



Dual courses of study – the supply and demand situation

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► For years now, Germany has witnessed steadily growing interest in dual courses of study, i. e. degree programmes that combine academic with vocational learning. A prime reason for their growing significance is that by integrating both dimensions they make it possible to equip skilled workers with fully-rounded qualifications for demanding roles in the workplace. This article describes current developments, drawing upon data from the AusbildungPlus (TrainingPlus) database.

CHARACTERISTICS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF DUAL STUDY COURSES

Dual study courses combine a degree programme at a university or a university of cooperative education (Berufsakademie) with vocational training and/or relevant practical employment. This greater emphasis on practical relevance is the key difference between dual and standard degree courses. One special feature is the close integration of academic and vocational content in the curriculum. This is achieved through contractual ties between the cooperation partners, namely the company and the higher education provider.

Dual courses of study can be categorised into four different types (cf. MUCKE 2003), using typological criteria based on the groups targeted by the courses, the content and organisation of the work-experience phases, and the nature and intensity of the cooperation between the vocational and academic sectors. Dual courses of study that *integrate vocational training* and *integrate workplace practice* into uni-

versity studies are intended as initial vocational training for school leavers with a higher education or university of applied sciences entrance qualification. In contrast, dual courses of study that *integrate full-time employment* and are conducted *in tandem with employment* are for the purpose of continuing vocational education and training and are targeted at experienced employees.

Within six to eight semesters, participants in the *integrated-training* study courses can obtain two qualifications: one vocational and one higher education certificate, which enhances their career opportunities in the labour market. Companies see dual courses of study as an important instrument for recruiting and developing qualified junior employees. But greater weight is also being attached to them from the perspective of education policy, which is supporting the expansion of this form of provision. Dual study courses open up transition routes between vocational education and the higher education system and thereby support the concept of lifelong learning. As a further benefit, they may also help to increase the proportion of graduates in Germany.

DUAL COURSES OF STUDY – SUPPLY AND DEMAND

The main providers of dual study courses are the universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen), the universities of cooperative education (Berufsakademien) and, since its foundation in March 2009, the Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University (Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg, DHBW). But a number of universities have begun to recognise the advantages and attractiveness of this form of study and now offer their own dual study courses.

The AusbildungPlus portal – dual study courses at a glance

The AusbildungPlus portal provides a nationwide overview of dual study courses. It has been operated by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training since 2007 with support from the Federal Ministry for Education and Research. The aim is to increase transparency regarding high-quality training provision including supplementary qualifications and dual study courses. The centrepiece of AusbildungPlus is a database containing over 44,000 listings of company-based training opportunities incorporating supplementary qualifications or dual study courses (as of May 2011). Until now the database has only listed the *integrated-training* and *integrated-practice* types of dual study courses. In future, it will also include dual courses of study for continuing vocational education and training.

Online information: www.ausbildungplus.de (in German)

At the last reporting date (April 2010), the AusbildungPlus database listed 776 dual courses of study (cf. Table 1, p. 30), in which 50,764 students are enrolled. A total of 27,900 cooperation links exist between companies and institutions of higher or cooperative education. Some companies may have been counted more than once in the statistics if they provide a variety of study-course qualifications.

Although the universities of cooperative education and the DHBW offer considerably fewer dual study courses than the

Table 1 **Providers of dual study courses** (retrieved April 2010)

Providers	Dual study courses	Participating companies	Students
Universities of applied sciences	394	7,732	17,503
Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University	189	11,810	21,481
Universities of cooperative education	164	8,045	11,213
Universities	29	313	567
Total	776	27,900	50,764

Source: AusbildungPlus in Zahlen 2010

Table 2 **Subject disciplines for dual study courses** (retrieved April 2010)

Subject specialisations	Dual study courses	Participating companies	Students
Economics and Business Studies	319	15,014	27,912
Computing	113	3,403	5,687
Mechanical / Process Engineering	120	3,909	6,987
Electrical Engineering	77	1,944	3,485
Engineering	42	705	1,640
Civil Engineering	29	908	972
Industrial Engineering	28	842	1,546
Social Studies	23	845	1,772
Economics and Social Ethics	12	267	196
Transportation / Nautical Engineering	11	58	355
Mathematics	1	3	210
Architecture	1	2	2
Total	776	27,900	50,764

Source: AusbildungPlus in Zahlen 2010

universities of applied sciences, they register more partner companies and more students per course. Aside from the historical fact that universities of cooperative education have been running dual study courses for considerably longer than universities of applied sciences, this discrepancy is explained by a peculiarity of certain dual study programmes at universities of applied sciences. Whereas the strongly business-led dual study courses at universities of cooperative education and the DHBW are taught in classes of 20-30 students, dual students at universities of applied sciences and universities are not always catered to with specific dual courses. In that case, dual students attend the normal Bachelor's degree classes and seminars, and complete their vocational training or practice phases during a year's work experience before commencing their studies, or otherwise during vacations and a work placement semester.

The majority of dual study courses are offered in business and economic disciplines (cf. Table 2). The predominant combination is a Business Administration degree coupled with training and/or employment in a recognised clerical occupation. Students can choose between different subject specialisations such as Banking, Media Management, Logistics or Business Law. They make this choice in consultation with their companies, taking account of the emphasis of their work-experience role.

Around a third of these study courses are based in the engineering field (e. g. Mechatronics, Electrical Engineering, Vehicle Engineering and Civil Engineering). The study programme can be linked with training in a recognised industrial-technical or clerical occupation, or with training or employment in the IT sector. Special study programmes are also offered for apprentices in the skilled crafts (e. g. the cooperative degree programme in Wood Technology for apprentice carpenters).

Analysis of the data from AusbildungPlus also permits a review of the quantitative development of dual courses of study in recent years. From 2004 to 2010, the number of such courses on offer continually rose (from 512 to 776), but it is striking that the number of students has not grown proportionately (from 40,982 students in 2004 to 50,764 in 2010). While the numbers of dual study courses and companies grew by a good 50 per cent from 2004 to 2010, growth in student numbers was just 23 per cent. This suggests a growing differentiation and specialisation in the subject-related content of dual study courses, coupled with only very modest expansion in the number of places offered.

OUTLOOK

The range of dual study courses has been expanded constantly in recent years, particularly at universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen), universities of cooperative education (Berufsakademien) and the Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University (DHBW). Despite the great interest of education policy and companies in this special form of study, the number of dual study courses has not proliferated unduly because they are highly demanding of time and effort and companies only have limited capacities. It remains to be seen whether universities of cooperative education and the DHBW will continue to record the largest numbers of partner companies and students in future, or whether any shift towards the universities of applied sciences will occur. The majority of dual study courses are offered in business and economics and engineering disciplines. The expansion into previously unrepresented disciplines such as social ethics and social sciences would be one possibility for expanding the overall provision of dual study courses. Further growth potential can be identified, particularly against the backdrop of skill shortages and life-long learning, in continuing-education dual study courses for applicants who are already fully qualified in their occupation. ■

Literature

Bericht AusbildungPlus in Zahlen 2010 (and other annual reports) – URL: www.ausbildungplus.de/html/903.php (retrieved 02.05.2011, in German)

KUPFER, F.; MUCKE, K.: *Duale Studiengänge an Fachhochschulen nach der Umstellung auf Bachelorabschlüsse – Eine Übersicht. Bonn 2010*