# Research

# Berufsakademien: Neither here nor there?

by Axel Markert Director, International Relations University of Tübingen

he title of an article in the Deutsche Universitätszeitung in 1996 ("Weder Fisch noch Fleisch") [1] would lead one to believe that Berufsakademien (BAs) are hybrid institutions, belonging neither to the business nor to the higher educational sector.

In a way this is true, and their dual structure does entail strengths as well as weaknesses.

These "university-level academies of professional education" (to quote from a sponsored section of the *International Herald Tribune*) were formally established in 1974 in the German state of Baden-Württemberg as a complement to the existing institutions of higher education: universities, teachertraining institutions (Pädagogische Hochschulen) and polytechnics (Fachhochschulen).

Their aim was to "integrate training facilities of the employment sector and activities of state higher educational institutions in a joint effort at cooperative education of the highest standards" [2].

The BAs remained a Baden-Württemberg peculiarity for nearly two decades, and therefore their graduates often ran into problems of recognition in the other federal states.

Meanwhile BAs, modeled after the Baden-Württemberg institutions, exist in Berlin and Saxony as well, and will be established in Thüringen as of the coming academic year.

In September 1995, the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education of the German states (Kultusministerkonferenz, or KMK for short) finally agreed that the "final qualifications awarded by Berufsakademien ... are final

qualifications at the tertiary level." Therefore, they are considered to be equivalent to Fachhochschule degrees if a number of prerequisites are met:

- The entrance requirements are to be identical to those of the other higher educational institutions. Therefore, the general Abitur is the entrance ticket for the BAs and it is interesting to note that Fachhochschulreife (the admissions requirement for the Fachhochschulen) is not sufficient for BAs.
- A minimum of 40 percent of the total teaching duties have to be fulfilled by full-time professors of the BA.
- Individual BAs must offer at least two different degree programs with a number of special subjects.
- A final thesis has to be completed within a period of three months. It is to be evaluated by an examiner from one of the state Studienakademien (for instance, the academic components of the BAs) who must be a professor.
- Quality assessment and teaching standards are to be controlled by the Studienakademie.

Germany has always taken pride in what has been called its "dual system" — the combination of academic and practical training in secondary and higher education.

In higher education, the Fachhochschulen introduced a cooperative model by making internships a mandatory part of their curriculum.

The BAs went one step further: periods of course work alternate about every 10-14 weeks with onthe-job training throughout the curriculum.

Students at BAs have about 30-34 contact hours per week during their academic semesters, for a total of 2,100 (business administration and social work) to 2,400 (engineering) contact hours — a figure which is roughly equivalent

to the course load at Fachhochschulen.

Some BAs have had even higher course loads (up to 3,000 in engineering). But it seems that, for economic reasons, they will eventually have to settle for loads which are 5 to 15 percent lower than at Fachhochschulen.

A Berufsakademie, then, is a joint venture of the state higher educational system and private business.

Several of Baden-Württemberg's globally-oriented companies originally joined forces with the state administration, represented by the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts to create this new type of institution in 1972.

Dissatisfaction with the existing higher educational institutions certainly played a role in launching this initiative. As elsewhere in the world, industry had long complained about the lack of practical training at traditional universities.

In Germany, the establishment of Fachhochschulen after the 1960s (Baden-Württemberg has more than 20 of them) resulted from that discontent.

Meanwhile there are now eight BAs in Baden-Württemberg (including two with branch campuses) enrolling about 13,000 students who are educated and trained in cooperation with nearly 4,000 companies.

What does the Berufsakademie have that a Fachhochschule doesn't?

Above all, the difference is characterized by a very direct influence of the companies involved.

On the state level, subject commissions (Fachkommissionen) were created that set the curriculum for the different subject areas in business administration, engineering and social work.

One-half the members of these commissions are representatives of

the companies.

The same is true for the liaison and coordination committees (Koordinierungsausschüsse), and the companies are also represented on the examination boards.

It is a unique feature of the BAs that private business is thus granted a say in all matters, practical as well as academic.

To qualify as a "training company," a business must meet specific requirements regarding its size, the qualifications of its training staff and the quality of its training facilities.

A student at one of the BAs is always a company intern at the same time.

In fact, a contract with a company is a prerequisite for enrollment. This contract provides for periods of release by the companies to the Studienakademie for the trainees' study terms.

The companies also provide the students with training allowances of varying amounts for both the academic and the practical periods of their course of study.

On average, companies annually invest close to 70,000 Deutschemarks per student.

The big advantage of this scheme is that a job for the BAs' graduates is practically a built-in feature.

In 1995, 84 percent of the graduates were employed immediately, two thirds of them with the company where they interned.

This very direct relationship between graduation and employment, however, also hides a serious flaw. Student numbers are dictated by industrial demand, and if the general economy slows down, the BAs' enrollment will also decline.

The numbers of first-year students dropped by nearly 20 percent in the period of relative recession between 1990 and 1995.

Some of the BAs have never actually attained the enrollment figures for which they were planned, but most of them are growing again.

It remains to be seen whether a recovering economy will produce the desired numbers.

It is fair to say the BAs could not exist without the universities and the Fachhochschulen from which they recruit, on a part-time basis, the vast majority of their professors.

Many others are practitioners from business.

The high percentage of parttime teachers was obviously a matter of concern for the KMK (see above) when they agreed to give the BAs their stamp of approval.

This is why they have asked that at least two-fifths of the faculty be full-timers.

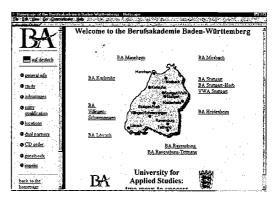
The BAs, on the other hand, see the employment of part-time faculty as one of their major assets because it provides a maximum of flexibility, practical orientation and up-to-date content.

Upon completion of their program, BA graduates are awarded a degree such as Diplom-Ingenieur (BA), Diplom-Betriebswirt (BA) or Diplom-Sozialpädagoge (BA) for engineering, business administration and social work. According to the KMK's ruling, these degrees are considered to be equivalent to the corresponding Fachhochschule qualifications, which carry the abbreviation (FH) following the degree title.

Thus, the internal pecking order of German higher education institutions is not quite as clear as it used to be.

The designation "university," however, remains very much in demand with all of them.

While the Fachhochschulen aspire to be "Universities of Applied Science," some of the BAs would like to be called "Universities for Applied Studies."



For more information, see the BA Website at: www.ba-bw.de.

One man's owl is another man's nightingale, as we say in Germany.

Note: I am grateful to Dr. Ludwig Spielmann of the Berufsakademie Mosbach for letting me have his draft manuscript of an Englishlanguage brochure on the "Berufsakademie Baden-Württemberg [3]." His institution also plays a central coordinating role in international cooperation for all the BAs in Baden-Württemberg. The contact address is:

Berufsakademie Mosbach Arnold Janssen-Strasse 9-13 D 74821 Mosbach, Telephone: 011-49-6261-87-112, Fax: 011-49-6261-87-123, Electronic Mail: ipc@ba-mosbach.de

[1] Markus Collalti, "Weder Fisch noch Fleisch," Deutsche Universitätszeitung, 1-2, 1996 (pp.14 f).

[2] Rudolf Mann, Berufsakademie — An Alternative to University Studies, Stuttgart, 1991 (p.4)

[3] It may be somewhat confusing for the outsider that, in Baden-Württemberg, the term Berufsakademie is used both for the whole network of state BAs (The Berufsakademie Baden-Württemberg) as well as for individual institutions—the Berufsakademie Mosbach. It bears repeating: All BAs have an academic part, the Studienakademie and a training company for each student. The building(s), however, will invariably be called Berufsakademie (not Studienakademie).

➤ See the back page for a directory of Berufsakademien.

# A Directory of Berufsakademien

Also see the BA home page on the World Wide Web: http://www.ba-bw.de.

### Berufsakademie Heidenheim Wilhelmstraße

10 89518 Heidenheim

Telephone: 011-49-7321-38-19-41 Fax: 011-49-7321-38-19-47

World Wide Web: http://www.ba-heidenheim.de/

Electronic Mail: ott@ba-heidenheim.de

### Berufsakademie Karlsruhe Erzbergerstraße

121 76133 Karlsruhe

Telephone: 011-49-721-9-73-55 Fax: 011-49-721-9-73-56-00

World Wide Web: http://www.ba-karlsruhe.de/ Electronic Mail: ihle@ba-karlsruhe.de

### Berufsakademie Lörrach Hangstraße

48 79539 Lörrach

Telephone: 011-49-7621-2071-0 Fax: 011-49-7621-2071-119

World Wide Web: http://www.ba-loerrach.de/ Electronic Mail: info@ba-loerrach.de

### Berufsakademie Mannheim Coblitzweg

7 68163 Mannheim

Telephone: 011-49-621-41-05-0 Fax: 011-49-621-41-05-101

World Wide Web: http://www.ba-mannheim.de/ Electronic mail: info@ba-mannheim.de

### Berufsakademie Mosbach Lohrtalweg

10 74821 Mosbach

Telephone: 011-49-6261-8-71-00 Fax: 011-49-6261-8-75-04

rax: U11-49-0201-0-70-04

World Wide Web: http://www.ba-mosbach.de/ Electronic Mail: info@ba-mosbach.de

## Berufsakademie Ravensburg Außenstelle Tettnang Hofkammerstraße

40 88069 Tettnang

Telephone: 011-49-7542-5-28-11 Fax: 011-49-7542-5-35-89

### Berufsakademie Ravensburg Marienplatz

2 88212 Ravensburg

Telephone: 011-49-751-8-06-27-00

Fax: 011-49-751-1-76-95

World Wide Web: http://www.ba-ravensburg.de/ Electronic Mail: info@ba-ravensburg.de

### Berufsakademie Stuttgart Außenstelle Horb Florianstraße

5 72160 Horb a. N.

Telephone: 011-49-7451-5-21-0 Fax: 011-49-7451-5-21-111

World Wide Web: http://www.ast-horb.ba-stuttgart.de/ Electronic Mail: info@ast-horb.ba-stuttgart.de

### Berufsakademie Stuttgart Jägerstraße

56 70174 Stuttgart

Telephone: 011-49-711-18-49-660 Fax: 011-49-711-18-49-719

World Wide Web: http://www.ba-stuttgart.de/ Electronic Mail: info@ba-stuttgart.de

### Berufsakademie Villingen-Schwenningen Erzbergerstraße

17 78054 Villingen-Schwenningen Telephone: 011-49-7720-3-90-60 Fax: 011-49-7720-39-06-21

World Wide Web: http://www.ba-vs.de/ Electronic Mail: info@ba-vs.de

### Studienakademie der Württ. Verwaltungs- und Wirtschafts-Akademie (VWA Stuttgart) Neckarstrße

88 70190 Stuttgart

Telephone: 011-49-711-2-10-41-45 Fax: 011-49-711-2-10-41-60

World Wide Web: http://www.vwa.ba-stuttgart.de/ Electronic Mail: info@vwa.ba-stuttgart.de



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