



# **DEVELOPING PRACTICAL TRAINING PROCESS**

**Case: International Business -programme of  
Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences**

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**Development Project Report  
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Abstract  The development project report starts by assessing the background (legal and strategic) and theory of Career-Development models that have an effect on setting up a tutoring process for Practical Training. Building on that background, as well as on the feedback from external and internal surveys and identification of best practices and new tools that could be taken in as a part of the Practical Training –tutoring process of IB programme, development ideas for a good Practical Training process are found. The development report proposes a development action plan – steps to be taken and their tentative timetable of developing the given activity in the assignor organisation.		
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Tiivistelmä  Kehittämishankkeen aluksi esitellään ja arvioidaan lailliset ja strategiset taustatekijät sekä urakehitykseen liittyvät teorit, jotka vaikuttavat Työharjoittelun tutorointi-prosessin laadintaan ja toteutukseen. Tältä taustalta, ulkoisen ja sisäisen palautejärjestelmän kautta saadun tiedon pohjalta sekä parhaiten käytänteiden ja uusien toiminnallisten työkalujen tunnistamisella kartoitetaan kehittämisideoita International Business-koulutusohjelman työharjoitteluprosessin kehittämiseksi. Kehittämishankeraportti ehdottaa kehitysohjelman ko. toiminnan kehittämiseksi toimeksiantajaorganisaatiossa – toteutettavat toimenpiteet ja niiden järjestys ja aikataulu.		
Avainsanat (asiasanat) työharjoittelu, työssäoppiminen, tutorointi		
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## **ABSTRACT AND APPROACH**

This development looks at one educational process – Practical Training (later in this report referred as PT) – inside the International Business (IB) Programme, part of the school of Business Administration in Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences.

The process in question is one of the key content pieces of all schools programmes in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, defined to be an obligatory part of the study path in the Law and Statute of Universities of Applied Sciences. Its duration and targets are precisely described in the curricula, and also many national and school-level measurements are used in assessing the success in running these processes.

The Practical Training –process and the present of quality of it was identified as one of the biggest challenge areas of the Programme in question, and the Development Work was launched to find the right basis and practical steps ahead to improve the process to better serve the needs of all parts of PT process: The learner (student), the school and the workplace.

The approach was very much hands-on, moving from a realistic target setting for improvement to the justified view on the current status of things and then finding the best practices and principles to be applied to the Practical Training process. As the final result a “development roadmap” – action plan with time-frame for the development is proposed.

The research and writing process is introduced more precisely in the Chapter 1: Introduction.

Keywords: Career, Practical Training, Tutoring, Working life

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND THE KEY CONCEPTS

The foundations of this development work were laid already some 20 months back when the author was recruited to be part of the faculty at the International Business (later in this report IB) Program at Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences. The organisation of the programme is small in students/teacher ratio, which means there are limited resources both for teaching as well as non-classroom teaching activities (tutoring, R&D work etc.). Therefore the job descriptions are important and both the faculty and the students must be well aware of the running and developmental responsibilities each and every faculty member has. The head of the programme had earlier identified 3 main areas where IB must take developmental action.

The two previous parts where the "IB Process" had been developed were:

- Project tutoring – a teacher in the IB-programme was assigned to be in charge. In practice this means that all projects, when initiated, are run via his desk so he has got an overall view on projects ongoing, as well as the acceptance of study credits is at the end his right and responsibility, even though an individual project might be tutored by other teachers depending on the subject and the time resources.
- Thesis Process – one of the lecturers in IB programme was assigned to develop and structuralise the process. The key idea was to make sure things concerning the Thesis are done in proper manner, all necessary steps are taken and formalities covered. Still, all teachers contribute into the tutoring of the thesis, but under the framework developed by the lecturer. The development of this part was her development project for Vocational Teacher studies 2005-2006.

The remaining part of the puzzle is Practical Training process that is assigned to belong to the role of Lecturer in Management, the position I currently hold and that includes e.g. the teaching of Human Resource

Management. So the learning gathered in this development project would support the evolution of the teaching of the undersigned, as well as helping in keeping the contact with the demands of the working life today. This development project aims at finding the base on which to build the Practical Training –process of International Business-programme as well as to create a clear and time-lined action plan for the improvement of the process.

As the terminology related to the issue is in various literature sources as well as in e.g. in the official documents of the University in different meanings and contexts, in the following some key terms and concepts are defined, that hold throughout the text.

The report touches the area that in the Curriculum of the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences is titled “Practical Training”. E.g. in the national HARKE-initiative the same issue was referred as “placement”. For the transferability of the ideas and findings of this development project, as well as for the general readability of the report, it is good to clarify some key concepts and how they are utilised in this project.

In the final phase of preparation of this report some organisational changes inside JUAS were announced, as the published proposals are still during the reporting phase tentative and lacking the confirmation of the University Board they are not treated in this report.

The definitions that follow are not any official definitions from textbooks or dictionaries, but they represent the way I have understood them and used them in my project.

Key Concepts and terminology:

Practical Training (PT)

A period limited in time and scope, during which a student works as a part of an organisation, either full-time or part-time. All parties, the student, the school and the organisation undersign a



common document, a Practical Training Plan. In addition the student may write a separate work agreement with the organisation. Work done during Practical Training –period can be paid or un-paid, depending on the agreement between the Trainee and the organisation. A synonym for PT would be “Work placement”. Student will be credited in ECTS for Practical Training based on the length in weeks of PT period and work hours/week.

### Project Studies

A form of studies where the students are performing a separate, defined task to an organisation, without being even part-time employed by the organisation in question. For these studies students earn ECTS –credits based on the time-based workload.

### Tutoring

The activity of the school where the faculty members provide support and guidance to students (outside the taught courses mentioned in the curriculum) in relation to their studies, career planning etc. Also the resources for tutoring in faculty member’s job description and resource plan is most often separated from teaching. Depending on the University, School and Programme the tutoring can take many different forms e.g. in its formality and number of tutors participating into it.

### Career

The professional development path of an individual, normally consisting of series of jobs/positions that follow each other in time. Usually, but not necessarily the job following another involves more responsibility than the previous one.

## Working life

Most often referred in the educational terminology when talking of applying the knowledge acquired in the school to the work on the professional field. In short, it is the out-of-school environment, where the workers participate to the daily operations of the organisations.

## Practical Training Process

All activities that are linked to executing the Practical Training-part of curriculum and individual's study plan. As the Oxford's Advanced Learners dictionary defines the word "process": "A Series of things that are done in order to achieve a particular result", in this case applying student's skills to the operations in working life.

## 2. THE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT MISSION, MOTIVATION AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. The organisational request for the development project

The way the head of the programme International Business Matti Hirsilä put his demands for the Practical Training - development project were:

1. The backbone is the basic mission and strategy of JUAS (“educating professionals for the needs of the business community, regional development etc”.) A closer visit at JUAS Intranet website tells it exactly in these words:

“All the employees of Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences are committed to our core promise "Creating Competence", which means that we (JUAS, 2007).

- recognise and anticipate the strategic development needs of the operating environment
- transform these needs into innovative processes of education, learning and development
- develop working life based on knowledge, experience and familiarity with working life

2. As the official measurements, e.g. the unified OPALA-feedback, common feedback system mastered by the Ministry of Education, are largely based on the feedback of the graduated students, formalising the tutoring principles will help the students to recognise the tutoring given. This should lead to better performance in these official indicators, even though the development taken now will only reach its full effect after all students taken part to enhanced tutoring have graduated, meaning up to 4 years of “inertia” – force of slowness - in these measurements.

3. Deriving from point 2, we need quicker and more open constructive feedback from students than e.g. OPALA-system can give, so developing these analytical tools to improve our reaction capability is needed.
4. Covering all e parts in the IB educational process: We are committed to continuous improvement of quality and we have the aim of being among the top performers in the “matters that matter”, using as a measuring-stick other programs in JUAS as well as comparable programs outside. Good process management of Practical Tutoring is one proof of good quality.

## 2.2. Researcher motivation and orientation

My own interest to the subject was there as well right from the start. I came to teacher career from an industrial organisation that employed many people with Bachelor of Business Administration –degree but I was not too well aware of how and how much they had been tutored before entering to working life. At the same time I realised that my background is biased, my own experience is dominated with one specific industry and mainly certain functions in it, even though at the same time I can say that environment I have most worked in, with all its internationality, is not totally opposite to the targeted professional profile of our IB students. The IB students come from many countries, work in many different cultures and industries, so the question that came to my mind was: What kind of a tutoring set-up would serve if not all at least most students' needs when preparing for a period in Practical Training?

Moreover, we can not separate the developmental issues concerning the teaching we give from the larger societal development and educational policy of Finland. The published guidelines from highest authorities of Education in Finland state that the Finnish university sector will be also in the future developed based on so called dual-model, where the Universities of Applied Sciences have their strengths in the teaching based on practical working life needs, whereas the “Science Universities” are

strongly research-focused. Both end of the dual-model will anyway need structural renewals – also in the number of institutions.

This means that to have a future success, University of Applied Sciences in Jyväskylä and its programmes must:

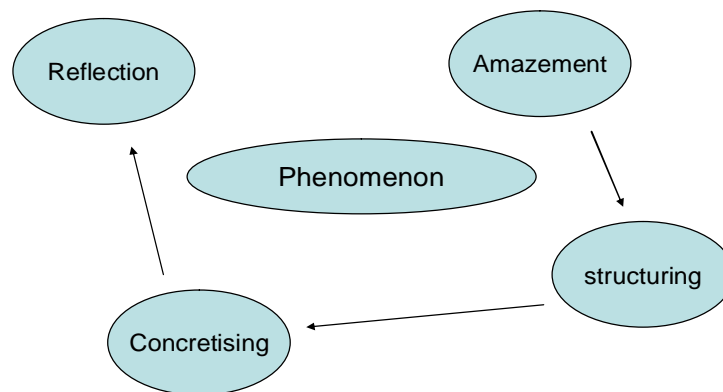
- be among the top Universities of Applied Sciences to secure its existence and adequate resources
- be able to demonstrate its reason of being – also in comparison to the traditional Science Universities – by showing its teaching contributes positively to the needs of the working life

The University sector in Finland is still in an era, where old structures are trembling but new ones are still under negotiation/construction. Also the international references on how to model the education are not that easy to find, as the German and Swedish “Fachhochschule” and “Yrkeshögskolan” are closest to the Finnish system, whereas e.g. the English and US systems are quite different, the difference of the names and educational systems can show e.g. in difficulty to create international peer institution networks.

### 2.3. The research strategy and methods

The process view of my research process can be described as shown in the following figure: The Phenomenon in the middle can naturally in case of this research be formulated to be: “A GOOD PRACTICAL TRAINING PROCESS”,

## Enquiry to one's own work



Based on Tuovi Leppänen's presentation at Vocational Teacher Training college, Jyväskylä 11th March 2008

Figure 1: The schematic model for my development work

As the result of the Amazement and Structuring phases, the following Mind Map was created – and updated a few times – before reaching the “final” version, that served also as the content plan for the report:

# Mind Map for the Development Project

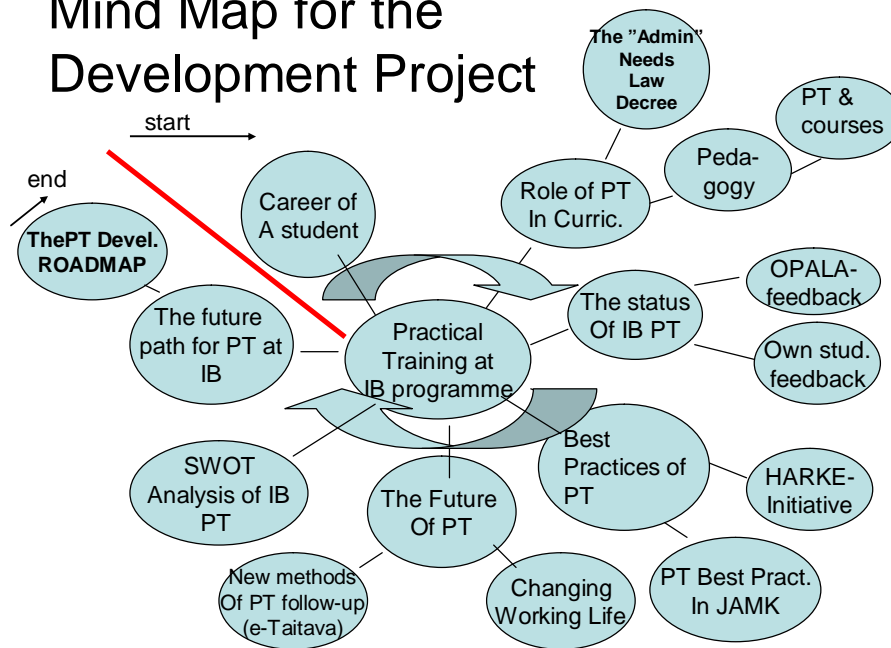


Figure 2: The mind map and framework for the content plan of my project

### 3. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK –ROLE OF PRACTICAL TRAINING IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND WORKING LIFE EXPERIENCE IN LEARNING

#### 3.1. The concept of a career and related theories

As Bill Law writes, the career-learning theories are numerous and they are in constant change. The rough description based on two dimensions: Psychological vs. Sociological approach and Structured vs. Interactive approach give 4 basic types of theories:

	Psychological	Sociological
Structured	Trait-and-factor theories	Opportunity-structure theories
Interactive	Self-concept theories	Community-Interaction theories

Table 1: Four main groups of career-theories

Although it has never been clearly written down, one can say that the idea behind career-related activities at IB programme is based on the interactive approach. The Trait-and-factor theories are (presented in a simplified way) based on matching idea. Finding what the person is about and then taking this “self” to the place (position, career) where the harmony with the environment can be found. Opportunity-structure theories are also more based (Law) on the approach that people are chosen to jobs and thus careers rather than they would be choosing the job they will land to. A social position is a central feature studied when taking this theoretical viewpoint. For example the recent phenomenon of “break of psychological contract” as well as the views of the generation that now approaches the employability-age (“Generation Y”) contrasts sharply with this line of theory.

The remaining approaches match better with the School’s and Faculty’s view on what careers and also learning at work is about.



In Self-concept theories person is seen as an interactive self, developing through life stages – and when doing so experiencing changing motivations and other feelings about work.

In Community-Interaction models the underlying assumption is that people act **FOR** and **IN RESPONSE** (capital letters by me in order to underline these points) to other people. Social exchanges such as interpersonal feedback, modelling and expectations are important in this process.

One can argue that all working life is nowadays more understandable through the framework of social and interactive approaches. I think especially the professional field that is the target of our students: International Business and careers and Practical Training -periods in that professional field, is definitely a field where these approaches are very valid. Still naturally we must bear in mind the psychological side, development of a unique individual, and in which development this Professional side is only one part.

Some theoretical background is needed for understanding the phenomenon and thus for being able to start developing it, but it is the practical steps in career management process that make the career process and its tutoring something less abstract to analyse and start to act upon.

Jennifer Kidd (basing on Herriot and Pemberton's work) proposes following pieces should be put together to form a satisfactory individual career management model:

1. Include notions on individual's career purpose or direction
2. Focus on skills for lifelong planning and negotiation and attitude towards change, as well as knowledge and understanding of the self and the situation
3. Be contextualised, reflecting knowledge of the organisational career context as well as other potential contexts. Monitoring and understanding the human resource systems and wider moves on labour markets is vital.
4. Be interactive, taking in account the relationship between the individual and the organisation and their conflicting interests. Individuals must

create an understanding of power relationships within the organisation and negotiating in that setting.

5. Have a temporal perspective, encompassing constructions of the past and ideas about future possibilities. The skills of systematic reflection on experience and action planning are fundamental in the face of changing labour markets.
6. Incorporate notions on career resilience; the capacity to cope with uncertainty and insecurity, and the confidence to challenge exploitative practices in the workplace.

### 3.2. The role of Practical Training in learning

The Practical Training is not only an obligatory demand for any student to graduate, but a part of learning that aims at maximizing the post-studies employability. This employability is also one of the measured variables in the Finnish OPALA-feedback-system, where position of graduated students on the labour market is measured after their graduation.

One can say that tutoring of the Practical Training has to be seen from two different and somewhat contrasting angles:

- As a separate and defined part of the given study path leading to a degree (e.g. Bachelor of Business Administration), that can be and must be tutored as a rather unified process from the tutoring part (School/teachers)
- A unique learning experience (for all parties – workplace, learner, tutor) that never repeats itself exactly in the same form.

To strengthen the latter statement, a quote from Ritva Nurminen (2007) summarises well the uniqueness of the learning situation that can not be ignored: “When professional competence is understood as a relation between the demands of the operating environment and the competencies of the actor, the natural consequence is that assessment on the competence can not be limited only to the characteristics and capabilities of an individual, but they must be assessed against the demands of the operating environment”.

A consequence of accepting Nurminen's viewpoint is that the workplace and the learner taking his/her Practical Training there should be the focal point in Practical Training tutoring. The School process should stay in the background, rather supporting the individuality of experience than downgrading it.

As the summary report of a Scottish initiative "Learning to work" (2004) states, word "employability" carries various meanings:

- post-course success in employment
- matching supply to of provision with demand from industry/employers
- something that "we do anyway" – after all, the vocational curriculum is designed with employers' needs in mind
- "core" or "transferable" skills
- "enterprise skills"
- something that the careers advisors deal with
- an enforced government agenda that is inconsistent with academic values
- ...and so on

Despite the lack of common and final definition, it can easily be seen that even though the employability is a property/characteristic of one individual person – and that the final responsibility of employability lies with the learner himself -, the role of the teaching institution and employers and their common understanding and agenda is crucial to support the possibility of employability developing in a learner. The "learning stakeholders", including the authorities responsible for educational policy creation and quality follow-up, should share the same view of the role of Practical Training and its role in employability. The model should be a triangle rather than any flow chart giving Practical Training just a time-slot in the student's learning plan.

## The triangle model

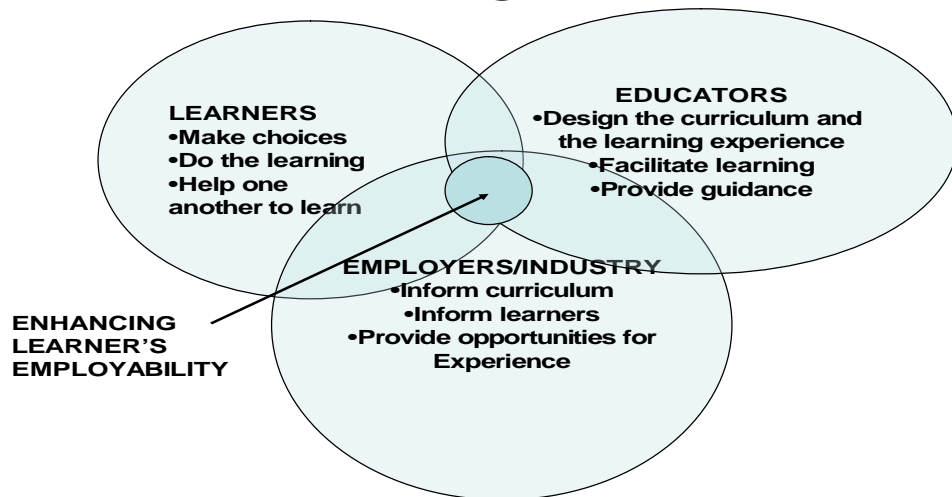


Figure 3: Triangle model of enhancing the employability of the learner (Scottish Founding Council (SFC), 2005)

“Learning at Work” –initiative proposes an “Iceberg”-model, that shows the two separate sets of skills related to the interest of the learning stakeholders. It is evident that without a meaningful combination of school teaching and practical training the skills – especially in business education, where exact technical skills needed are not that easily to define in comparison to e.g. nursing and thus to include in the curriculum is close to impossible.

## The Iceberg Model of skills related to the employability



Figure 4: Model of skills related to employability (Scottish Funding Council, SFC, 2005)

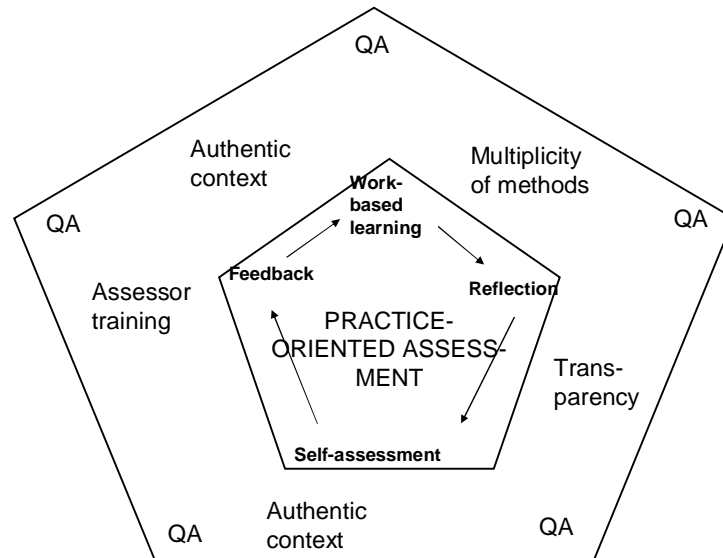
As a conclusion the “Learning at work” –report proposes that to enhance their personal employability – with support from the educators and employers, the learners need to:

- have the motivation and the tools to make effective and informed choices about learning, training and employment throughout their lives
- build up their achievements – their knowledge and understandings, skills and attributes – in ways that are relevant to the labour market
- learn how to recognise their achievements and understand how these are relevant to the labour market
- learn how to understand employers’ needs and how to make their achievements relevant to employers

It is easy to draw the conclusion that a well-planned and executed Practical Training -period can make a big difference to the learning experience of all parties. And also a successful PT-period reaches the main target: To enhance the employability of students, that will then contribute positively to the reputation and cooperation possibilities of the School and the programme with working life.

### 3.3. Towards practice-based assessment

A model of elements of good practices to be included to a practice oriented-assessment process has been proposed by Stenström and Laine (2006). A full and final Practice-Oriented assessment model can most likely never be made complete in a way that it would cover all cultures, industries and individual Practical Training-experiences. However, elements and their relations can be picked for the model to be used in varying circumstances. In the figure the factors can be interpreted to represent the activity environment and the learning process. The inner circle describes the learning process assessed by using practice-oriented methods. The outer circle represents the activity environment of the practice-oriented assessment itself. As the figure shows these environmental factors act as constituents of quality assurance (QA).



Stenström, M-L & Laine, K: Towards good practices for Practice-oriented education  
 In European Vocational education, Institute for Educational Research, University of  
 Jyväskylä, 2007

Figure 5: Towards good practices for Practice-oriented assessment

One can compare the idea of the Stenström/Laine -model to the common practice of today: In current implementation of Practical Training the process and its steps today is much built around the inner circle, which is rather natural, as stated in our pedagogical strategy, the learner is in the centre of our pedagogical process.

However, to improve the total quality of the PT activity, we must find ways where our practice-related educational aims are made clearer and agreed with the working life where PT periods actually happen ("in the model named "Assessor training" and joint "assessment"). Also we must be able to evaluate the working life placements and their success, as that is valuable information to coming student generations. As stated in the opening chapters of this report, the only possible way to do that in an international context may be taking into use a unified assessment platform (e.g. e-Taitava application, see Chapter 6), that serves as a meeting point between all parties involved in the process: student, workplace supervisor and the tutor/school. However, there is a need for joint and comparable quality development inside the University of Applied Sciences and inside its schools that the decisions concerning moving from pilots to regular use of new applications should be done on rather central/high level.

## 4. THE EFFECT OF LEGISLATION, PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY AND CURRICULUM TO PRACTICAL TRAINING

### 4.1. The frames given by the Polytechnic Act and Decree

The law about Universities of Applied Sciences (9.5.2003/351) already in its early paragraphs where the basic tasks and role of UASs are stated, shows clearly the working life connections to be one of the main constituents of the contents of work at UASs (both for teachers as well as for students): (FINLEX, 2003):

Law 351/4§;

- The tasks of universities of applied sciences

The task of UASs is to give higher education based on the demands of working life and its development and research-based and artistic backgrounds aiming at professional expertise, support the professional growth of an individual and practice Research and Development –activities that support the education of UAS, supports the working life and regional development taking in account the specific demands of the surrounding economic environment. UASs give and develop also adult education in order to maintain and develop working life competencies.

351/5§

- Cooperation with the operating environment

While performing its main tasks the UAS must be in cooperation especially on its own operational region with the business and other working life as well as with other Finnish and International Institutions of Higher Education and other educational entities.

Comparing these frames to the ones given to “Traditional” Universities FINLEX (Law about Universities 27.6.1997/645), it is easy to see that

emphasis is there on the scientific side of the operation, as clearly as the working life orientation is there for UASs.

In the Law about Universities of Applied Sciences it is even listed that part of the teaching leading to the targeted degree can be arranged to happen at workplaces (17§). Also the required capabilities of teachers take in account this demand of working life experience. "A senior lecturer or lecturer, whose teaching tasks include mostly arranging professional studies, a minimum 3 years of practical working life experience is demanded in the tasks corresponding degree is question. (23§)

The Decree of Universities of Applied Sciences (Valtioneuvoston asetus ammattikorkeakouluista 15.5.2003/352) in its 7<sup>th</sup>§ puts up a more detailed purpose and framework to the role of Practical Training:

"The target of Practical Training is to make, supported by tutoring, the student familiar with the working life tasks that are in line with especially the professional studies and prepare the student to apply the skills and knowledge in working life. "

In summary, no UAS, School or Programme is able to run a degree programme without including the Practical Training it is core contents. How in Practice the Practical Training and its tutoring is arranged, is left to be outlined in detailed in the Pedagogical Strategies and Curriculum work of UASs and their individual Schools

#### 4.2. Role of PT in the pedagogical strategy of the school

To avoid too many organisational level strategies, I do not go in detail to the (Pedagogical) strategy of the whole JUAS. Here below are the main points – the ones related to Practical Training - from the JUAS School of Business Administration, of which the Programme of International Business is part of.

In the opening paragraph of the Pedagogical Strategy of the School of Business Administration of JUAS there is a reference that shows the basement of the Pedagogical strategy being in the Vision, Mission and Values (responsibility, trust, creativity) of JUAS. As a whole institution JUAs has not



defined its pedagogical strategy. This is understandable, as the diversity of its Schools and Programmes would limit that strategy to be of overly general nature and thus giving very little practical help in methodological and curricula planning.

According to its own mission of the School of BA is a regionally renowned and well-known educator of experts in business and a cunning developed of SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) that has significant activity based on the demands of the surrounding business community. This way the School of BA aims to develop inside its operational region new knowledge and capability, wellbeing and competitiveness.

The Pedagogical Strategy of the School of BA lists also some concrete strategic goals to be reached by 2008. Again I include into this report the ones out of total 5 goals that have the most direct link to Practical Training (underlining of some parts by me).

Goal 2: Versatile high-quality learning environments that encourage the learner to individual thinking and “learning to learn” :

Learning occurs in schools, in working life and in virtual environments. With the help of these learning environments the school prepares the students to be able to act in an international environment. Inside the School a forum of learning – consisting of physical, social and virtual environment – will be built. On that forum education, development activity and research as well as cooperation with business life will take place.

Goal 3. Profiling of the programmes, systematic pedagogical planning and a curriculum leading to high-level competences:

The mission statement of the school (under renewal, this is a tentative version): School of BA educates competent business professionals, capable in development of regional business-life and problem-solving... Individual programmes profile themselves by clarifying their own basic idea: What, How and Why. The target is to create an educational offering that is sufficiently unique, so that a potential student sees it as unique and thus competitive choice... Teaching contents - What? - are based on the professional profiles

and professional qualifications needed in the future, the core competences of the programme(s) and the competency requirements of the working life.  
Methodological choices – How? - (Problem-Based-Learning, project-based learning and Team Academy method) promote entrepreneurship and general readiness to the working life.

#### 4.3. Specific challenges in tutoring Practical Training in International Business

The programme at hand is a specialised programme inside the School of Business Administration in JUAS. These special features have their effects on the Practical Training Process and its tutoring. These features that distinguish the programme from some others are e.g.:

- The small size of the annual student intake (30 students/year, from 2008 onwards 40/year)
- The inter-cultural structure of the students as a group (an asset!) that means also somewhat diverse cultural backgrounds i.e. in relation to working life issues. At the moment of writing this summary (3<sup>rd</sup> Sept., 07) the degree student division between Finns/Non-Finns is roughly 60%/40%.

It is however worth noticing, that many Finnish students have had touch with foreign cultures due to the fact that their parent(s) have worked abroad and the family has resided there

- In addition to the degree students, approximately 75 in-house all the time, as 3<sup>rd</sup> year students are partly in their international period abroad and 4<sup>th</sup> year students are thesis-writing or in Practical Training, there are some 40-50 exchange students from abroad taking part into IB teaching. Some of them also take Practical Training in Finland.
- The “generality” nature of the program: Unlike e.g. the programme of Nursing at any University of Applied Sciences, there is not a specific “job specification” where we expect our students to land into in the job market. Also the subject teaching at IB programme reflects that: We try to cover a rather wide look at business sciences with rather narrow possibilities to specialization. Naturally the students can specialise

somewhat via their choice of elective studies, projects and especially Practical Training

So what opportunities and challenges do those facts coming from the nature of the programme and also the way of organising of the academic year cause to the Tutoring process of Practical Training?

Opportunities:

- as the yearly amount of students going to the PT periods is limited, following the process is possible to be kept in one person's responsibility, and reaching people e.g. for information sessions before going out is possible with high participation rate
- The students and the tutor can utilise organisational learning/mutual learning in preparing the student for Practical Training periods – for example if a younger student is going to a same country or same company in Finland, where we have had trainees earlier, that “common memory” can be used

Threats:

- The variety of countries, industries, companies and jobs where IB students go into is so huge, that it is not easy to create an ongoing relationship Faculty <-> Company, that would allow a common development of the Practical Training Process with the workplaces where the PT takes place. Exception might be the biggest internationally operating companies in Jyväskylä-region.
- This variety also means that the Tutor Teacher's abilities to assist in support in the work itself are limited. No person can be jack-of-all-trades in what comes to understanding different industries and their processes. On the other hand, the student is the one having the main responsibility of his/her learning.
- An ideal PT tutoring would not include only e-mails and calls and feedback/report to the trainee and his/her Supervisor at the workplace, but also the visit to see the student and the supervisor in action in their natural background.

There are two obstacles to make this to materialise:

## 1. Timing

Practical Training-periods often take place during the summer-time, starting mid-to-end-May and ending late August-early September. In practice this means that in the beginning of the training the student is not yet that deeply embedded into the working place and job that he/she is doing that questions would arise. When getting to mid-June the teacher goes into his vacation + is in today's setting also teaching in summer period in first weeks of June.

Once the teacher is back from vacation, the PT period is close to an end and it is too late to try to "fix" anything".

## 2. Distance => Time, Money

Due to the wide spread of origins and career targets, the PT periods of IB students are scattered not only all over Finland, but all over the world. Thus a personal visit on-site is impossible both for reasons related to time and money resources. E.g. the Programme of Logistics of JUAS is trying to keep a principle, that all students, whose PT period is less than 300 km away, are visited once during the training period. This would also be a relationship-building visit, where the school, programme and operations (projects, thesis work) could be marketed to the managers in the company. The success rate at Logistics is approximately 80 % concerning this principle. Of course at the same time the visits serve as a source of latest working life information source to the teacher that then helps in keeping up the working life relevance and "street credibility" of the teaching.

Looking at the same problem area from IB point of view underlines even more the need for innovative and cost-efficient solutions for Practical Training tutoring.

At one randomly chosen point of time (10<sup>th</sup> January 2008) there were 8 IB students at PT and they were distributed to:

Finland – 3 students: One in the School's home town, another one 150 km away and one in Lapland 450 km away (the employer is a UK – based firm).

USA East Coast – 1 student

Tanzania – 1 student

Argentina – 1 student

France – 1 student

Switzerland – 1 student

So even when in some cases modern tools of communication could help in overcoming the physical distance, the time-zone differences would mean the synchronous interaction with all parties being “on-line” at the same time interaction would be difficult to arrange. Another aspect is naturally that the employers, the students' supervisors have a very limited view on the Finnish educational system, the basics of University of Applied Sciences and how we as an institution see the Practical Training and its tutoring.

Also other International programmes of JUAS like The Facility Management and Nursing programmes are facing the same challenge, and partly based on these issues a new mobile virtual follow-up tool named e-Tatiana is being piloted for their purposes.

#### SUMMARY:

- Instead of tutoring the Practical Training when it is on (the student is already at the company), the role of the PT Tutor in our programme is very much preparing people to the period, and collecting the feedback and reflecting that to the “next generation” of students going-out
- Permanent relationships with some companies would greatly support and continuous development of our teaching, finding right companies and getting the resources from people in those companies (as this would be on top of their normal duties) is the challenge
- Active PT Tutoring would improve both relationships with companies (networking) as well as supports the development of the subject teaching

## 5. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRACTICAL TRAINING - PROCESS IN THE IB-PROGRAMME

### 5.1. The way we do Practical Training (PT) -tutoring at International Business - programme of Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences

The students at International Business School are – in order to graduate – to complete a total 30 ECTS of Practical Training and Projects together. The latter part (Projects) consisting of projects done for companies is anyway to be minimum 9 ECTS. The Practical Training can make the full 30 ECTS, but that is a rare case, that so far has not happened to any student.

The PT Tutoring Process has been under some change lately, as certain formalities in the process earlier done by paper forms have now been digitised, making the reporting and follow-up easier, process descriptions are left behind, and will be updated. Latest driver of change is the new European Commission Programme Period and its programme of Lifelong Learning, which will bring in some new formalities to the process in case of International Practical Training.

Other needs of development are naturally coming from our organisation (International Business Programme) itself, as we have self-evaluated in faculty meetings during 2007 our SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats). I have put in bold font the ones that to me matter most concerning Practical Training.

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reachability of Teachers/Low power distance</li> <li>2. Good touch on the progress of individual student (projects, small intake groups etc.)</li> <li>3. <b>Delegated responsibility areas: Projects/Manninen, Thesis/Neuvonen, Practical Training/Saukkonen</b></li> <li>4. Quite the same structure of studies between the students – less individual choices</li> </ol>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>The mirror side of the strength nr. 2: Formal tutoring practices are underdeveloped=&gt; students do not recognize "low-hierarchy tutorointia"</b></li> <li>2. Certain JUAS practices (e.g. processes described) do not support Internationality</li> <li>3. <b>Resourcing (note: IB intake will be 40 from 2008) !</b></li> </ol>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ASIO-system would give us more follow-up data and tools that we are aware of at the moment</li> <li>2. <b>Best Practices available form other programs or AMKs ?</b></li> <li>3. Renewed web-pages would support ?</li> <li>4. <b>JAMKO (Students´own organisation)-tutoring and mentoring – as well as as other peer tutoring by students - could be an asset</b></li> <li>5. Electronic- Personal Study-Plan to use</li> <li>6. Renewal of the tutoring time-line, from huge information load/shot the first weeks of studies towards more continuous tutoring</li> </ol>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Facility Man./Music Man. Students take resources from IB teachers</li> <li>2. How to keep degree students in top priority and serve exchange students "relatively less" – Role of International School/International Coordinator of Business School etc.</li> </ol>

Table 2: Internal SWOT of IB programme

The existing process description available at the ASIO –system of the University of Applied Sciences is as shown in Appendix 1.

That description has not been updated and the results of this development work have kept that process on hold. Instead, a PowerPoint-presentation on our PT Process has been kept available on the School´s L-drive, unfortunately accessible only from two campuses of the school (any computer in these locations). The process description is to be renewed during 2008 – one of the main goals of this development work - and the process descriptions of the whole JUAS and some of its programmes will be used as a base, spiced with some own additions and best practices developed during the development work of the undersigned in the Vocational Teacher Studies.

On the school level a generic PT Process has been issued – for International Mobility and more precisely outgoing trainees i.e. when the PT period is abroad and certain financial support mechanisms come into the picture - as follows:

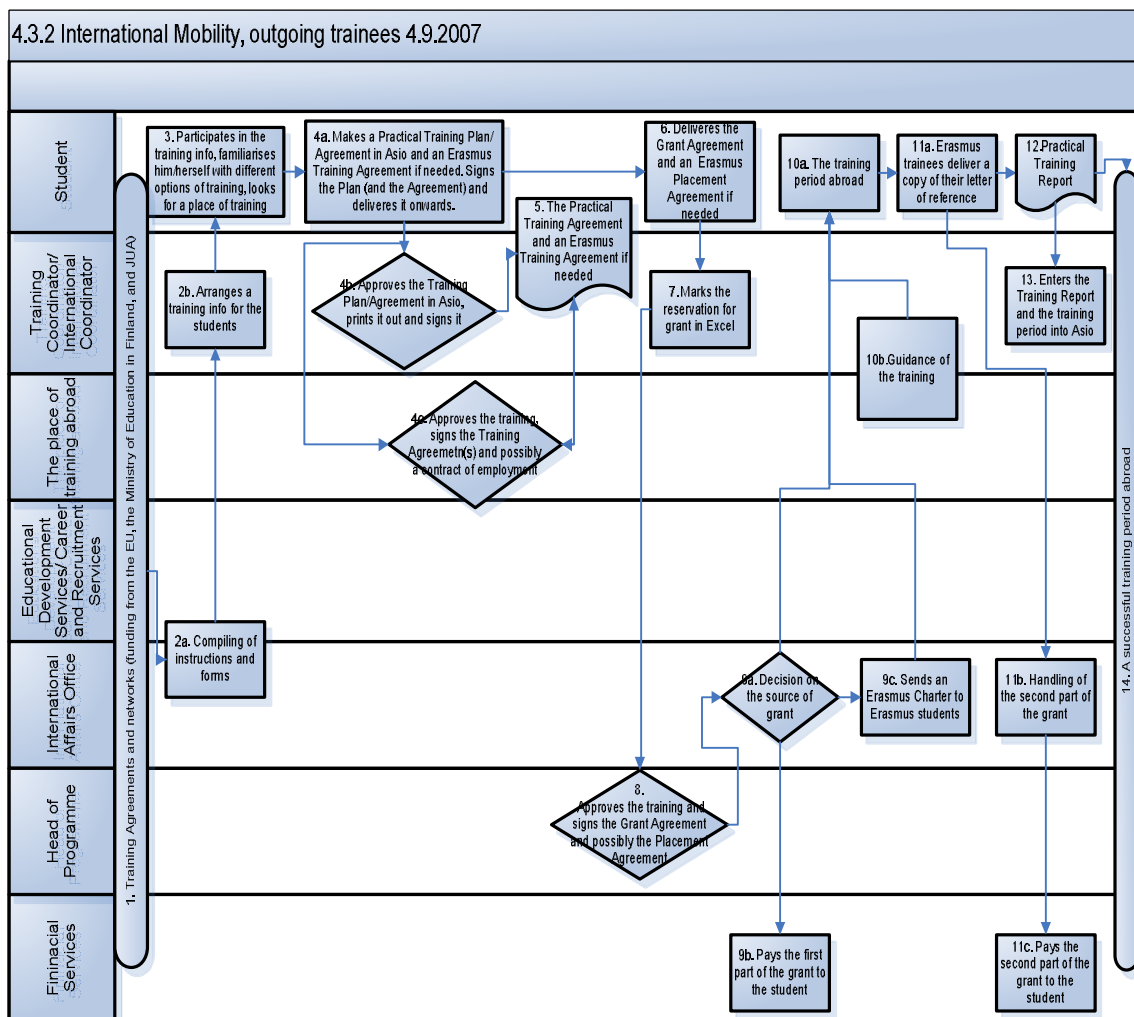


Figure 6: Process model/flowchart for International Mobility, Outgoing Trainees in JUAS

Instead or at least in addition to this kind of detailed (and hard to maintain?) flowcharts, my development target from the very beginning was to come up with a model that more resembles a “do-this” list, that the student and tutor can jointly follow in order to see that the necessary steps are taken.

### 5.2. In search of best practices - Benchmark interviews with Practical Training coordinators in JUAS

In order to utilise the organisational learning it was naturally wise to look at programs inside the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences and their practices in use (and not in use) in what comes to Practical



Training Tutoring. Having this in mind I chose three reference programs, where either their subject teaching (and thus potentially the work placements of the students) resemble the ones we have in International Business-program of JUAS and/or the structure and the size of the program corresponds the one we are having.

The three organisations, whose Practical Training-process I wanted to benchmark were:

- Logistic Programme – more precisely its international English-language program – at JUAS
- Facility Management – English language program at The School of Tourism and Services Management
- Liiketalous – The Finnish-language side of the School of Business Administration

The method of benchmarking was following their process descriptions, results via the OPALA-feedback and above all – interviewing the people in charge of the process in the organisation. To Chapter 5.3. I have collected together the student feedback via OPALA-log of all 3 reference programmes + IB programme of JUAS.

### **Logistic Programme – more precisely its international programme – at JUAS**

Interviewee: – head of the programme, international logistics engineering (also the Practical Training coordinator of the programme)

Date and place: 30.8.2007 at JUAS premises at Rajakatu.

The annual student intake of the logistic engineering department totals some 85 students, out of which 60 start at the Finnish-speaking programme and 25 at the international (English-speaking ) programme – this year that 25 divides into 18 foreigners and 7 Finnish students – the success in the entry exam - especially its maths part - being the criteria causing such a huge “internationality”. Especially in the sense of the programme size but also of the

mix of origins of the students, the International Logistic Engineering is quite comparable to International Business –programme, and thus offers a fair comparison point also in Practical Training-arrangements.,

According to the interviewee, both the Logistics Engineering –department as well as the whole Technical School (“TeLi” in the internal abbreviation language) have been under some scrutiny or at least a pressure due to the poor results in the OPALA-feedback in what comes to the Practical Training-tutoring. In the OPALA listings the Finnish-speaking logistics programme shows with abbreviation TLO and the International Programme as TEL. As a result, some parts of the process have been more formalised and made part of the department routine. The process description of PT Tutoring is enclosed in the appendices of this report.

Here are listed the main constituents of the Tutoring process that were brought up in the discussion:

#### Common Preparation - Before going out for a Practical Training-period

- Target is that the Practical Training is started after the second school year
- That year the whole student group (2<sup>nd</sup> year students) is invited to a common information session, where the role of PT in their professional development and the learning targets of the PT period are clarified
- Also the formalities conc. PT like making the PT plan into ASIO are explained
- The reporting instructions – quite tight format – are also explained
- The key message given: Responsibility of PT is at foremost in student’s hands!!!(Getting the place, being active learner etc.,) It is a certain sense not just part of the “teaching”! Of learning, yes!
- There are no common CV-workshops or seminars where people would share the experiences and tips of the passed PT periods
- CV-preparation is a part of Communication Studies provided by the Language Centre of JUAS, also the offerings of Recruitment Services of JUAS are actively offered

### Personal Preparation – once the student has found a PT placement

- The target is to have a personal meeting with each and every student going out to PT, to agree on learning targets and plan a possible visit to the workplace
- The whole teaching faculty takes part in the process as tutors, so the Tutoring teacher is decided out of 15 (!) potential teachers based on the placement industry, company, job description and possible existing relationships – so that the teacher having the best prior knowledge – and naturally having time resource available – will be tutoring the student.

### Visiting the Practical Trainee at work

- Naturally an ideal situation would be visiting all students and their supervisors when they work, but in practice time and money resources set limits to this to happen.
- With an 80-% success rate the target is to visit all students working at max 300 km from Jyväskylä.
- The role of the visit is both orientated to follow the learning of the student with him/her and the supervisor, but also to serve as a “stakeholder visit”, where the school, the programme and its offering (projects, thesis work etc.) can be introduced.

### After the PT Period

- The student prepares a Practical Training report acc. to the reporting instructions
- Report + Work certificate are returned max. 1 month after the PT period to the tutoring teacher, who accepts the PT and signs the credits in ASIO

The challenge!

- A big challenge is keeping the tutoring a natural and really Student- (and not System-) supporting thing – not “over-tutoring” – especially as the teacher can not know the precise demands of each and every workplace and job. However, at the same time OPALA-feedback is a widely followed tool, and getting results there means the tutoring has to be sufficient both in amount and visibility – sometimes students ignore the non-formal tutoring as tutoring!

### **Liiketalous – The Finnish-language side of the School of Business Administration**

Interviewee and source of hand-out material by the Practical Training coordinator at Liiketalous (The Finnish language programme at the School of Business Administration), for clarity reason this programme is referred to in Finnish as “Liiketalous” in the future in this Report.

Date and Place: 15.4.2008 at Mankola campus of JUAS

Liiketalous is the biggest single programme inside the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences both in annual student intake (120) as well as in the number of faculty members (teachers and administrative people) participating in the Practical Training process. Bearing that in mind, the process has been made very precise and administrable, which is naturally a must as so many different people are involved in the process.

There has even been a separate Course Description written about the Practical Training-part of studies (HBAAW100). The programme is quite strict already in listing the pre-requirements of a student to be accepted to the PT period (during 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year of studies, basic business studies of 120 ECTS must be done before going to PT.

The process (which based on the OPALA-feedback, see Chapter 5.3.), seems to be well recognised by the student) consists of orientation period – participating into which is compulsory - that includes:

- Description and preparation of the whole process
- \* The role and meaning of PT
- \* Making the PT plan and agreement
- \* General working life demands
- \* Interviews etc.
  
- The job search process
- \*each students writes an application letter and CV, gets that examined and feedback is given
  
- Practical Training seminar
- \* The students who have passed their own PT period share their own experiences

The PT tutoring teacher can be any from the faculty, based on the subject area, industry of PT period in question and available teacher time resources. The system is kept up and the process run by one nominated teacher, whose time allocation for this activity is 300 hours of her total working-time of 1600 hrs, including some tutoring to students from outside her own programme (International Placements of Team Academy students). Different teachers inside the programme have different time allocations given for Practical Training tutoring.

After the PT period each student in order to get credited with ECTS must prepare a PT learning report, whose form is rather strictly formulated.

### **Facility Management – the English-speaking programme of the School of Tourism, Catering and Home Economics**

Interviewees:

- The international coordinator of the Facility Management Programme)inside the School of Tourism and Services Management
- Practical Training tutor (senior lecturer) in the same School, programme of Facility Management

Date and Place: 11<sup>th</sup> January 2008, Man kola campus of JUAS

The programme of Facility Management is a full-English programme inside the School of Tourism and Services Management in JUAS. The annual intake (including both local as well as international students) is 20, to go up to 40 in the autumn of 2008. Like in the IB programme, an obligatory period abroad, either in form of Practical Training or Studies, is needed in order to graduate. In addition to their own students, the programme takes care of the international training periods of other programmes inside the school (both in terms of administration as well as tutoring), so the total number of trainees per year is 25-30.

The internal division of tasks is centralised to the hands of the International Coordinator in what comes to administrative work, plans/agreements etc. The tutoring during the periods is also in one person's hands. This is done in order to make sure same procedures are followed, and thus the resource usage is optimised.

The programme took part some years ago to the IdeaHunt-initiative as a part of Leonardo-program. As a result certain Training-assistance tools were developed and taken in use in the existing R5 Generation environment. An example of the application was a discussion area for peer support, sharing the feelings and learning during the Practical Training was made possible. The tool was in active use in 2003 and 2004 for the student groups starting their training periods at the same time.

### 5.3. The measured results by OPALA-feedback system

In the following I have summarised the Opala-feedback systems' results, from 3 last graduated "groups" and concentrating in addition to our own program to the programmes that were the target of my benchmark interviews. The different groups – columns of the tables – are formed by the students graduated in

1. Between 1.1.2007-30.6.2007
2. Between 1.7.-31.12.2007

### 3. Between 1.1.-31.3.2007

For some programs the sample for individual periods would have been to small (1 to 2 students only, so I have left those cells in the table blank, as the values of 0%/50%/100% would have given leads to very biased interpretations.

The questions chosen to be shown in here were the ones related to working life issues and Practical Training and Tutoring. After each question and the summary of the results conc. that question I have added my comments and learning that gives value to this development work. My interpretations are in *Italic* font, and they naturally reflect most the figures given to International Programme, and the potential causes for the results are based on my views.

Question 8: Fully or partly agree: The UAS has in different ways supported the development of my working life connections?

Programme	Time of Graduation		
	1.-6.2007	7.-12.2007	1.-3.2008
Liiketalous	78 %	69 %	82 %
Intern. Business	81 %	100 %	100 %
Intern. Logistics	91 %		84 %
Facility Management	53 %	100 %	

*Comment: The Project Studies (research and development projects run for companies/other organisations) are obligatory, unlike e.g. in Liiketalous*

Question 10: The type of my work after graduation is an expert, supervisor or entrepreneur (versus being on the lower level task ("suoritustaso" in Finnish)

Programme	Time of Graduation		
	1.-6.2007	7.-12.2007	1.-3.2008
Liiketalous	42 %	42 %	38 %
Intern. Business	63 %	50 %	50 %
Intern. Logistics	63 %		33 %
Facility Management	26 %	0 %	

*Comment: The question is rather vague as the definition of what makes an expert is left to the person answering. In case of Facility Management the whole concept of Facility Management as a field of study is rather new, and job offerings do not (yet) reflect the supply of graduates. IB figures have stayed roughly on the same level.*

Question 12: Fully or Partly agree: In my work after graduation I can utilise the learning I got from UAS

Programme	Time of Graduation		
	1.-6.2007	7.-12.2007	1.-3.2008
Liiketalous	95 %	79 %	94 %
Intern. Business	75 %	75 %	100 %
Intern. Logistics	88 %		100 %
Facility Management	63 %	100 %	

*Comment: All the programmes seem to have rather good – and improving - applicability of the teaching. It must be remembered that this OPALA-enquiry is done right after the graduation, and there the typical temporary jobs before landing in to the job closer to the study field have an effect on the results?*

Question 13: Fully or partly agree: The teaching in UAS has been competent

Programme	Time of Graduation		
	1.-6.2007	7.-12.2007	1.-3.2008
Liiketalous	90 %	88 %	86 %
Intern. Business	81 %	83 %	100 %
Intern. Logistics	72 %		100 %
Facility Management	53 %	100 %	

*Comment: This stresses the results to the previous question (12). Competent teaching is in students' minds one that is applicable. General level has been increasing across the board.*

Question 14: Fully or partly agree: Tutoring during my studies has supported me

Programme	Time of Graduation		
	1.-6.2007	7.-12.2007	1.-3.2008
Liiketalous	65 %	82 %	59 %
Intern. Business	69 %	66 %	75 %
Intern. Logistics	100 %		100 %
Facility Management	48 %	50 %	

*Comment: Tutoring is a very wide term – it includes (looking from the school's point of view) general study guidance, career tutoring, PT tutoring etc. The important issue with be the level on which the students are able to recognise the tutoring they get. Here e.g. the practices of the International Logistics-programme – e.g. Having a personal meeting with every student once the PT place has been confirmed – seems to be a model to follow.*

Question 15: Fully or partly agree: The tutoring during my Practical Training has been sufficient

Programme	Time of Graduation		
	1.-	7.-12.2007	1.-3.2008



	6.2007		
Liiketalous	74 %	71 %	91 %
Intern. Business	56 %	41 %	100 %
Intern. Logistics	91 %		83 %
Facility Management	65 %	100 %	

*Comment: The IB figures show that during 2006 and Spring 2007 (when the process documents and descriptions were available) the lacking of nominated PT tutor was leading to very poor results. As the improved results also from Liiketalous and Fac. Management show, a success in PT tutoring is a combination of structured process and a person responsible for running the process.*

Question 16: Fully or partly agree: My tasks during Practical Training have supported my learning

	Time of Graduation		
	1.-6.2007	7.-12.2007	1.-3.2008
Liiketalous	80 %	82 %	81 %
Intern. Business	76 %	75 %	75 %
Intern. Logistics	91 %		83 %
Facility Management	82 %	100 %	

*Comment: This seems to be the area where things are rather well in order across the board of studied programmes. Naturally the comparison to respective programmes in other UASs would give more data, as in all these questions.*

#### 5.4. The results of IB's own student survey – PT trainees during 2007

As the OPALA-system is relatively slow in reacting to changes in educational processes inside a program (as the opinions are gathered from graduated students), a separate survey was conducted among IB students who were taking their Practical Training between Spring-Autumn of 2007. The short timeframe lead to a rather small sample (91students), but on the other hand the experience is reflecting the same developmental phase of our tutoring system.

Below the survey results I have added my commentary/interpretation or upcoming questions, in the end I draw together the results and show potential impacts on the Practical Training tutoring system of IB programme.

PART 1: Your own experiences from the past PT period (scale grade 1 to 10)

Average value
---------------

7,89

*Comment: Proposing somewhat better OPALA-results in 2008/2009 than available OPALA-data from the same period (2007). OPALA is based on graduation-time, so people answering this survey were likely to graduate mostly during 2008.*

2. How would you rate the support/tutoring at various stages of PT process (scale 1 to 10)

	Average value
Before PT period	7,11
During PT period	7,78
After PT period	7,00

*Comment: Our process needs to be improved truly as a process. The “storyline” should start before the administrative process (fill in the forms once you found the place) and should not end to the administrative process (fill in the forms to earn your credits)*

3. How would you rate the **support you got** in various sub-activities of PT tutoring? (1 to 10)

	Average value
Preparation for job search	5,75
Getting information on Programme's Pt process and Demands	7,67
Contacts before going	6,67
Contacts to the student during PT period	6,78
Contacts to the employer during PT period	6,17
Tutoring after the period	5,57
Sharing experiences whit other students	3,50

*Comment: The process must be seen by the faculty to be long enough and the last point (“Sharing experiences...”) must also been as a part of the first point (“Preparation”...). Process view, but student-need focused.*

4. How would you rate the **importance** of various sub-activities of PT tutoring? (1 to 10) (e.g. what should an ideal tutoring include?)

	Average value
Preparation for job search	7,67
Getting information on Programme's Pt process and Demands	8,22
Contacts before going	7,67
Contacts to the student during PT period	6,89
Contacts to the employer during PT period	7,00
Tutoring after the period	6,89
Sharing experiences whit other students	5,89

*Comment: The students want to “survive themselves” after getting started? Support is mostly needed in the early phases of the process.*

5. Do you feel the STUDENT should be contacted during the PT Period (circle the alternative that reflects your view)?

	Total
Contact not needed	0
Contact once during the PT period	8
Contact more than once during PT period	1

*Comment: As in question 4: The student wants to be clearly a part of the organisation where PT period takes place - outside enough of the school-context - and too many contacts could be seen as “over-tutoring”*

6. What would be an ideal time for contacting the STUDENT during the PT period?

(If you prefer multiple contacts, choose all times you feel the contacts should take place)

	Total	Total%
Right after start	2	20
After some weeks in PT	1	10,00
In the middle of the period	7	70,00
Some weeks before the end of the period	0	0,00
Just before finishing the period	0	0

*Comment: From the tutor a check-up contact is welcomed, but first when things are settled and the student has a better picture on the workplace reality.*

7. Which would be an ideal way of getting in touch with the STUDENT? List in order of preference (1= highest priority 5=lowest)

	Highest priority			Lowest	
	1	2	3	4	5
A call	5	4	0	0	0
A visit	0	0	5	3	1
A chat	0	0	3	3	3
An e-mail	3	5	0	0	0
A SMS	0	0	1	2	6

*Comment: The low preference given to visits may be a sign of students aiming more and more to international PT periods, visit is a time- and money-wise impossibility. Still a personal contact is (call being the highest preferred option) valued.*

8. Who should take the initiative of getting in touch?

	Total
A Teacher	8
A Student	2

*Comment: Is it so that due to the distance (more and more often there is considerable distance) it is good to feel somehow is following and interested in your success and progress?*

9. Do you feel the EMPLOYER should be contacted during the PT Period (circle the alternative that reflects your view)?

	Total
Contact not needed	1
Contact once during PT period	8
Contact more than once during PT period	0

*Comment: The same as with the contact to student: rather a check-up than "over-tutoring".*

10. What would be an ideal time for contacting the EMPLOYER during the PT period? (If you prefer multiple contacts, choose all times you feel the contacts should take place)

	Total	Total %
Right after start	1	11,11
After some weeks in PT	2	22,22
In the middle of the period	4	44,44
Some weeks before the end of the period	2	22,22
Just before finishing the period	0	0,00

*Comment: More diverse answers than Question 6 (When should the student be contacted?): Early contact might be needed in cases where things are not materialising other way than in the PT Plan, to the student taking these difficult things up may be difficult, as they are young newcomers to the organisation? Later contact may mean that the assessment of success is easier, as the student has been able to adapt and show all the potential?*

11. Which would be an ideal way of getting in touch with the EMPLOYER? List in order of preference (1= highest priority 5=lowest)

	Highest priority				Lowest
	1	2	3	4	5
A call	7	1	1	0	0
A visit	0	0	8	1	0
A chat	0	0	0	6	3
An e-mail	2	7	0	0	0
A SMS	0	1	0	1	7

*Comment: A personal discussion between the “two supervisors” is clearly preferred. The students potentially see this kind of discussion would create more common understanding than e.g. e-mail with pre-set questions?*

12. Who should take the initiative of getting the school in touch with THE EMPLOYER:

	Total
A Teacher	9
A Student	0
Employer	0

Summary and comments of the survey results:

In addition to the most important part which is preparatory process – preparing and guiding students to find a job and easily find and fulfil the process/administrative criteria – the students need a delicate balance of letting them survive by themselves but at the same time be followed/tutored from the distance personally. At the time of making the survey the TOVE-project (see Chapter 6) aiming at testing and assessing new, partly virtualised tutoring practices, was not yet started, so those options were not possible to include to the list of choices.

The students’ role in educating each other – in forms of seminars etc. – must be stressed and demanded by the faculty, as students do not show big commitment to the process continuation after their own PT period is over,

## 5.5. Summary of the Opala-feedback, IB's own survey and best practice - interviews

Directing and maintaining the process of Practical Training Tutoring means balancing all the time between over-formality (meetings, seminars, reports, forms) and low-key informal tutoring, that can lead to below-the-awareness level recognition of the given tutoring.

How the process looks like now from student point-of-view is very much biased on the "do-your-paperwork-right" –side, instead of looking at deeper what and how you are going to learn and how we (school) are trying to support you.

Even though the process is described, we do not even ourselves live according to it concerning our "in-house trainees", people performing their Practical Training in the student cooperative active inside school walls. That is the first thing to correct, only after that experience can we better understand what should and what should not be done with traineeships that take place outside our "own house"

## 5.6. HARKE-initiative results/recommendations

In 2004 in Finland was launched a common, networked development initiative titled HARKE (Harjoittelun kehittäminen = Placement Development Project), that released its final report in 2006. The participants of the project were all UASs in Finland, Ministry of Education as well as the central organisation of students in UASs in Finland, SAMOK ry.

The full Final Report of the study lists many practical recommendations and even proposes general templates to be used to better unify the practices between UASs and thus provide the students more equal tutoring experience independent on the UAS where they study and the workplace where their PT period occurs.

From the HARKE-Projects list of 23 main (?) recommendations I chose the following which have a rather direct link to the topic of this development project. I have also added my personal comment on how the recommendations should be taken in consideration in the PT tutoring process in the Programme I represent.

- Placement periods have to be versatile and they have to form a path that supports the student's professional growth and possibilities for employment

*Comment: Not all work counts as a valid IB PT period, looking at the targeted field where the students are expected to be employed. So a one-to-one discussion of the placement offers and available learning between the student and the tutor is needed!*

- Placement in UAS is always guided. The minimum requirement is that student is given necessary guidance when needed. The objective of guidance is that student learns and his/her professional growth is supported.

*Comment: To make possible a more active, more than the minimum support from the tutor – often working from long distance – tools are needed where the tutor can follow the development of the placement and not only interfere once or twice with general questions type “Is everything Ok and according to the plan”*

- Taking advantage of technology in guidance is recommended especially when the distance between the UAS and the workplace is long. This especially applies to International Placements

*Comment: Partly referring to my comment at previous point. However, decisions to use the technological means and which and how, must be done on a level high enough and application must be wide enough, partly to guarantee the equal support for all students and partly to guarantee the transparency of the process and comparability of the results between programmes/years etc.*

- Placement is always evaluated based on achieving the objectives of the placement. The objective of evaluation is to assess students' learning and



to support professional growth but also to develop the degree programme and especially the placement process as part of that

*Comment: The latter part has perhaps been left with less emphasis, as the huge variation between the placements and the scarcity of deep-enough contacts to the workplace supervisors has restricted the evaluation to be very much based on the student's assessment, mainly via self-reflection. The improved focus on organisational learning is partly a tool- and partly a resource-question.*

## **6. NEW TOOLS AVAILABLE TO IMPROVE PRACTICAL TRAINING PROCESS? – EXAMPLE E-TAITAVA**

Based on the demands of increased mobility, physical spread of the PT Training periods and the limited time and money resources for PT tutoring, there has naturally emerged means of quick and relatively inexpensive means of tutoring by using up-to-date communication technology.

All Universities in Finland have some kind of electronic learning platform, that allows chats (=synchronous written interaction), virtual conversation platforms (non-synchronous written interaction) or e.g. diaries kept by users.

When starting this development work, JUAS was using the R5 Generation – platform for e-learning. It allowed the features described above. In addition there was a possibility to use on-line video-conferencing program “Sametime”, which has its edge in the multi-user occasions and in cases where both presentation material, written communication and video and speech must all be delivered in one channel.

Naturally there are communication tools available for teacher-student interaction outside the “official” e-learning platform as well. Examples are Traditional e-mail, Skype voice and image connection etc.

The big downside in these solutions is that they do not offer enough structure to give economies of scale. Individual tutoring sessions provide a unique document, which is hard to summarise and follow the development along time.

A Jyväskylä-based company Mobiletools International has developed a mobile tool that should allow ease-of-use frequent contact between the trainee, workplace supervisor and the tutoring teacher. The system requirements are that all parties have in their use a mobile phone that supports Java-operating system, has GPRS-data transfer capability and a colour display – according to the company (Pirttiaho, 2008) 95 % of the new phones sold at the moment fill these criteria. Naturally there must also be a GSM-coverage on the place where these people operate, especially for Business School students this should not be a problem. Also they are most of their working time in an office environment with access to Personal Computer and Internet, so answering the questions over the web is a viable option.

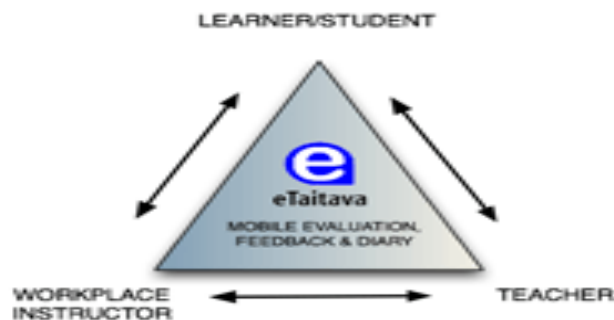


Figure 7: A Schematic model of the e-Taitava application and the stakeholders involved (Mobiletools, 2008)

When the system is taken in use the following steps (assuming there is a business contract between the owner of the application and the school) must be taken:

- all users (incl. teacher and supervisor) need to be given a username and password
- users need to download the application to their mobile phones
- the set(s) of question and their sending frequency must be decided (there are already available some basic question sets for different student profiles – also in English).

During the Practical Training –period the server (managed by Mobiletools) automatically sends the questions to the respondent, by simple clicking the visual display of questions (see figure X) the student e.g. answers the

question “I have had an opportunity to do tasks that correspond my training” weekly with a scale “Not at all – Very much” (5-step scale).

Questions to the work-place supervisor can be different and be sent less often. Also free comment as text can be added.



Figure 8: Examples of the student (mobile phone application) and tutor (computer) screen views in e-Taitava application. (Mobiletools, 2008)

The web-application allows then the tutoring teacher to see in time-scale the development of the training period and also to do statistical summaries from different participants. The questions touch areas such as:

- The student's feelings of the training
- Assessment of knowledge/skill
- Development of knowledge/skill
- Orientation questions (in the beginning of the period, to arise the sensitivity to important issues).

Inside University of Applied Sciences also the Schools of Nursing and Tourism took part into pilot-use the application during the Spring 2008, based on the available resources conc. the project TOVE (“Työharjoittelun Ohjaus Verkossa = Practical Training tutoring over the web”) and at the Schools the number of pilot-users and pilot-teachers were decided.

Here are my views when familiarizing with the application and also piloting it with a student taking her Practical training abroad and using e-Taitava-application— looking purely from my own programme's point of view. Some support to my views has appeared in the discussions/meetings inside TOVE-project – peer teachers who also have piloted the application with their students. At the time of writing this report the TOVE-projects summary was

not yet available, as it will be published during academic year 2008-2009, including also student interviews as well as group interview results from various programmes.

#### Strengths:

- gives a possibility to enhance the contact frequency
- can be a tool to engage the workplace supervisor better to the “training triangle”
- gives the student “out there” the feeling of care and touch
- would automatically give a learning report material. Now the report is written in the very end of the training, and the happenings along the way are forgotten and the report is written on a very general way to fill the study credit criteria. With the log to the weekly comments only a good summary/cover page would be needed

#### Weaknesses/Question marks:

- in Business studies the workplaces and tasks are so different, that finding meaningful, not too detailed questions can be a challenge, it should not turn only to “feeling barometer”

As an example, the businesses where the IB trainees were working in 10.1.2008 were:

- \* IT system development
- \* Business Plan analysis
- \* Banking
- \* Tourism promotion
- \* Property Business

- Too high frequency of asking can cause negative feelings in the workplace supervisor
- transparency of the information? Will the answers be overly positive or negative depending on who can see the results?
- cost of the right of using the application and data transfer are minor, still it is a cost to which resources must be allocated, and also the students costs must be covered

The pilot student also gave her views after using the application for several months are here are her viewpoints (e-mail 9.6.2008):

- A good system, as it puts you to think yourself how things have gone and also you know that your training is followed regularly
- Even though the weekly answering to the same questions starts making you feel a bit “tired” at some point, put on the other hand it is good to keep the set of questions simple and quick to answer. Less than weekly might be too low frequency, you would start forgetting to answer
- Your own answers act as a good base for the Learning report, which you write about your practical training after your Training period is over

Even though no larger conclusions can be drawn from the answers of a single recipient, virtual applications of PT tutoring have potential to help the student him- or herself to recognise the learning and structure the learning experience.

## **7. THE PLAN AND SCHEDULE FOR A PRACTICAL TRAINING DEVELOPMENT PLAN IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS -PROGRAMME IN JUAS**

The more one looks into the concept of Practical Training and its role in the curriculum and student’s learning process, the better one understands the big challenges there are in running this part of the learning in Universities of Applied Sciences. The pedagogical strategy and core promise of e.g. JUAS and its School of Business Administration stress the importance of learner-centric approach as well as the importance of working life competencies. Also the existing measurement systems like OPALA-feedback system have questions related to Practical Training-process and its tutoring. The basic dilemma - balancing the controlled and continuous pedagogical and administrative process with the individual’s unique learning experience in very heterogeneous contexts – is likely to always stay there at some level.

The results from recent OPALA-measurements show that even inside one University the differences in obtained results can differ significantly, which lets one assume that some practices function better than others. Also the big variation between in the feedback by graduates from different

years/semesters shows that in processes also need a responsible faculty member for the activity in question. That can be seen in the OPALA-results of IB-programme, where due to the changes in the personnel there was a period when there the role of active PT tutoring was not taken care of by any particular faculty member. Indicators in OPALA-results dropped clearly under the level of other programmes in JUAS.

The survey done among IB students who took their PT period during summer 2007 showed also that for students the different parts in the PT process have different importance. It was remarkable, that sharing the experiences with other students was not seen as such an important issue, even though that would be a vital part of the preparation phase of the next students going out for exchange period, and preparing the students for PT period was seen as an important issue in PT Process.

In the following I list the principles and key facts on which the IB – programme's Practical Training-process should be based. In the figure 9 I have collected the things to do to an action plan, a time-base roadmap for the next 1-1,5 years from the date of writing this final chapter in summer 2006.

1. In addition to "low key" tutoring (one-to-one tutoring and explaining of the PT process) we need well structured and visible Process documents and a way of easily locating and updating the documents. They also must be available also for remote users.

2. We have to take a good existing model of Liiketalous in use, where the seminars (pre- and post-Training period) are an obligatory part of each student's PT experience. Only by this we can utilise the learning of the experienced students and also help them to reflect and assess their own PT learning experience better. Formalising the PT process also is likely to lead to better recognition of the tutoring obtained by the students, something that OPALA-results reflect.

3. Despite the criticism that can be directed towards OPALA-system, results given by it must be followed and changes of a meaningful magnitude must be reacted upon. In addition, own survey(s) with quicker answer and reaction

time must be continued. Depending on the upcoming structural changes, these tools can potentially be shared with some other programmes.

4. To truly develop the proposed ideal Triangle Model of Learning at Work in the context of an international programme, a virtual tool of the type e-Taitava should be used, and clear decisions of its scope of use (wide enough instead of individual users, do the decision go based on Schools inside the University of by programmes/departments?) and the way the data collected by that kind of application are used, will be needed by the decision-making bodies in JUAS. This most likely can only be done after the development project TOVE summarises the experiences and the exact cost of use is known – as well as potential savings in time resources that the application may bring with it.

Below the action plan put in to a time-line.

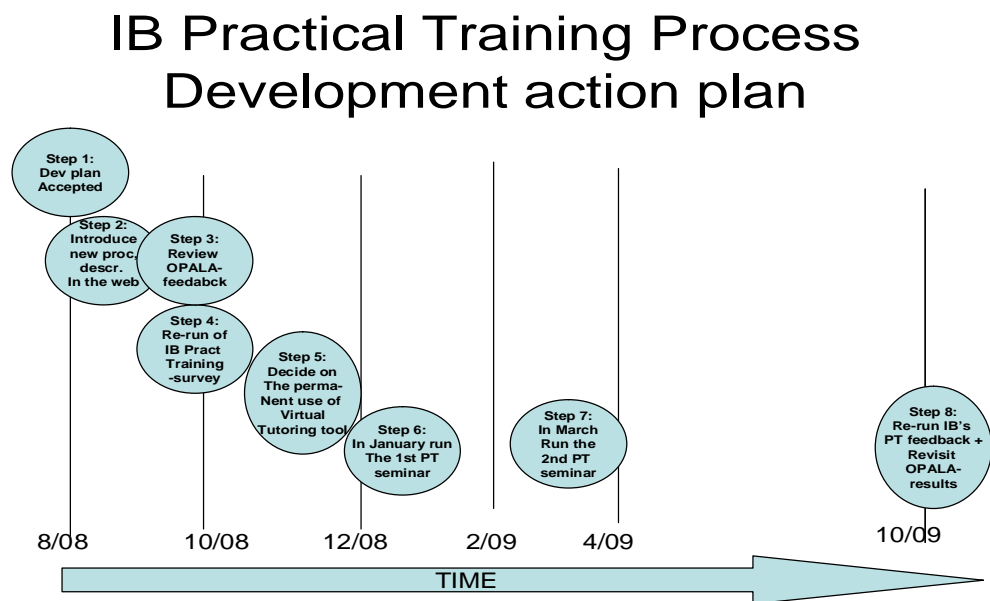


Figure 9: Time-based Action plan for developing Practical Training – process of IB Programme

## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND IDEAS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Practical Training is a fascinating learning process as a topic of research and development. It is part of the curriculum of any UAS programme as well as it forms a vital part of the learning path of an individual learner. At the same time, it happens outside the school context and largely on the conditions set by the authentic environment – working life. And organisations - especially in cases where they are located outside Finland - are not able to have a full picture of how our educational system sees and treats Practical Training as part of the learning. It is not even fair that they should put too much emphasis on that issue, as then the authenticity of the learning experience would suffer. Also students show in their answers that during the course of the PT period itself they do not want too close presence or frequent interventions of the school/tutor, but want to “survive” in the authentic working life context.

However, the new virtual means, one of which was introduced in this report, may offer a discussion tool for all stakeholders in the PT process, to enhance the outcome of the PT period to all parties involved. In short the student experiences professional growth and the workplace can simultaneously utilise the potential of the student in an optimal way. New research will be needed to prove the promise of these new methods becoming true in authentic working life context. The results and thus the applicability of these methods can also prove to vary between different fields of study and working life.

On the other hand, the traditional PT tutoring also shows even inside one University a variety of way of arranging the PT process. Partly these differences form an asset, as they form a source of mutual learning and comparison to the people involved in PT processes. Continuous Best Practice-oriented forums and perhaps widening this comparison of processes to e.g. international partner institutions might also prove beneficial.

There is also not yet evidence if successful (and which are standards that define success?) in PT period have a correlation to the future professional



success of the learner either in the organisation where the PT period took place or outside it. The ongoing relationship of a student with the organisation where PT took place in the form of e.g. Thesis or even a job could be one such proof of success, as well as the repetitiveness of training periods in a given organisation, meaning that the organisation offers continuously PT opportunities to the students of a School/Programme. Also a good landmark of success would be that the student returns from their training periods from organisation with positive professional learning experiences. Little measured data concerning this issue is available at present.

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# Appendix 1: Practical Training Process Description in ASIO

## Steps in the Practical Training Process

*Read Carefully*

### **Starting point**

- You have 30 ECTS to complete between projects and Practical Training in total.
- The maximum credits for Practical Training is 30 ECTS in total, the minimum depends on the amount of project credits you plan to accumulate (if you plan to have 10 ECTS in project credits the minimum for Practical Training is 20 ECTS, but you may still do the full 30 ECTS as most do).
- Possible Questions to Answer:
  - When I should do my Practical Training, can I integrate it with my language studies?
  - Could I complete my Practical Training during the summer?
  - Would I like to work abroad (subsidy €\_\_ from JUAS)? If yes, in which country?
  - Could I follow up my exchange period with Practical Training?
  - Shall I have two separate periods or just one?

### **Preparation and Planning: Search For Practical Training opportunities**

- Read the handbook
- Start searching for work placement opportunities in Finland and Abroad
- Once you have an idea contact the Practical Training Coordinator - lecturer Juha Saukkonen

### **Planning and Application: Find the Company and Negotiate Your Terms**

- Find the company
- Try to make the company pay! (Does not affect your subsidy abroad)
- Fill the required documents (available at [www.jypoly.fi/lita/ib](http://www.jypoly.fi/lita/ib))

### **Contracts, Aid & Learning Goals: Fill the Documentation**

- Complete the paperwork (available at [www.jypoly.fi/lita/ib](http://www.jypoly.fi/lita/ib)):
  1. Agreement for Practical Training (Submit to Practical Training Coordinator)
  2. Application for financial aid (Submit to Practical Training Coordinator)
  3. Declaration of studies abroad (Submit to International Coordinator)
- Write your learning goals on a half a sheet of paper (Submit to Practical Training Coordinator)
- Check all details

### **Upon Return: Gather Necessary Documents Previous to Completion**

- Previous to completion get a work certificate! (Without this you cannot get credits!!!)
- Write a free format report (3 -5 pages)
  - Describe your duties
  - What did you learn in that company?
  - Evaluate yourself and the company
- Plan the continuation of your studies according to your Personal Learning Plan (PLP) and sign up for the relevant courses

### **Getting Your Credits**

- To get your credits have the following documents:
  - Copy of your Agreement for Practical Training
  - 2 Copies of your Work Certificate
  - Copy of the title page of your report
- Once your Practical Training Coordinator has signed the documents you are ready to go and get your credits from the Student Office

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