

Master of Science in Berufsbildung: Masterarbeit

Registered Apprenticeship Programs in South Carolina - A Case Study

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Whereas the number of registered apprentices in the U.S. dropped dramatically during the economic downturn, South Carolina managed to expand the number of apprentices in the same period (2008-2012). Detailed information about the instruments and factors that allowed the increase of apprenticeship programs in South Carolina is available, but very little is known about how apprenticeship programs are actually implemented in the field. Consequently, this master thesis aimed to do research about the implementation of apprenticeship programs in practice. Therefore the research question was:

Why do companies offer registered apprenticeship programs and how do they implement them in practice?

To examine this question, a qualitative approach with exploratory character was used to empirically collect basic data for the case of South Carolina. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted in larger companies in the manufacturing sector. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed with qualitative content analysis.

Results show that the two major motivations to conduct an apprenticeship program are a) to train skilled workers and b) to profit from financial incentives. Companies with youth apprenticeships state social responsibility as an additional motivation. Regarding the actual implementation of the apprenticeship programs, this thesis shows that even though the written program outlines are part of the paperwork for the registration process, they do not allow to draw conclusions about how (if at all) the contents are implemented in practice. Whereas several companies have programs where the academic and the hands-on parts are implemented very carefully, there are also programs where no hands-on training takes place at all. The fact that such programs can nevertheless be registered as apprenticeship programs indicates that there is no or at least incomplete control.

The findings suggest that a highly flexible apprenticeship framework combined with a lack of control as well as financial incentives may lead to a lack of quality standards and in extremis to the registration of programs that do not fulfill the requirements of registered apprenticeship programs.

Keywords: Registered Apprenticeship, Youth Apprenticeship, South Carolina