seen as interchangeable. For a good overview of definitory differences see Schrader (Schrader, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> From August 2005 to January 2008, the results of the search term “Corporate Citizenship” found by Google grew from 86,000 to 1.2 million.

The term corporate citizenship has various definitions in the literature, the main criteria for differentiation being how deeply the company's activities are embedded in the social environment. A widely used definition comes from the research of Westebbe and Logan (1995) who define corporate citizenship as the holistic, coordinated and strategically aligned engagement of a company beyond its usual business goals to help resolve social issues. The British NPO *Business in the Community* defines corporate responsibility as the management of a company's positive impact on society and the environment through its operations, products or services and through its interaction with key stakeholders such as employees, customers, investors and suppliers (Business in the Community, 2008).

In its core sense, CSR is understood in Germany as supporting activities with a strong focus on civil society, mainly social activities with no political background or influence on government (Schrader, 2003), like, for example, supporting universities in research and teaching. In the English-speaking parts of the world one can observe a move towards a much wider understanding of those concepts (Schrader, 2003), as CSR often includes the relations to local and national governments and the acceptance of governance responsibility. This applies also to the field of education, as can be observed in the *Intel Teach* or *Intel Higher Education Initiative*. The term corporate citizenship can be extended to mean the total impact of the company's activities on society (Schrader, 2003). This is rooted in the understanding that firms are not only responsible for their economic success, but also have to take into consideration their impact on the local and national society through various complex relationship structures with their stakeholders.

#### *The Rising Demands From Society On Corporations*

The role of companies in society has dramatically changed over the last years (Osburg, 2009). The traditional sharing of tasks between the public and the private sector has evolved and new forms of cooperation have emerged (Schrader, 2003). There are three main trends that are responsible for this shift of paradigms:

Firstly, the importance of governments is diminishing in various sectors as, with reduced budgets, governments are less and less able to guarantee adequate education, health or insurance against poverty. Increasing the public income through raising taxes is usually very difficult. As a result, countries lose a significant part of their capability to shape the social agenda (Habisch, 2003; Hansen & Schrader, 2005; Schrader, 2003). In Higher Education, it is well known that increasingly the needed money needs to come from non-governmental sources, more and more universities (mainly still in the U.S.) have their own Fundraising Teams in place.

In parallel, the importance of companies is rising, as with increased profits they have the financial backbone to assume responsibility in a globalized world. This leads to an increased capability to shape and influence national agendas (Schrader, 2003). Various large multinational companies now post revenues that surpass the GDP of small or medium-sized countries.<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, the rapid *technological development* leads to increased possibilities for stakeholders to become better informed than ever before, which makes corporate decisions and processes more public. This transparency might lead to increased risk for public sanctions following corporate misbehavior, as well as to more possibilities to publish corporate good behavior (Habisch, Wildner & Wenzel, 2008).

This development results in a modified sharing of tasks between the public and private sector (Habisch, 2003; Schrader, 2003). In former times, voluntary donations by companies could be seen as additional funding for public tasks. Nowadays, societies across the globe expect companies to become engaged in public issues, far beyond their usual business activities – i.e. within the areas of arts, social issues, health or education (Bertelsmann, 2005;

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<sup>3</sup> The World's largest corporations have revenues that surpass the GDP of Switzerland, Greece or Portugal.

Gazdar & Kirchhoff, 2003). This new obligation is considered to extend beyond the statutory obligation of companies to comply with legislation. They are now also expected to improve the quality of life for their employees, as well as to support the local community or support tertiary Education and the society at large in responsible ways.

The result is an emergence of opportunities for private companies, to fill the vacuum left by the public sector (Schrader, 2003). This will only be successful, if a corporate social engagement is linked to corporate goals and thus creating a strategic framework for the corporate social engagement (Enquete-Kommission, 2002). Over the last decade, most companies have accepted these new paradigms to act as corporate citizen, and thus have developed proactive concepts to meet the expectation of communities they operate in (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2005; Habisch, 2003).

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY GOALS

### *Social Goals*

The basis of corporate citizenship activities can be seen in the creation of a public benefit, meaning the involvement of companies to solve one or several predominant social issues (Osburg, 2009). This is usually done in cooperation between companies, public authorities and non-government organizations (NGOs) (Habisch, Wildner & Wenzel, 2008). Reaching sustainable results through their corporate social engagement is crucial for companies to document the credibility of private firms through measurable impact (Habisch, Wildner & Wenzel, 2008). The areas for company engagement can span a wide range of areas:

In *Education*, support is possible for better qualification of teachers or improved conditions for teaching and learning; as it is for state-of-the-art university research, improving university teaching or enabling universities to equip their labs with new machines.

From an *Environmental* perspective, companies can focus on waste reduction, design of appropriate products, green buildings, etc.

By supporting *Health Care* projects, help can be given to develop concrete projects for elderly or disabled people.

*Culturally*, music education or enabling concerts for a wider audience can be seen as areas of engagement.

### *Psychographic goals*

Psychographic goals include all non-monetary objectives and are thus not easily quantifiable and measurable (Bruhn, 2003):

The building of *corporate reputation*<sup>4</sup> is usually seen as the overarching psychographic goal for Corporate Citizenship Activities (Clemens-Ziegler & Looch, 1998; Hansen, 2004; Maaß & Clemens 2002; Schrader, 2003). A major study regarding Corporate Citizenship goals in Germany confirms that for 78.9% of the companies,<sup>5</sup> the improvement of image is the most important goal for CSR activities (Maaß & Clemens, 2002). This is especially true for higher education, where companies can initiate an image transfer from a highly respected university to their own firm through CSR cooperations.

CSR Engagement can also be considered to be an aid to *employee recruitment and retention*, particularly for high-potential students who care about more than the pure job and salary (Schleier & Armutat, 2004). Potential recruits are seen more and more to inquire about a firm's CSR policy during a job interview. Having a strategic and sustainable policy can give the company advantages over its competitors (Maaß & Clemens, 2002). Internally, corporate citizenship projects positively influence the corporate perception – and thus motivation among its employees – by becoming involved in fundraising activities or community volunteering (Maaß & Clemens, 2002; Schrader, 2003).

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<sup>4</sup> *Reputation* and *image* are not identical; however, both words are commonly used to describe the same concept. In this paper, they should be seen as interchangeable.

<sup>5</sup> n=228 (Maaß & Clemens, 2002).

Goals that extend beyond the boundaries of the company's core business can be seen to improve the reputation of firms and their managers in general, thus helping to generate a *business-friendly climate* to operate in (Maaß & Clemens, 2002; Schrader, 2003). Especially small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are dependent on a well-functioning social and political environment as they are usually more tied to a specific site than multinational companies (Habisch, 2003).

The *License to Operate* can be understood as the agreement between a company and its key stakeholders to operate within the community chosen by having the acceptance of all relevant stakeholders (Schrader, 2003; Zammit, 2003). It also implies that companies who show proactive and responsible behavior might avoid governmental interventions in their areas of operation.

#### *Economic Goals*

With corporate citizenship activities companies can try to differentiate themselves from competition and attempt to gain market share. In the long term, CSR can also play a role in building customer loyalty. In times of decreasing product and service differentiation, the behavior of companies within the society becomes a more and more important purchase decision criterion of consumers (Maaß & Clemens, 2002).<sup>6</sup> The scope of CSR activities that positively influence customer behavior can range from sustainable operational practices, to acceptable production processes, fair employee and supplier treatment, the usage of healthy and toxic-free materials, or support for local communities.

Investing in corporate citizenship activities implies no contradiction to a corporate shareholder orientation. Investors demand of corporate citizenship to minimize risks and increase the stock price, even though a direct link in research between social investment and a positive stock price has not yet been established (Schrader, 2003).

#### *Corporate Social Responsibility Instruments*

The two main and most commonly used instruments to put CSR activities in place are corporate giving (which does not have to be philanthropic) and corporate volunteering:

By *Corporate Giving* one understands the free-of-charge donation of goods and services of a company to an organization in need (Maaß & Clemens, 2002). The most common tools to do this are donations and sponsorship (Osburg, 2006), which differ with regard to the agreed upon return by the receiver organization and with regard to tax issues (Gazdar & Kirchhoff, 2003; Mutz, 2002; Schrader, 2003). Fundraising offices in German universities are still mainly focused on trying to increase the donation part, while US universities mostly see the need for offering something to companies and thus create increasingly customizable sponsorship packages for firms.

*Corporate Volunteering* is the investment of the human resources of a company to the benefit of the society (Reichenau, 2003). One of the major benefits of corporate volunteering can be seen in the interaction between the company and stakeholders in society, thus leading to an improved integration of CSR into the overall company strategy (Reichenau, 2003). Corporate volunteering requires a much stronger civil involvement between the enterprise and its partner organization, making it a highly sustainable approach (Enquete-Kommission, 2002), but does not really exist for the higher education sector.

## COMMUNICATING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### *Communication as Information Sharing*

The model of one-way information sharing within the communication concept is used when information simply needs to be transmitted to relevant stakeholders (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). This communication does not require or expect feedback. Instead, the purpose is rather documentary regarding relevant company information, for example, the annual CSR report that most large companies regularly submit. Stakeholders have a passive role, and an

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<sup>6</sup> In a research study from CSR Europe, 70% of the interviewees said that Corporate Social Responsibility is a key purchase criterion and 44% declared they would spend additional money for products from companies who show responsible behavior (CSR Europe 2000, p. 3).

integration of NGOs to support the communication is usually not needed (Gazdar, 2008; Wermter, 2008). The channels for one-way communication for CSR topics are dominated by traditional media like daily newspapers (83%), television (76%) and radio (61%) (University of St Gallen, 2003).

#### *Dialogue Oriented Communication*

Dialogue oriented communication can be differentiated into a symmetrical and asymmetrical dimension, depending on the level of involvement of the recipient (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). The asymmetrical dialogue-oriented communication strategy (also called *stakeholder response Strategy*) is a two-way communication with various stakeholders, initiated by the company, the goal being to inform the stakeholders about company activities (similar to the information sharing model). The active role of the stakeholders consists of reactions and answers to the company initiated communication: "The stakeholder response strategy is a predominantly one-sided approach, as the company has the sole intention of convincing its stakeholders of its attractiveness" (Morsing & Schultz, 2006, p. 327).

A true dialogue with stakeholders only happens in a symmetrical communication approach (also called *stakeholder involvement strategy*). This is an open iterative dialogue with no specific result in mind, where the content of the activities and communication are jointly influenced and agreed upon by the key stakeholders (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). This communication strategy is heavily supported by the emergence of new technology, like blogs, wikis, and so on. In taking this approach, companies accept the influence from stakeholders with regard to their CSR activities. The main purpose of this communication approach can be seen in the creation and maintenance of relations with important stakeholders by proactively including them in the CSR communication.

#### CURRENT PRACTICE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: STUDENT RESEARCH AS PART OF A CO-OP PROGRAM

##### *Goals of the Project*

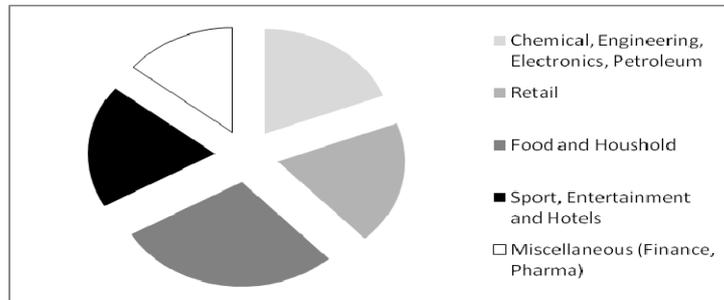
The overarching goal of this project was using a field research project carried out by students in cooperative education to develop an understanding of CSR concepts by those students. Instead of one-way teaching, students developed a sound understanding and ultimately judgment how companies design, implement and communicate their CSR Programs. They did this by talking up to 10 companies in each subgroup using predefined structured questioning approaches. In a classical 'learning-by-doing' approach, this student research project's main goal was to create knowledge and also excitement for CSR topics, and at the same time introducing research elements in the curriculum at the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg.

##### *Approach and Methodology*

Students from Johnson & Wales University in the US, range from Americans to Europeans, Asians and Africans, and students from Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg, were invited to participate in a cooperative research project on CSR supported by Intel Corporation. The two universities have a long term relationship in exchanging students and staff. For this project Professor Lisa Sisco from Johnson & Wales University, and Professor Karin Reinhard from Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg, each visited the partnering institution in late 2008 and early 2009 in order to

give the introductory lectures on CSR to these students. In addition, the German students were introduced to the topic by Thomas Osburg, Director Europe Corporate Affairs at Intel Corporation, and responsible for Intel’s CSR programs in Europe.

After hearing the theoretical content, the students themselves decided on the companies they would do the research on. In Germany, companies involved in cooperative education (i.e., partners of Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University) also were included. This selection resulted in a balanced mix of companies from a large variety of sectors (Figure 1).



Source: Companies selected by student groups (n=21)

FIGURE 1  
Split of companies included in the student research by company sector

The research focus of the students was on: (a) the instruments of CSR (as described above) being used by the companies, (b) the communication of these CSR activities, and (c) whether the CSR performance was being evaluated by the companies or not. The findings of the German and American students were exchanged on a joint learning platform (Moodle™). In addition, the students presented their results at their own institution to fellow students and concerned staff members.

#### FINDINGS FROM STUDENTS

Though no formal questionnaire was requested from the students, the research result revealed very strong similarities in the CSR communication aspects that can be discussed and clustered as outlined below.

##### *Learning Outcomes From the Cooperative Student Research Project*

##### **The Interest of Students in Corporate Social Responsibility Topics Grew Significantly:**

The first result indicated that conducting a research project within the CSR area significantly developed the interest of 88% of the students in CSR topics. Very often, students were not too familiar with the CSR topic before engaging in the research, so the goal of raising interest in the topic among students was clearly achieved.

##### **Most Companies Researched Cover All Areas of Corporate Social Responsibility:**

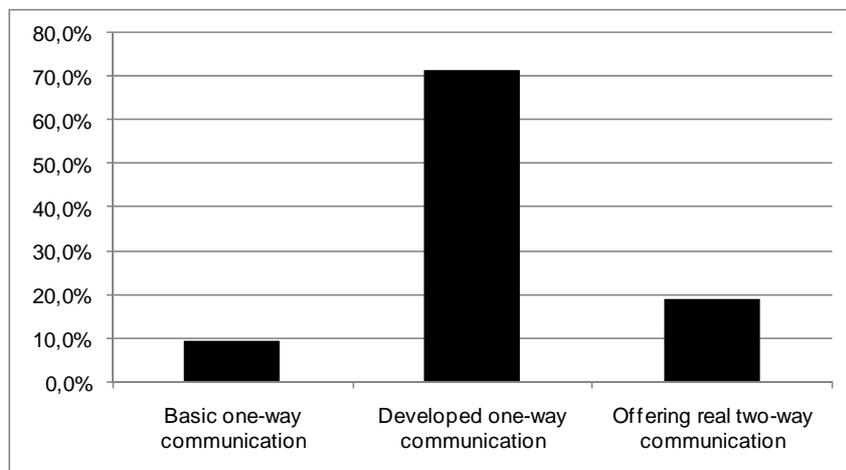
The students’ research covered the width of the current programs, from truly philanthropic (Hotels) to commercial Cause Related Marketing Campaigns (Brewery). While initially all of this was considered to be part of the CSR activities (and as such presented by the companies), students soon started seriously questioning the CSR approach of, for example, a Cause Related Marketing Sales Campaign. However, as this is sometimes presented as CSR in public, the student group working on this specific example showed great professionalism in establishing clear boundaries as to what CSR is and as to what CSR is not. Nearly all companies researched (90.5%) had a full range of CSR programs available according to the definitions commonly used in the literature (Business in the Community, 2008).

*Web Communication Partially Influenced the Perception of Programs*

A deeper analysis by the authors found that the Web and content design of the companies had a significant impact among the students on the perception of the overall quality of CSR Programs. Students were tempted to judge the programs exclusively by how they were presented on the Web but resisted doing so. They decided that Web design and content alone were inconclusive. This self-imposed restriction has to be taken into account as Web Research was in fact often the only way to gather relevant information.

*Communication of Corporate Social Responsibility Programs*

One of the areas the students paid specific attention to was the communication of CSR activities. The results showed that 95.2% of the companies surveyed show basic communication on the web site, but only 19.0% of the companies offer the true two-way interactive communication possibility, thus proactively engaging with the various stakeholders. Research indicates that companies are mostly still experimenting with open stakeholder communication where the feedback cannot be controlled.



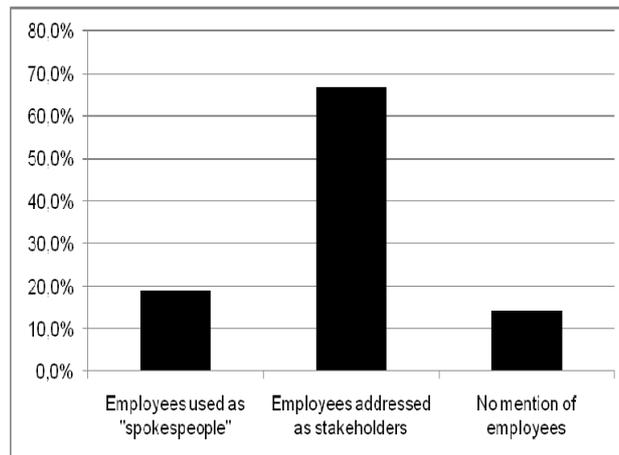
Source: Own research (n=21 companies)

FIGURE 1

Classification of communication models used by companies

*Employees Play a Growing Role in Communication*

Employees can play a significant role in the CSR engagement of a company. On the one hand, they could be used as active spokespeople or ambassadors, being a key communication method for the company. This is mainly true when there is a lot of customer contact by the employees (e.g., in a retail channel). On the other hand, employees are considered to be major stakeholders and sometimes target groups for CSR activities. The findings show that the overwhelming majority (66.7%) of companies consider employees as very important stakeholders, and some (19.0%) start to use them as ambassadors to communicate the initiatives. Only a minority (14.3%) do not mention employees in their CSR communication.



Source: Author's unpublished work (n=21 companies)

FIGURE 3  
Integration of employees in CSR communication

*Missing Impact of Recent Incidents in Corporate Social Responsibility Programs and Communication*

CSR projects and communication need to be an integral part of the overall company's strategy and actions. Therefore, students paid specific attention to the integration of current or recent issues within a company that were made public and that could have an effect on the CSR programs (i.e., bribery, lay-off's, legal or environmental issues, child labor, etc.). The result was surprising. None of the nine companies, who had documented issues in the press over the last year, related their CSR activities to these issues. Students observed companies who had major lay-offs but claiming on their CSR Web Site that people are the most valuable asset. Other companies were accused of bribery, yet at the same time claiming that "...the ethical standards of our Corporate Governance Programs are unmatched in the industry..." (The quotation is from one company which prefers not to be mentioned).

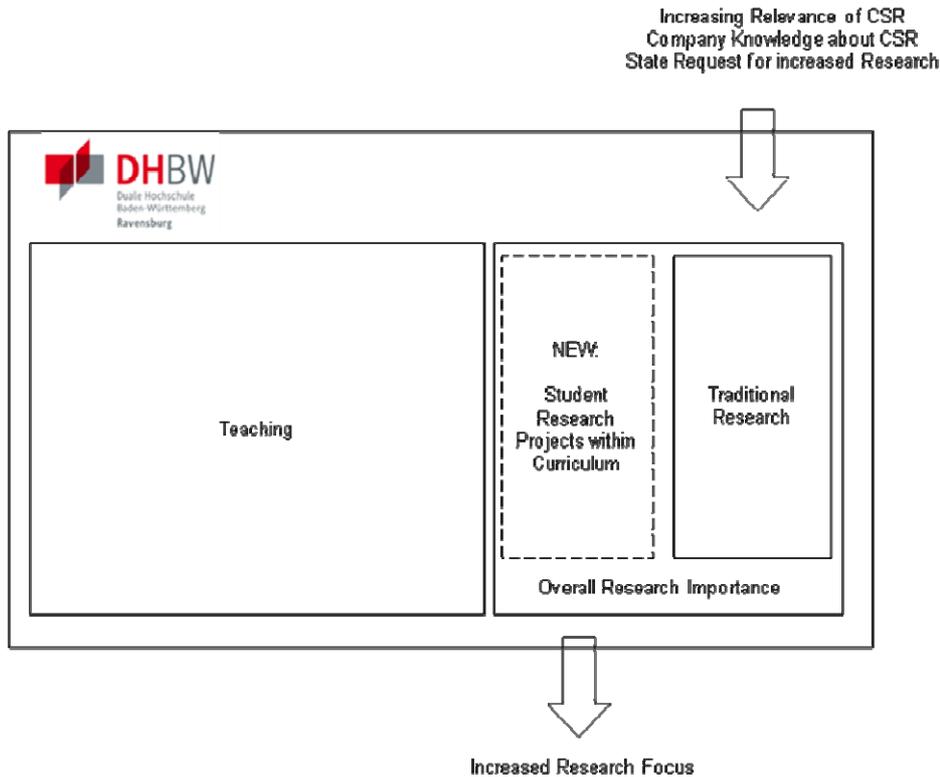
*Temptation of Only Positive Communication*

The importance of rankings has significantly grown over the last years;<sup>7</sup>and companies try to be in a top spot regarding their CSR performance. While it was not surprising that companies without exception communicated a first, second or third rank, there was no mention of a 14th, 37th or 59th rank. This contradicts sharply with the mostly pledged openness by the companies for open and honest communication. The student groups immediately raised the question of whether companies were not missing a great opportunity to address a 'not-so-perfect' rank proactively and communicate what they learnt from this and how this might positively impact the programs in the next year. Companies seem to be missing a great opportunity to move from simple PR to truly two-way communication approaches.

<sup>7</sup> Listing the currently available rankings worldwide would go beyond the scope of this contribution.

## INCLUSION OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The research project described above and the associated findings proved to be a suitable way of including practical research into cooperative education as required by the state authority. This state requirement, the increasing relevance of CSR and the existing knowledge in this field from firms such as Intel Corporation have ultimately expanded the research component in the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg through a student research project like the one described in this paper (Figure 4).



Source: Author's illustration

**FIGURE 4**  
Increased Research through Student Projects

The student groups working on the project significantly raised their interest and knowledge in this area and were able to come up with scientifically defensible results. This includes on the one hand an impressive range of currently run programs by the researched companies, but on the other hand also leaves some room for improvement in terms of communication. It became obvious that not integrating current company issues into CSR programs seriously damages the trust of a younger generation. Also, the often pledged open communication was outweighed by the non-communication of less favorable ranking results. But, in general, students were impressed with the current level of the corporate citizenship engagement of most companies and clearly expressed an interest to do more research in this area.

The merger of the eight disparate universities of cooperative education into Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University, and the resulting legal implications mean that the new institution can grant academic degrees. One of the main innovations is the brief to realize cooperative research projects. That means that collaboration with partner enterprises and institutions can be intensified, and steps can be taken to make academic studies more up to date. Previously, professors at the University of Cooperative Education Ravensburg had to explore ways to overcome the exclusive research focus by sponsoring companies and to experiment with new concepts in order to participate in private support from the business sector (Reinhard, Osburg & Townsend, 2008). Now that its status has changed and its research dimension enlarged, Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University is in an even stronger position to cooperate with numerous universities and enterprises worldwide, thereby facilitating international research partnerships such as the one described in this article. This research area is particularly suited for cooperative education students as they have a more hands-on relationship with industry than do students from traditional universities.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper we have shown not only what CSR is but also how it is being targeted internationally as a necessary area of focus for business students. We have showcased the joint project of Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg and Intel as an example of how to bring the consciousness of CSR into the curriculum.

Now that the University of Cooperative Education Ravensburg (under whose banner the original project was launched) has been transformed into Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg with its greater (and regulated) emphasis on research, there should be even more opportunities to embark on such projects with like-minded international partners. This project shows how the new-born Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University realizes its new task to implement cooperative research projects.

In the field of cooperative education, institutional partnerships such as the one between Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg and Johnson & Wales University, Providence, US can be extended to serve the research and developmental needs of the relevant institutions and their students. There is now even more impetus than previously to expand the current research focus on the dynamics of how CSR operates in the marketplace. With the internationalization of business, there is an ever increasing need for a greater and shared understanding of ethical principles and their application. It is our hope that this article has contributed to stimulating further research in this area.

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## ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative education (APJCE) arose from a desire to produce an international forum for discussion of cooperative education issues for practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region and is intended to provide a mechanism for the dissemination of research, best practice and innovation in work-integrated learning. The journal maintains close links to the biennial Asia-Pacific regional conferences conducted by the World Association for Cooperative Education. In recognition of international trends in information technology, APJCE is produced solely in electronic form. Published papers are available as PDF files from the website, and manuscript submission, reviewing and publication is electronically based.

Cooperative education in the journal is taken to be work-based learning in which the time spent in the workplace forms an integrated part of an academic program of study. Essentially, cooperative education is a partnership between education and work, in which enhancement of student learning is a key outcome. More specifically, cooperative education can be described as a strategy of applied learning which is a structured program, developed and supervised either by an educational institution in collaboration with an employer or industry grouping, or by an employer or industry grouping in collaboration with an educational institution. An essential feature is that relevant, productive work is conducted as an integral part of a student's regular program, and the final assessment contains a work-based component. Cooperative education programs are commonly highly structured and possess formal (academic and employer) supervision and assessment. The work is productive, in that the student undertakes meaningful work that has economic value or definable benefit to the employer. The work should have clear linkages with, or add to, the knowledge and skill base of the academic program.

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The editorial board welcomes contributions from authors with an interest in cooperative education. Manuscripts should comprise reports of relevant research, or essays that discuss innovative programs, reviews of literature, or other matters of interest to researchers or practitioners. Manuscripts should be written in a formal, scholarly manner and avoid the use of sexist or other terminology that reinforces stereotypes. The excessive use of abbreviations and acronyms should be avoided. All manuscripts are reviewed by two members of the editorial board. APJCE is produced in web-only form and published articles are available as PDF files accessible from the website <http://www.apjce.org>.

Research reports should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry, a description and justification for the methodology employed, a description of the research findings-tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance for practitioners, and a conclusion preferably incorporating suggestions for further research. Essays should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to, and discussion of, relevant literature, and a discussion of the importance of the topic for other researchers and practitioners. The final manuscript for both research reports and essay articles should include an abstract (word limit 300 words), and a list of keywords, one of which should be the national context for the study.

Manuscripts and cover sheets (available from the website) should be forwarded electronically to the Editor-in-Chief directly from the website. In order to ensure integrity of the review process authors' names should not appear on manuscripts. Manuscripts should include pagination, be double-spaced with ample margins in times new-roman 12-point font and follow the style of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association in citations, referencing, tables and figures (see also, <http://www.apa.org/journals/faq.html>). The intended location of figures and diagrams, provided separately as high-quality files (e.g., JPG, TIFF or PICT), should be indicated in the manuscript. Figure and table captions, listed on a separate page at the end of the document, should be clear and concise and be understood without reference to the text.

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