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Made only in Germany?

Internationalization and Transfer of Dual Study Programs

Lukas Graf 1, Justin Powell 1, Johann Fortwengel 2 & Nadine Bernhard 3

1 University of Luxembourg, Institute of Education & Society, Route de Diekirch, L-7220 Walferdange, lukas.graf@uni.lu & justin.powell@uni.lu

2 Freie Universität Berlin, School of Business & Economics, Boltzmannstr. 20, Garystraße 21, D-14195 Berlin, Fortwengel, johann.fortwengel@fu-berlin.de

3 Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Institut für Erziehungswissenschaften, Unter den Linden 6, D-10099 Berlin, nadine.bernhard@hu-berlin.de

Abstract: Germany, along with Switzerland and Austria, has a long tradition in the provision of dual apprenticeship training. However, since the late 1960s we see a new development with the rise of hybrid dual study programs located at the nexus of vocational training and higher education. In recent years, this innovative training model has received increasing attention by policy makers in Germany – and abroad. In this context, our study first analyses the degree of internationalization of dual study programs in Germany. Secondly, we examine institutional conditions for the transfer of these programs to other countries: France, the US, Mexico, Brazil, and Qatar. The explorative analysis is based on a range of expert and stakeholder interviews in all six countries. We apply a neo-institutional comparative-historical approach.

Keywords: Vocational education and training and higher education, dual study programs, historical development, internationalization

Introduction

This study focuses on the historical development as well as the future perspectives of the internationalization and the transfer of dual study programs (see Graf, Powell, Fortwengel, and Bernhard, forthcoming, for details). Dual study programs offer a specific hybrid form of education and training located at the post-secondary level that has developed over the past four decades in Germany. While vocational training and higher education have historically been divided by an “educational schism” (Baethge, 2006; Bernhard, Graf, and Powell, 2013), dual study programs combine institutional and organizational elements from both fields, for example, with regard to curricula, teaching staff or funding structures. Furthermore, dual study programs integrate the classroom and the working place as two complementary learning settings. The original type of dual study programs, the *ausbildungsintegrierende* type, leads to an official vocational certificate from the field of vocational training (upper-secondary level) as well as a Bachelor’s degree from the field of higher education (post-secondary level) (see Graf, 2013b: 95-102 for a detailed description of all four types of dual study programs).



Recently, German educational concepts have (once again) gained in importance in global debates about successful education systems, facilitated by the economic strength of Germany during the financial crisis and also by its low youth unemployment rates (Powell, forthcoming). Some of Germany's achievements in this regard are attributed to the "dual principle," i.e. the integration of classroom teaching and training on the job within one curriculum. Dual study programs stand for an upgraded version of this traditional dual concept of learning, given that the higher education institution (or vocational academy) has replaced the vocational school as the major locale for classroom teaching. However, while in the German context dual study programs are very likely to play an important role in the development of vocational competencies in the 21st century, they have thus far remained a mainly German phenomenon (Graf, 2013a).

The rapid expansion of dual study programs also poses the question about their systematic internationalization. Dual study programs were not the result of long-term, strategic planning by policymakers but arose from initiatives of large industrial companies since the late 1960s. And still today their continued expansion is not driven top-down by educational politics. Rather, dual study programs are more often built bottom-up through the cooperation of large and medium-sized companies with higher education institutions (or academies) interested in providing vocationally oriented academic programs (Graf, 2012). In fact, as we illustrate in our historical-comparative study, in rare individual cases dual study programs already today are transferred to other national contexts via the pre-existing global networks of the involved companies and higher education providers.

Research Design and Methodology

While dual study programs have significantly expanded and evolved since their start several decades ago, they only recently have received attention by a broad array of major stakeholders in the German education system. Previously, their development took place rather in a niche or grey zone between the established fields of vocational education and training and higher education (Graf, 2013b). Therefore, so far little is known about the opportunities and challenges related to the transfer of these programs Made in Germany. Thus, we follow an explorative research design and are especially interested in analysing the conditions that could facilitate a successful uptake of dual study programs in the receiving countries. Which cultural, legal, but also local demand-driven conditions are necessary for the successful transfer of dual study programs? Such conditions refer, for example, to the institutional setting comprising the education and training system as well as the industrial and business sector in the respective national contexts. The goal of our study is to measure and make visible the degree of internationalization of dual study programs in Germany and, on this basis, to explore the potential for a systematic transfer of these programs globally.

Given that this relatively new hybrid area of the German education system (see also Deißinger, Aff, Fuller, and Helms, 2013 on hybrid qualifications at the upper-secondary level) is going through an extended period of dynamic change and given the still rather limited literature related to this, we mainly base our findings on expert interviews with key stakeholders in Germany and abroad. The focus is on relevant representatives from higher education organizations as well as firms that are



pioneers in the internationalization and transfer of dual study programs. To analyse the interview data we refer to the tools of theory-guided qualitative content analysis (Gläser and Laudel, 2009). In addition, we analyse seminal studies on vocational training and higher education to look for findings that can be transferred, for example from the discussion around the transfer of classical dual apprenticeship training (upper-secondary level) to the case of dual study programs (see, e.g., Gonon, 1998; Hamilton, 1999; Jacoby, 2001; Thelen, 2004; Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2012; Euler, 2013). Are the chances to successfully transfer and implement dual study programs better than those of classical dual apprenticeship training? We argue that dual study programs must not rely as heavily on a high degree of corporatist governance (which can only be found in a few countries) as does classical dual apprenticeship training at the upper-secondary level. Further, we find that higher education's more theoretical focus and high level of internationalization facilitates transfer of dual study programs.

Case Selection and Outlook

To study the feasibility of the systematic transfer of dual study programs, we compare the German case with the neighbouring country France as well as with four countries outside of Europe, namely the US, Brazil, Mexico, and Qatar. The comparative-historical research design is grounded in two strands of neo-institutional analysis, that is historical institutionalism and sociological organization theory (see, e.g., Powell and Solga, 2010). France and the US signify two ideal-types of educational systems that have often been contrasted with Germany in terms of the structuration of the respective school-to-work transitions (for reviews, see Bernhard, 2014; Fortwengel, 2014; Powell, forthcoming). However, mutual exchange and lesson-learning about education and skill formation (and specific organizational forms) between Germany and these two countries certainly has a long tradition. The educational systems of Brazil and Mexico in Latin America and Qatar in the Persian Gulf are far more dissimilar to the German case, even in higher education (see Powell, 2012 on the Gulf region). However, the economies of these countries are in rapid transition, which implies that many of the relevant local stakeholders are interested in innovative dual educational models. The comparison of the varying institutional conditions in the six countries allows us to draw a number of conclusions about the institutional conditions for the successful transfer of dual study programs also to other countries in these respective world regions.

To summarize, dual study programs have developed in Germany since the late 1960s and represent a rapidly expanding hybrid organizational form at the nexus of higher education and vocational training. Our contribution analyses strategies to internationalize dual study programs in the German context as well as the potential to transfer this specific model of practice-oriented academic education to France, the US, Mexico, Brazil, and Qatar.

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