

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Learning cycles in experiential education show a striking similarity to the PDCA-(plan-do-check-act)-cycle in corporate problem solving (David Kolb, 1974).

A dual system involving multiple rotations with the same company offers an attractive framework to enhance corporate innovation processes by integrating the enterprises with the education of students.

From the beginning in 2002 the dual study programme “Production Technology and Organization (PTO)” at University of applied sciences FH Joanneum had a strong emphasis on integrating SMEs with little or no previous cooperation with higher education.

Dual education seemed to be a good option for bridging this gap during a joint effort to educate young engineers for future challenges within the company.

Several of the partner companies had not yet hired a college graduate but agreed help educate one through dual education.

We will present strategies and methods which we developed and applied to meet growing requests from partner companies to extend this interaction to a wide range of issues, always concerning improvement and innovation in product development and production processes.

Meanwhile PTO and the dual students play a central role in the Austrian industry – university relationship at FH JOANNEUM and for other regional universities.

Dual education in higher education has opened a completely new and innovative channel to SMEs regarding the promotion of innovation. The presentation shows our experiences in Austria, comparing them with activities at other universities and generating new ideas for further improvement of the role of dual programs as a partner to regional industry in coping with the present economical crisis in nations.

Keywords: dual education, production technology and organization, university of applied sciences, networking, partnership to industry, qualification.