

## BLENDED AND ONLINE LEARNING IN A CAREER SERVICE<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper summarizes the situation of knowledge transfer at the Career Service of the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau, Germany, and its diverse offers for students to develop additional qualifications to increase their nowadays highly demanded employability. In the following text, information about the formation of this institution, and about the development, implementation and contents of the currently existing e-learning and blended learning module portfolio will be given. Furthermore, four modules will be introduced: Project Management, MS Office, Leadership Skills and Soft Skills. Subsequently, statistics about the participants will be listed and results will be analyzed. Future prospects about possible further developments are mentioned in the last part, as well.*

**KEY WORDS:** Blended Learning, Career Service, Employability, Knowledge Transfer, Qualification Modules

### INITIAL SITUATION

#### UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES ZWICKAU AND ITS STANDING

As a West Saxon centre of industry and trade, and particularly important location in the automobile industry, Zwickau has enjoyed a long tradition as a home of technological education.

Founded in 1992 the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau (UASZ) continues this long-time tradition in education and research. To this day it has expanded to include locations in Reichenbach, Schneeberg and Markneukirchen.

The program contents (of the 40 study programmes) reflect both the traditions in the field of the automobile industry in West Saxony and modern, innovative ideas and trends using the latest technology.

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Programs in the fields of engineering and economy include Mechanical and Automotive Engineering, Physical Technology/ Computer Sciences, Electrical Engineering and Economics in Zwickau. The academic departments of Applied Arts in Schneeberg, Architecture in Reichenbach as well as Languages and Business Administration, and Health Sciences and Health Care Management in Zwickau establish the third profile of life quality at the University of Applied Sciences.

The UASZ offers a modern academic education i.e. practice-oriented teaching, steadily integrating research and development as well as technology transfer, all by an experienced teaching staff and sophisticated technological equipment. Newly arranged and well equipped lecture and seminar rooms, libraries, laboratories, studios and computer pools with advanced information and communication technologies provide the basis for both a modern academic and practical university training. This is particularly reflected by cooperative training programs and postgraduate courses for full-time and distance learning providing further training facilities for university graduates.

As a modern practice-oriented institute of higher education, the University conducts applied research work with a high level of commitment. Research projects are carried out at the University itself, at the Innovation Centre of Automotive Engineering, at the Research and Transfer Centre or at newly founded institutes associated to departments. As a result, indispensable scientific and technological services are offered for the region and beyond.

The strengths of the University offers in education and research are clearly appearing in regional business contacts. Anyway the number of students has developed continuously. Thus, there are every year round about 1 000 new students, which have to be prepared for their work in industry and research.

#### *LEARNING PROCESS - LIFELONG LEARNING*

Learning is a permanent inner process for individuals of acquiring information, knowledge, skills, etc. It results in outlasting changes of behavior. This process consists of cognitive structures, neuronal networks, biochemical stimulus-reaction chains, and emotions. The intellectual capacity of an individual plays an important role for the success of its learning activities, but also motivation, mood, and the attitude towards learning influencing factors (Ehlers and Schenkel 2005, p. 81).

David Kolb, an American educational theorist focused on experiential learning, outlined his theory of learning styles which consists of the information in our genes, life experiences, and the demands of our current environment (Kolb, Boyatzis, Mainemelis 2001). Thus, experiential learning reflects a crucial part of the lifelong learning process: ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated ambition for obtaining knowledge.

Each individual is involved in a lifelong learning process, always depending on new tasks, challenges, and ideas. For instance, in our more and more project-organized working world, an amount of individuals work in the course of time in different constellations on an amount of projects, dealing with complex data, information and knowledge. Starting a new project or working task needs the establishment of a new working group, where each team member imports its knowledge and competence. On the other side, the fulfillment of the project goals needs special knowledge and/or competence. Thus, there may be a difference between existing and needed knowledge, and it is necessary that the project worker closes this gap by learning.

This project orientated learning improves the individual's knowledge and competence. A part of this knowledge stays also within the organizational knowledge base where the individual is active and influences consequently the organizational learning. But there is also an amount of knowledge that stays only in the minds of the members of the organization. This is lost for the organization, when the member leaves (Argyris and Schön 1996, p. 27). This can be imagined like a cycle of learning with the development of individual tacit knowledge to organizational explicit knowledge by origination, communication, collectivization, and exercising from the individual up to the organizational network. It is the process of organizational learning, in a systemic view the process of organizational knowledge transformation (Wolf and Hilse 2009, p. 125). Organizational learning means a social scientific view on the learning organization with the behavioral patterns, causes and effects, and the examinations about the structure of the organization. The learning process takes place on the different (integrated) levels (a) individual, (b) teams and groups, (c) companies and organizations, and (d) markets and regions. Following, organizational learning includes the individual- and team-level. To reach a high level of sustainability and efficiency it is important to control this process. The crucial influencing factor is the learning objective, which defines what kind of knowledge, which changes, or solutions shall be reached through the learning process. Further, a positive attitude towards learning and learning competence, the ability to learn, are necessary. But also the methodical and didactical learning environment with the individualization and practical orientation of the learning content is indispensable. The goal-directing of the learner needs learning stimulation to see a success for the learning activities. Finally, the learning success should be checked against the learning objectives.

#### *KNOWLEDGE - KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER*

The main component of learning processes is knowledge and its transfer. In the formal learning, at first the transfer of theoretical information and knowledge to the participants (e.g. in a course of study or vocational training) takes place. The result is a cloud of more or less formal knowledge which cannot be completely utilized by the learners. Only the application of the information and knowledge resulting into experience leads to internalized knowledge. The Greek philosopher Plato said that knowledge is a true and justified opinion (Plato and Noble 2003); which means that knowledge exists for an individual, if this individual has a substantiated opinion about it. Exactly this happens, when the student or trainee applies its formal learned knowledge in practical working. The formal knowledge will be reflected and evaluated. These recognitions, added by the new knowledge from the practical project work, reflow to the theoretical knowledge and improve the knowledge base. Hence, the process of knowledge transfer (Bernard and Tichkiewitch 2008) with initiation, knowledge flow, and integration is reality.

Knowledge transfer itself, meaning the knowledge correlation between theory and practice, takes place digitally but also non-digitally. Lots of knowledge will be exchanged by conversation, books, etc.

For optimized knowledge transfer in learning procedures it is important to direct and support the learning outputs with a perfectly fitting compilation of digital media embedded in a didactical concept. These concepts should combine classical or traditional teaching instruments (attendance workshops or lessons) with e-learning components like virtual classrooms, web based trainings, learning-management-systems, etc. The result is called blended-learning which offers learning, communication, informing, and knowledge management independent from place



and time in a mixture with exchange of experiences, attendance-training, and personal meetings.

### *COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT*

Consequently, it is not enough for a learner to just gather knowledge, since the trend nowadays shows a clear direction towards qualification and competence development. Competence is the quality of being adequately or well qualified physically and intellectually. It is an expression of the capability, skill, and (very important) the inner will to solve tasks in a special subject field or problem area. If only the capability and the skill exist, we can talk about a “qualification”. It is there, but does not need to be used. But the practical use and application of the qualification by the individual for the fulfillment of tasks makes a competence out of it. That’s why the term competence is more and more used instead of the term qualification. It is created out of specialized knowledge and practical experience with this knowledge, embedded into lifelong learning.

The term “competence”, developed since the 1990s, is a core part of the (further) educational strategies. However, because of varying definitions it was only hesitantly realized in the study concepts. Consequently, there are deficits in the competence development of students.

Exactly this shortage of competence is shown in long-termed investigations of graduates on their way from study to the practical work. There are deficits in additional knowledge- and competence-conveying. As about 75 percent of the graduates first start to look for a job right after finishing their studies, the problem is obvious that they have several knowledge and competence gaps. That is why a considerable support for the students (while they are in the last phase of their study) is necessary to ensure occupational success.

A survey from 2007 in Saxon universities to find out orientations for outcomes, shows the most influencing factors for securing a better start in the job: practical experiences, expert knowledge, specialization, creativity, and expressiveness. Otherwise, facts like the duration of study or examination marks play a minor role.

Further, more and more graduates - 40 percent and more - work in an internship before they start with the job. This was found out by a German survey in 2007. Actually the companies react to the deficits of the graduates and offer those practical trainings. The goal is to develop and increase the qualifications and competences. However, essentially it is already a task of the universities to prepare the students better for their tasks in the job. There is an enormous need for establishing services for students to achieve special qualifications and competences by the utilization of learning process supporting methods like blended learning.

### *CAREER SERVICES*

Following this idea, Career Services have already been developed since 2003. These institutions were introduced to offer specific courses and trainings for students outside of their regular study programs. They are the central interface between studies and jobs. Their main task is to support the different faculties by preparing their students for the transition into work life, thus increase their employability. Additionally, they serve as a collecting point for employers to publish their internship-, final theses- and job-offers.

As the Career Service Network Germany states, Career Services generally:

- advice students individually about job entrance and career planning,

- support them with application processes,
- inform about jobs and work fields, and
- provide contacts between students and employers. (Das Career Service Netzwerk Deutschland e.V.)

At the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau (UAS Zwickau), no Career Service has been institutionalized until 2009. With the introduction of the project “JOB FACTORY Career Service” in 2009, supported by the European Social Fund (ESF), selective existing impulses have been picked up, concentrated and extended. Moreover, wide-ranging actions have been institutionalized at the University in a central Career Service. The aim was (and still is) to develop and extend a network for young professionals together with mainly regional companies. One core aspect is the supportive conception and introduction of specific, job-oriented key qualifications, seminars, workshops, coaching etc., to prepare students for certain work fields or leading tasks and thus opens the way to a successful career start. Ensuring this goal, job-oriented education offers, as study parts for interested students, are integrated parallelly to the courses of the semester.

#### *MOTIVATION*

The necessity of further education and qualification and skill development, which takes place parallel to the studies of students, is reflected by the constant need of well qualified employees. Thus, an early integration of students into the mainly regional companies is an important task of the Career Service at the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau, to influence the improvement in the sense of a sustainable specialist development in a positive way.

## IMPLEMENTATION

#### *OPINION SURVEY OF THE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES ZWICKAU*

One of the fundamental services of the JOB FACTORY - Career Service is to provide an academic portfolio of different qualification programs for students to increase their employability. Thus, the aim was to offer courses, in a modular structure, which gives students the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in areas that are not or hardly covered during their studies at the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau. The areas covered in these modules were based on a comprehensive survey conducted with a large part of the entire student body right at the developing phase of the new project in 2009/2010. The results have been the foundation for the decisions on the concept of the now existing service portfolio. For this purpose, more than 200 questionnaires, each including 33 questions, have been distributed, answered and analyzed. The main topics of interest were the demands and wishes of students according to additional training programs.

After analyzing the survey's results, three main demands of the students were deduced. They will be depicted in the following passage:

- I. First, the results showed a clear demand for a central contact point at the university which did not exist so far. The students asked for a place where they could go and meet specialized people who can help with specific questions or have necessary contacts, or



generally get the possibility to gain information about application procedures, internships, additional qualifications, business networking opportunities and much more.

- II. Secondly, within this central contact point, students often asked for multiple forms of consulting and placement services. 48 percent of the students that returned the questionnaire asked for an institution that offers counseling, provision and assistance with the search for internships, also closer contacts to mainly regional companies, and topics for final theses and jobs, as well. Deficits of the university have been detected primarily in the provision of internships, final theses and direct entries to companies. The results showed that 46 percent of the asked students answered they have a very high demand and 36 percent said they have a high demand for a central contact point at the university that would provide useful information about application matters and a place where announcements of internships, jobs, etc. are collected and published. (Westfälische Hochschule Zwickau (ed.) 2010, p. 17) Moreover, application counseling and management have been rated as important.
- III. As the third position, the results of the study showed a general need for further education offers, parallel to the studies. A broad service offer was requested, especially with the aim of a better preparation for the professional practice after the studies. The answers depicted how well students felt to be prepared to a professional practice:
  - Only 3 percent felt very well prepared,
  - 52 percent felt rather good prepared,
  - 38 percent said that they are rather bad prepared and
  - 1 percent said that they think of themselves to be very bad prepared for a future job (ibid., p. 40).

Thus, the JOB FACTORY - Career Service aimed to establish more practical experiences by an extension of the regular study program, with the help of specific courses.

Furthermore, the students indicated own deficits mainly in the following areas:

- 30,5 percent said, they do not have enough knowledge in professional experiences and knowledge
- 27,3 percent feel they have most deficits in social competences (communication, presentation and leadership competences)
- 25,7 percent said, they lack knowledge in foreign languages
- 9,1 percent think of themselves they do not have enough proficiency in economics, and
- in each case 7 percent said they lack knowledge about law and taxes and also special professional knowledge. (ibid., p. 40)

Interdisciplinary, the following needs as the foundation of the work of the Career Service became apparent: Offering trainings in key qualifications/multidisciplinary qualifications, which means there is a need in education and training beyond the content of the student's studies. The more key qualifications one person has, the higher his or her market value will be for the companies. In the field of horizontal qualifications, the students asked for more educational support in project management, social competences/soft skills, time management, conflict solving competence and

competences to expand already existing knowledge. When students were asked to assess their own qualifications, among others these were the skills with the overall lowest knowledge level:

	Very well	Rather good	Rather bad	Very bad
Project management	16,3%	49,0%	28,4	3,8%
Time management	21,2%	37,5%	32,2%	7,2%
Leading skills	15,9%	43,8%	31,3%	6,7%

Figure 1: Qualification level (ibid., p. 41)

### CONCEPT AND MODULE DEVELOPMENT

Another important aspect that became obvious during the evaluation of the study was the diversity of statements and wishes when the students had to decide about when they would like to attend the trainings and courses. Generally, the results showed that the majority of the students said the time-coordination of the courses of their studies is “bad” (ibid., p. 33). More in detail, they indicated their thoughts about when the courses should take place:

- 43,3 percent wished for an integration into the general lecture schedule,
- 31,7 percent would like to have one course weekly after their lectures,
- 19,7 percent preferred a block of classes at the beginning of the semester, while
- 15,0 percent favored the block during weekends. (ibid., p. 43)

Thus, concluding these wide-ranging information, the Career Service decided to develop time-flexible courses. In order to react appropriately to the demands of the students, and also to support different learning speeds of different learners, alternative learning forms were developed, such as online and blended learning.

Another decision was to develop a set of modules. The Career Service planned to offer a semester-long series of courses, which are built on one another and go much further into detail. These so called modules will convey a very high level of knowledge and competence. This is why eventually the form of modules was chosen.

### MODULE IMPLEMENTATION

The qualification modules have been implemented methodically and didactically mainly on the basis of the blended learning form. With this arrangement, the advantages of attending-classes (face-to-face contact, direct influence on participant motivation, possibility of team-building) and advantages of e-learning (relative independent of time and place, self-directed learning) can be used. (Westfälische Hochschule (ed.) 2012, p. 68) The results of the student survey and experiences from previous modules showed that the implementation of a purely e-learning system is barely possible, particularly in the field of personal, social and methodical competences. With e-learning, only theoretical content can be conveyed. On the contrary, theoretical knowledge can be applied and practiced on-site within attending-phases. Additionally, during trainings on social and personal competences oftentimes sensitive topics are covered, which require personal contact between the trainer and the students. Contrary to the majority of the students’ preferences to integrate the educational offers into the lecture plan of their studies, this could only be realized



partially. Organizationally it was not possible due to the openness of the modules, which are open for all students from all courses of study and faculties.

Concerning the development of the contents, it took place step by step. First, possible key areas derived from the student's survey and were subsequently differentiated. This led to huge educational fields which then formed the foundation for the specific modules. As second step, concrete key objectives were derived for the single modules to develop a contextual structure. On the basis of these key objectives and the structure, the e-learning-contents were investigated and compiled.

The foundation for the e-learning contents of the qualification modules is a user friendly learning platform. It should satisfy the requirements of the didactic and methodic presentation and implementation of the module contents. Also, in terms of functionality, students, as well as module tutors, should be able to use it easily. Thus, in the year 2010, the concept of the learning platform arose and was followed by the first implementation using moodle. This software was chosen due to its flexibility and versatility.

Based on the results of the study, the following blended and e-learning module portfolio, that is crucial for a successful and swift transition to employment, was planned within the 36-months project:



Figure 2: Blended and E-Learning Modules of the JOB FACTORY - Career Service

### PROJECT MANAGEMENT

E-Learning: 75%

Attendance: 25%

Project Management was the first module. It has been introduced in winter term 2010/2011. In this module, the most certificates have been attained ever since the opening. During the e-learning phases of this module, the students acquire a comprehensive theoretical knowledge about the goals, phases, risks, methods, techniques of project management. Also basic principles of contract management, budgeting, reporting, teamwork and problem solving and project changes are parts of the training. The students have the opportunity to check their state of knowledge with control questions at the end of each section. These theoretical contents will deepen during a five-day

phase of practice or a lecture series which takes place parallel to the semester. Furthermore, these contents will be applied with the help of a concrete case study, or respectively a practical example. After the successful participation of the e-learning part, the answering of the control questions, and the participation during the attendance-classes, all participants will be rewarded with a certificate of attendance by the Career Service. Moreover, now the students fulfill the necessary conditions to acquire the external certification (Basic Certificate in Project Management) of the German Project Management Association (GPM). This certification leans against the project management competence-elements of the ICB (IPMA Competence Baseline). Thereby, the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau also functions as examination centre of the GPM, which lead to a further lowering of the hurdle for the external certification. In preparation for the external certification examination, the possibility of a consultation is provided by the Career Service, together with an expert in project management.

### *MS OFFICE*

E-Learning: 100%

MS Office is the second module that has been developed. It was introduced in the summer term of 2011 and is a pure e-learning module. It consists of two parts: First, in the theoretical part, fundamentals of the operational information management are conveyed. This part ends with a comprehensive multiple choice test, which is completed und automatically assessed via the learning platform. Not until the passing of this midterm exam, the students receive the access to the contents of the practice part. This part then includes tutorials about particular MS Office applications from which the students can pick out their favorites. The contents cover the most important applications, such as MS Excel, MS Word, MS Power Point and MS Access, in different experience levels and also basics about the use of MS Outlook, MS Visio and MS Project. This second part ends with a complex test in which gained competences about the use of MS Word and MS Excel are checked. If this complex test is passed successfully, the students get the certificate of attendance of the Career Service. This also enables them to take part in the external certification of Microsoft (Microsoft Office Specialist). These exams can be taken in a test center at the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau.

### *SOFT SKILLS*

E-Learning: 75%

Attendance: 25%

Soft Skills has also been introduced in the summer term of 2011, as the third module. During this module, the students will acquire a deep knowledge, for instance about job interviews, rhetoric, career planning and individual goals, daily job routines, communication, presentation, time management, group dynamics and conflict management. The attendance classes of the modules Soft Skills and Leadership Skills are carried out in the form of block seminars, either on weekends or during semester breaks. This enables an intensive training of the new abilities. After more than two years of implementing this module concept, this model proved to be efficient and is now widely accepted by the students.



## LEADERSHIP SKILLS

E-Learning: 75%

Attendance: 25%

After the first evaluation of the Soft Skills module, the students showed special interest in leadership skills. This led to the decision to produce a separate module, specially focused on the topic of leadership skills. This module was then introduced in the winter term of 2011/2012.

Soft Skills and Leadership Skills are very similar in structure. Just like in the module Project Management, the theoretical aspects of this topic are conveyed during the e-learning part. Each chapter closes with a short midterm-test (a multiple choice test). Deep knowledge about the basics of application processes, the structure of application documents, leading theory (introduction to leadership, the different leading models and styles, strategic leadership tasks, women in leadership positions, staff leadership and team development, coaching) and many more referring topics are conveyed. The attendance classes are carried out continually in the form of block seminars. There, particularly communication skills and time management skills are trained. After successfully passing the e-learning part, with passing all midterm tests, and after participating at the attendance classes, the students receive the certificate of attendance from the Career Service.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION

The module portfolio of the Career Service at the University of Applied Sciences has been evaluated comprehensively. For that matter, it is crucial to initially define what evaluation particularly is and how it can be classified. The term evaluation is a rather unspecific one. It is used as a paraphrase for versatile assessment shapes. According to James R. Sanders, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation defines evaluation narrowly as the systematic investigation of the worth or merit of an object. (Sanders 2006, p. 28) Though, evaluation does not just define the process of gaining and rating of information, but the result of this process as well. Contrary to academic research, evaluation should provide a concrete benefit. Decisions, especially in the context of control and management processes, can be the final, actual result. Thereby, it supports a transparent shaping of processes, documentations of impacts and demonstrations of correlations. (Stockmann 2006, p.65f) Thus, questions about effectiveness, efficiency, costs, implementation etc. can be answered. Therefore, evaluation contributes to the support of the management with the improvement of the quality of services and, as a result, can be seen as part of the quality management. (ibid., p. 66f) Generally, evaluations can be conducted by internal or external experts. In the case of internal evaluations, the organization, offering the services to be evaluated, carries out the evaluations on its own initiative. A special form of internal evaluation is self-evaluation. Here, the evaluation is carried out by those employees or organization units who offer and supervise the services to be evaluated. On the contrary, the external evaluation is conducted by experts who do not belong to the organization offering the services to be evaluated. (ibid., p.80f)

The evaluation of the service portfolio of the Career Service comprises two elements: each module has comprehensively been evaluated by external experts. They examined the modules, the structure with regards to content, and learning goals. Additionally, the gained knowledge was tested. Not just the contents and regarding aspects, but also all processes that are connected with the module have been analyzed. This includes the advertisement for the extracurricular module portfolio among students, the enrollment process, the support and care for participants on the learning platform,

as well as the used literature. Though, the external evaluation already began before the actual start of the modules. Thus, the analysis and planning phase, including the assessment of the students' survey, has been evaluated. The evaluation then leads towards concrete recommendations for the improvement of process procedures and possibilities for the further development of the service portfolio as well. This comprehensive and holistic consideration of the module construction and implementation by external experts enables well-grounded decisions on the continuation of the modules.

The internal evaluation is carried out constantly and immediately after the completion of the modules or the module sections. Here, the e-learning contents and attendance parts are evaluated separately and very soon afterwards. The evaluation is carried out with the help of questionnaires, which have to be completed by the module participants. These questions are distributed by the staff of the Career Service to the students in person or sent via e-mail. The inquiry about the contents particularly includes questions about the content of the chapters, about comprehensibility, structure, learning success, difficulties and the technical framework conditions (learning platform). Additionally, there is the option for communicating concrete suggestions and notes with a free text field. Based on the inquiry results, the learning contents and the technical environment will be improved and further developed continuously. For the attendance classes, the evaluation questions specifically ask for details about the qualities of the lecturer and if the contents have been communicated successfully. This inquiry particularly serves as a feedback for the lecturers to enable conclusions for the future designing of their attendance classes.

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## RESULTS

The service portfolio of the JOB FACTORY - Career Service is widely accepted by the students of the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau, with about 5000 students, and by numerous companies. This confirms the necessity of these training offers. More and more companies specifically search for Career Service institutions at universities because they are now well established organizations in Germany.

Since the launch of the Career Service at the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau in the year 2009, 576 participations in the four offered modules of the JOB FACTORY - Career Service have been counted (multiple counting is possible; status as of 14. August 2014). The majority of the students registered for the MS Office module, possibly due to the fact that this one is a 100 percent e-learning format with 100 percent flexibility in time and place. Project Management is the second favorite module with 185 participants, but more students manage to finish it successfully with a certificate (122 = 65,9 percent finishing rate) in comparison to the MS Office module. There, only less than half of all participating students (104 = 39,5 percent finishing rate) stayed in the course until the certificate. Additionally, 78 students registered for Leadership Skills, where 43 (= 55,1 percent finishing rate) succeeded. The module Soft Skills has been passed by 20 (= 40 percent finishing rate) out of 50 students. Thus, it can be summarized that Project Management and Leadership Skills have had the best success-rates of all offers at the Career Service so far.

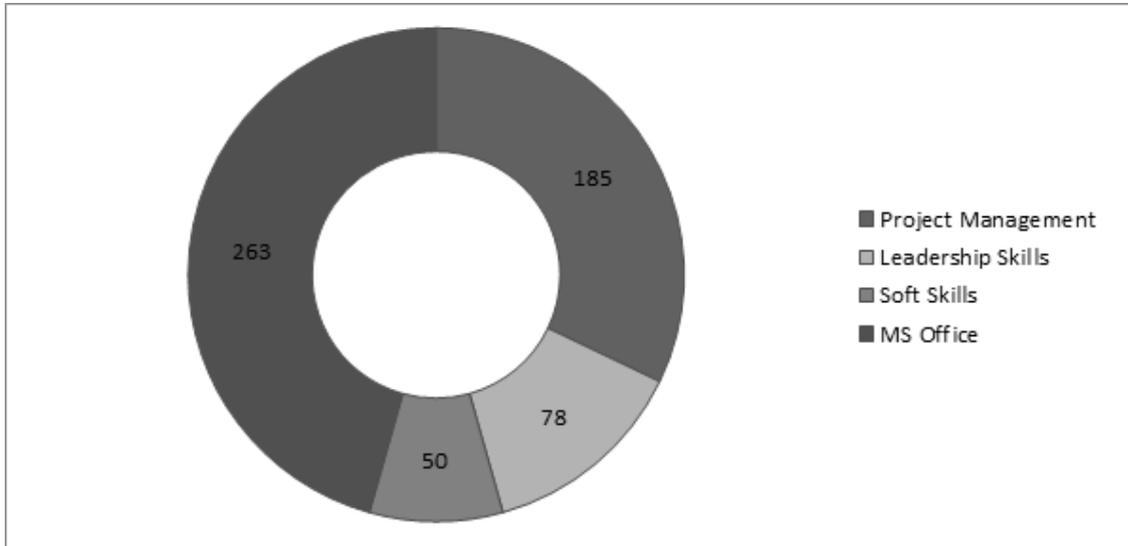


Figure 3: Distribution of all participants since 2010

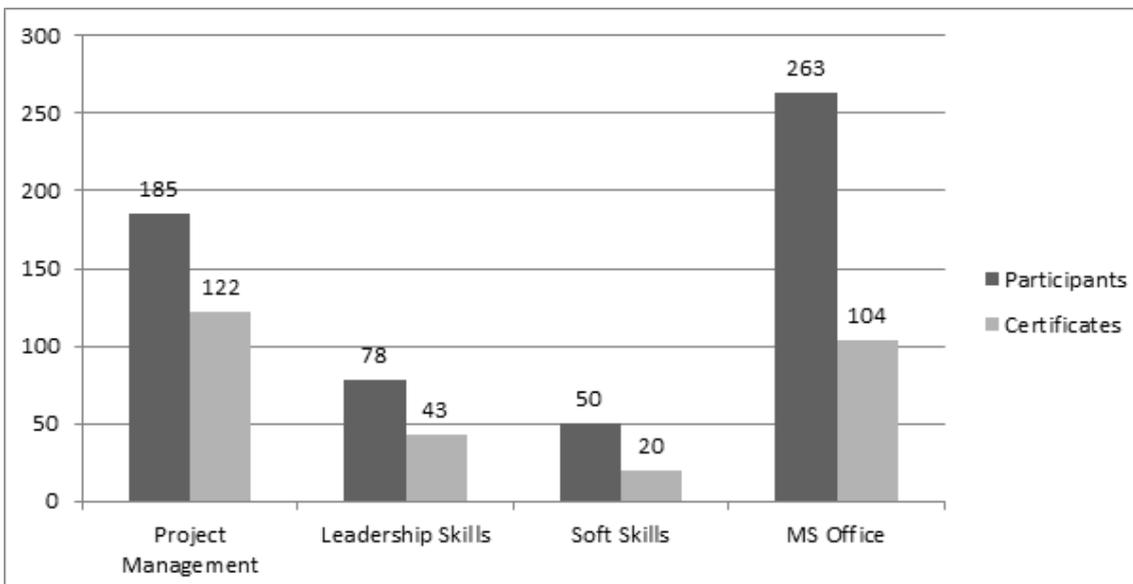


Figure 4: Number of participants and certificates since 2010

All qualification modules are currently still running, which means some students cannot yet be counted as successfully finished participants. However, here are the numbers of the registered students at the moment:

- MS Office: 56
- Project Management: 32
- Leadership Skills: 17
- Soft Skills: 8.

For the drop-out rate of the modules of the Career Service in Zwickau, there have been named several reasons by the participants why they did not finish the courses. One major reason, which has been mentioned more often than not in the evaluations, was the high amount of effort and especially time that students have to spend to finish the training. Even though the courses are mostly online and therefore flexible in time, a lot of learners underestimated the additional effort for completing the qualification modules successfully with a certificate.

To ensure the quality standard of the university, for development of the special modules internal as well as external experts are involved. The internal partners are represented by professors, which are also available throughout the module period for technical and scientific steering and support for the students. For external partners will always paid attention to the experiences in each area, so that the award goes to the most qualified.

Through years of cooperation, a good network of lecturers, professors and other qualified mentors has been built. By use of this network it has succeeded to imply lectures by special experts (e.g. managers) into the university to discuss professional everyday topics with the students or edit practical case studies.

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES

Due to the reasons of a proceeding flexibility of study offers, as well as the increasing requirements for the employability of Bachelor students as part of the Bologna process, the need for qualification offers is further rising too, additionally to the contents within the curriculum. The regular learning contents of the students are already very extensive and normally with a high presence in the compulsory courses, therefore additional courses in a blended learning format offer an ideal supplement. With this concept, theoretical contents can be conveyed as e-learning courses and, moreover, can be kept up-to-date easily. The students can work on the contents whenever and wherever they want. As a consequence, the attendance part of the modules can be used exclusively for the deepening and the application/ training of the new competences. Great potential lies here in the addition of e-learning contents by different universities. They could supplement one another's courses. For this purpose, in Saxony (one of the 16 free states of Germany) an appropriate technical environment already exists in the form of the standardized learning platform OPAL. It is managed by the participating universities corporately. On this learning platform all students of the respective universities are already registered as users. This enables an easy and common usage of the learning contents. Only the attendance classes still have to be carried out on-site.

Further potentials also lie in the development and introduction of MOOCs, which are open learning



videos. This could provide a possibility to gain new qualifications not just for the students of the University of Applied Sciences Zwickau and regional university alliances, but for worldwide spread participants. Thus in conclusion, there are several possibilities to further develop the service portfolio of a Career Service and opportunities for students to increase their employability. The path for a lifelong learning framework is paved by now.

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