

HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM IN HUNGARY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN OF THE NEW DUAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

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Abstract

It is the explicit aim of the Hungarian government to make education better match the needs of the labor market to improve the country's competitiveness. Between 2010 and 2014 the Hungarian system of higher education was completely restructured. One of the key aims was the closer cooperation between educational institutions and local companies. In the winter term 2015/2016 the first dual degree programs in higher education were introduced. Hungarian policy is guided by German ideals and refers explicitly to the model of the Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University. Our contribution provides a short overview of the institutional architecture of the Hungarian approach in a comparative manner.

By means of the framework of the German Science Council, which records different dimensions of "duality" (types of stakeholder involvement, shape of the programs, industrial partners, etc.) we assess if the first outcomes of the reform fulfilled the expectations of the government. We analyze, whether the adopted approach may lead to a better fit of education and the labor market or not. With regard to the traditional structures we identify both advantages and structural weaknesses and suggest amendments.

We conclude that the now implemented form of dual degrees provides no silver bullet to reach an appropriate match of industrial needs and higher education outcomes. Hungary has taken a first step in the right direction, but still does not apply a new institutional model: it is still a desideratum that has to be developed. It will be a sensitive task of educational policy to develop the now existing form further, namely in tune with the stakeholders of Hungarian industry. Hungary needs a smart education policy based on long-term considerations as well as wisely developed university strategies. Both a better involvement of the corporate partners and a closer cooperation with existing players of the higher education system would be advisable. In the long run, universities will face the necessity of a greater change.

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