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The Bachelor as an Academic Degree –Apprenticeship Versus Study Degree?

Topic: Issues arising from professional education for librarianship versus library technicians and library assistants education

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Abstract

The following four education levels in LIS are established now in Germany:

1st level: Apprenticeship of three years to the employee of media and information services, in German: Fachangestellter für Medien- und Informationsdienste (FAMI).

2nd level: Undergraduate: Higher education of three maximum four years at Universities of Applied Sciences or Universities awarding the academic degree „Bachelor“ in librarianship or information economy.

3rd level: Graduate. Higher education awarding the academic Master-degree in Information Science at Universities of Applied Sciences or Universities or an official government supported education at special school of academic librarianship for 2 years as a postgraduate programme.

4th level: Postgraduate: Doctorate only at Universities

In Germany universities and libraries have only little experience with this new study structure following the Bologna process and in reality little is done regarding the USP promotion of the Bologna process. One of the key issues is to take care of the value of the Bachelors´ degree as an academic degree. Many of librarian directors only compare the duration of study and apprenticeship which are nearly identically. But the fundamental differences consist in the kind of teaching and learning. Therefore the Conference of Informational and Librarian Education Institutions in Germany (in German: Konferenz der informatorischen und bibliothekarischen Ausbildungseinrichtungen - KIBA) decided in 2006 to start a campaign to promote

and protect the Bachelor for Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities as an academic degree.

On the one hand the differences between a FAMI and an academic must be made clear, explained and promoted, on the other hand the consequences of indiscriminated personnel management must be discussed.

The publication shows the development of ideas for different attributes of this campaign, presenting various possibilities of marketing as well as initiatives e.g. the formulation a list of arguments “pro Bachelor” elaborated by students of LIS. A second focal point is the different fitness for use of FAMIs and academics in a library.

The Library and Information Science Structure in General

The European Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences, especially German ones, are undergoing far-reaching changes. These changes are related to the Bologna Declaration, which aims at an unified and interchangeable course system all over Europe (46 countries) . The former 4- or 5-year Diploma programmes in Germany will be step-by-step substituted by a normally 3-year Bachelor programme until 2010. In addition, a new normally 2-year Master programme is be introduced.

The Library and Information Science Structure in Particular

In Germany we have a four level education in LIS:

- 1st level: *Apprenticeship* of three years to the employee of media and information services, in German: Fachangestellter für Medien- und Informationsdienste (FAMI).
- 2nd level: *Undergraduate*. In the past: Higher Education at Universities of Applied Sciences awarding the academic degree „Diplom“ in librarianship or information economy i.e. Today this will be replaced by the academic Bachelor-degree at Universities of Applied Sciences or Universities.
- 3rd level: *Graduate*. In the past: Higher education at Universities awarding the academic degree „Diplom“ in Information Science i.e. as supplementary study, doctoral study, an official government supported education at special schools of academic librarianship for 2 years as a graduate programme. Today we have an academic Master-degree at Universities of Applied Sciences or Universities and one government supported education (Munich).
- 4rd level: *Postgraduate*. Till today: Doctorate at Universities. Universities of Applied Sciences try to get doctoral degree rights in future.

Elaborating the LIS USP

When working out the difference between service, product or institution marketing specialists have to work out the USP, i.e. the Unique Selling Propositions.

To be more specific: What is the uniqueness of an academic Bachelor, especially in Library and Information Science? In reality little is done regarding the USP promotion of the Bologna process in Europe, on the other hand the employees of media and information services - FAMI are promoting their profession very excellent in Germany.

Therefore the Conference of Informational and Librarian Education Institutions in Germany (in German: KIBA) started a campaign to protect the academic degree of Bachelor in 2006.

The KIBA Campaign

The KIBA rallies Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences, University Colleges and other educational institutions from Germany and abroad as well as practitioners from the LIS-field. Its goal is, among other activities, to work out recommendations for politicians, the private enterprise, and educational institutions.

At their conference in September 2005 at the Cologne University for Applied Sciences the attendants decided to start a campaign in 2006 to promote and protect the academic degree of Bachelor for Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities. Three essentials will be briefly outlined.

1. The LIS USP

“Applied Science(s)” must be a kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy for all LIS professors, teachers, and students. Therefore German LIS institutions create names like *Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften* (University of Applied Sciences) or *Hochschule der Medien* (Media University). They organise their fields of study in faculties like „Information Science and Communication Studies“ (Cologne) or “Information Sciences” (Potsdam). They maintain R&D Institutes like the “Institut für angewandte Kindermedienforschung“ (Institute for Applied Research on Childrens´ Media) at the HdM in Stuttgart or the “Institut für Informationsmanagement” (Institute of Information Management) at the Cologne University of Applied Sciences.

2. Theory and Practise

The LIS programmes combine theory and practical work in the sense of applied science(s). Therefore LIS undergraduates have the ability to take over manager functions. This can be seen as a vital difference between the employees in media and information services (FAMI) and the academic level / degree. The first one works task oriented, whereas the second one works problem oriented. There are many projects to proof this hypothesis: LIS students are involved from the beginning in projects like mission statement development, corporate design, service development or surveys, i.e. conceptual design, performance, controlling, documentation, financing and so on.

3. Public Awareness

Most of LIS associations´ work can mostly be regarded as lobbyism in secret. The public in large and many librarians without management function do not know what LIS stands for, i.e. projects, curricula, performance power. Usually this

information is spread via scientific journals. The KIBA campaign must now spread LIS information via mass media of all kind.

Arguments „pro Bachelor“

One result of this discussion and campaign is the compilation of arguments “pro Bachelor”. These student results were presented at the KIBA conference in 2006 and optimized. It’s the goal to show the differences between an academic degree and apprenticeship – important for every library.

The Theses

1. Only a study degree offers the opportunities to carry out the future of library and information science active.
2. Higher education enables abundantly the innovation of products and services. Thereby the graduate has good chances for a good job with a promising future.
3. Only a study degree negotiates the techniques for scientific work.
4. The study degree negotiates the branch-overlapping qualifications.
5. A study degree makes internationalisation easier
6. Study degrees are qualifying for executive duties (management).
7. A study degree gives the power to act with third persons like administration or funding provider.
8. A study degree improves the academic reputation on the market.
9. A study degree increases the chance of a good salary.
10. Conclusion: A study degree is indispensable in future too.

The fitness of employees of media and information services (FAMI)

In general the employees of media and information services may work in any area of a library, but normally they work in the responsibility of librarians. The FAMI is a new job outline in Germany. Some years ago the FAMI took place of the library assistant.

Normally the work of the FAMIs encompasses technical services like database management etc., ordering, claiming, cataloging and classification, serials control, binding and public service. This shows that library-specific skills are indispensable and that this job can’t be done by a honorary capacity. It’s very important that there exists a predefined qualifying education system like in Germany because the FAMIs are part of librarian professionals.

Currently many of the FAMIs assume more and more responsible areas in librarianship depending on the size of the library and the budgetary restraints. Therefore the consequences of indiscriminated personnel management must be discussed. Because of the increasing demands in automation and IT permanent training on the job and further education is very essential.

But there is one fundamental problem in Germany. Many of the German FAMILs have the university entrance qualification (the German Abitur) but they earn only little money. Therefore many of them start a study degree in librarianship afterwards. Planned is moreover another *undergraduate* education: the specialist in information services, in German: Fachwirt für Informationsdienste. This course can be enrolled after some years professional practise and will give possibly better job prospects (career) for FAMILs and lateral entrants. The examination is hold by local chambers of commerce and they will award a professional Bachelors´ degree. This kind of degree is very controversial discussed in Germany, because in future there are possibly two types of Bachelor: a “Chamber of Commerce”-Bachelor (professional Bachelor) and an academic “University”-Bachelor. Therefore one of the key issues for universities is to take care of the value of the “original” Bachelors´ degree.

Moreover the question must be discussed if there are enough jobs for these further educated persons. Otherwise they are qualified like librarians but earn the little money of a library assistant. Therefore it seems to be better to prefer young applicants with a secondary school-leaving qualification (in German after 10 years: Realschulabschluss) for the FAMI apprenticeship. These professionals have fundamental interests in professional library activities as support staff but not or less in the role of leader. These different roles must be made clear for everybody taking part in this process: pupils, FAMILs, students, librarians and politicians.

Conclusions

Due to globalisation, innovations, and political regulations European LIS programmes and libraries themselves are undergoing fundamental reconstructions. To meet these challenges, well educated and trained personnel is requested. The substitution of the traditional 4 or 5 year Diploma degree to a 3 year Degree of Bachelor must therefore be accompanied by a broad information campaign. Further more the difference between the employee of media and information services (FAMI) on the one hand and the higher education at universities of applied sciences must be made clear and explained. The Conference of Informational and Librarian Education Institutions in Germany (KIBA) mapped out a campaign to close these information gaps. Ideally European education and research institutions on the one side and practitioners on the other hand have to discuss the future of European LIS education together.

References

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