

Chapter 12

An Archetype of WIL in Information Technology at Baden–Württemberg Cooperative State University Ravensburg, Germany

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ABSTRACT

The chapter provides an overview of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) into the Information Technology (IT) programme offered at the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University in Ravensburg, Germany. The opinions and debates of leading role-players in WIL are featured. The university's pose and the operations adopted in managing this programme will be presented. These include the structure of the IT programme, its accreditation process, strengths, and weaknesses. The chapter concludes with the programmes direction for the future.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a holistic perspective of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and its integration in the Information Technology (IT)

programme offered in the School of Information Technology at the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University in Ravensburg, Germany. The university is also known as the Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg (DHBW) University. This chapter will present the views and discussions of leading role-players in WIL, the university's

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position on WIL and the operations adopted in managing the programme at this university.

The operations will cover the main focus of the chapter which is the structure of the IT programme, its accreditation, strengths and weaknesses and problems and controversies. The chapter will close on the viability of the programme and its direction for the future

BACKGROUND

The policymakers of state of Baden-Württemberg, Germany, determined that there was a need for a new method of teaching that would directly impact the students who were attempting to learn the duties and responsibilities that industry desired in today's highly technical and increasingly global world. Therefore in 1972, three world-renowned organisations: Bosch, Daimler Benz and SEL initiated, in cooperation with the Baden-Württemberg Chamber of Commerce, an innovative and highly successful system of academic study at university level. Their intention was to establish a model programme for WIL.

Shortly thereafter, the DHBW was founded in 1974 in Stuttgart, the capital of the state of Baden-Württemberg. Today, eight main locations and three branch campuses with their areas of responsibility and close networking with the regional organisations form the pillars of the DHBW group of universities (Müller, 2009).

On 1 March 2009 the German state of Baden-Württemberg changed the status of these former universities. Among other changes, one was to include a more "robust research component" (Reinhard, Osburg and Townsend 2010, p.2). Therefore the university was encouraged to change from a diploma-only university to one that offers a variety of bachelor degree programmes in the fields of business, engineering, social work and research. Executive master programmes will also be initiated by the year 2011.

There are number of definitions or models of WIL. Martin (1997) tabulates a variety of these which are widely used globally and range from pre-course experience, sandwich courses, co-operative programmes, cognitive apprenticeship or job shadowing, joint industry courses, new traineeship and apprenticeships, placements or practicum, fieldwork and post course internship. The DHBW University models WIL according to Jarvis and Wilson (1999) where the university and the related industries work closely together to provide programmes where the students alternate between attending classes at university and industry. There is an overlap between what Martin (1997) refers to as a co-operative and sandwich programme models at the DHBW University.

The DHBW University allows students to alternate work and industrial experience several times before graduation. Students alternate every three months between industry and university. The objective of this teaching method is to provide a strong correlation between theoretical and practical phases of studies to allow students to experience in reality the principles mentioned in the classroom.

The DHBW University currently works with over 10,000 organisations of varied sizes representing diverse disciplines. These organisations comprise both national and subsidiaries of international organisations and work with the University as partners. The majority of these organisations are located in the state of Baden-Württemberg.

Heinemann (1988) states that in 1984 the Cooperative Education Incorporating Internships Association commissioned an investigation regarding the position of WIL in higher education. Although the growth and success of WIL were undisputed, the concern of the association was that the programmes being offered would not be seen as intellectual and did not provide the level of standard expected of a university. Du Pre (2009) concurs with Heinemann (1988) and is of the view that in some instances it was thought

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