Chapter 4.18

Teaching Criminology and Police Science for Postgraduate Students at the Ruhr– University Bochum, Germany

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study looks at the postgraduate program in Criminology and Police Science at the Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany. This practice oriented course of study is designed as a distance learning course (*blended learning*) and therefore focuses on techniques of e-learning. The case study describes the history of origins and examines the educational situation before this master's program was established and how an idea became reality. It is one of the very few possibilities in Germany to receive a deeper insight into criminology and police science. Despite the fact, that the students are all professionals and thus working mostly full time, the technical premises make a discourse possible as in on-campus programs. These innovative forms of learning are the focal point of the following case study. It is our aim to provide insight into how a master's program could be set up and to promote new concepts of e-learning in the field of criminology.

BACKGROUND

To date there are two other courses of study dealing with criminology in Germany besides the master's program in Criminology and Police Science at the Ruhr-University Bochum. In addition to two master's programs in the Social Science department of the University of Hamburg (M.A. in International Criminology - consecutive since 2005/as research

studies from 1984-2005 & a non-consecutive Master since 2007), a Master of Laws (LL.M.) in Criminology and Criminal Justice is taught at Greifswald since 2006.

It was a long road to the emancipation of these programs however. The idea of a full and independent course of study in criminology is relatively new in Germany. Whereas in other countries – especially the United States of America (Bufkin, 2004), but also many European countries[1] – teaching criminology (and/or criminal justice) has a long tradition and has therefore brought up almost uncountable programs, a full course of study in Germany was for a long time not in sight. The education of criminological aspects was mostly restricted to basics and, for various reasons, was insufficient or had little practical relevance (Feltes, 2005a, p. 1).

For a long period of time, teaching criminology at most universities was attached to the law schools. Predominantly in the first semester, law students received (and still receive) the possibility to learn about the scientific study of crime and criminal behavior. However, at most universities there only existed one course dealing with criminology – mainly giving the students a brief introduction and supporting the lectures in criminal law. Most other students, although confronted with deviant behavior in their jobs, e.g. of psychology or prospective teachers, did not and still do not get a mandatory criminological introduction during their studies.

Looking at the praxis showed that the situation within institutions such as the police was also not satisfying. There were numerous skill enhancements, which were however mostly orientated on current problems and events. Most students considered the criminological component to be difficult to understand or irritating (Feltes, 2005a, p. 1).

Seldom was there a systematic, theoretical preparation of problems and experiences – especially not with the focus on criminology. For a long time, there was no profound, interdisciplinary

reflection of the causes of deviant behavior. The need (as well as the calls [see Löschper, 1986]) for a postgraduate, full course of study grew, after the aspect of interdisciplinarity had developed within the academic discussion (so called "Kommunale Kriminalprävention") and had started to be implemented into every day police work in the mid 90´s. Nonetheless a course of study which was orientated like that in the first place was still missing. These needs also could not be met by police intern study programs (like the German Police University), since they are only open to police officers. Prospects from other occupational backgrounds did not have the chance to attend those programs. Therefore there was a gap in the educational system in both teaching criminology as well as interdisciplinary focused study courses in Germany.

Although having realized that within the respective undergraduate studies the courses in criminology did not present much more than a glimpse (and therefore needing extension) and according to the change in the way of dealing with crime in an interdisciplinary way, it took until the turn of the millennium to change. Since the beginning of the new century these changes are becoming apparent in Germany, too. Slowly, the idea established that knowledge of deviant behavior is important not only to police officers, but also to a variety of other occupations, such as social work, teaching, psychology and that, a postgraduate program was necessary.

In Bochum, this change is irrevocably linked with the name Professor Dr. Thomas Feltes M.A. Feltes holds the chair for criminology, criminal policy, and police science at the law faculty at the Ruhr-University Bochum since 2002. With degrees in law as well as educational science and being headmaster of a police academy for many years, he combines experiences within academia and practice.

The Ruhr-University seemed to be the right place for developing ideas about a master´s program in criminology, because of its history and

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