

**DEVELOPING A STRUCTURED WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING PROGRAM
IN BENIN AFRICA –
A CASE STUDY IN PROGRESS**

Darnice R. Langford, Associate Professor
University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

ABSTRACT

In August 2006, Professor Darnice Langford was invited to the Republic of Benin to conduct a July 2007 seminar titled “Cooperative Education and Work-Integrated Learning.” In attendance at the Benin seminar were faculty and representatives of universities, technology institutes, and non-government organizations (NGOs).

The Republic of Benin is in the process of expansive education and economic reform. Social and university leaders are considering a variety of methods to support the country’s economic development including the initiation of structured Work-Integrated Learning programs into its education centers. Believing that the economic and education climate of Benin is ideal for a formalized system of WIL, the seminar participants’ primary objectives are two-fold: to enhance their education programs with practical experience for students; and to encourage economic development that benefits employers and citizens. In this presentation and paper, Professor Langford illustrates how she developed a seminar curriculum for Benin and other developing nations. Two critical results of the seminar are the development of a professional network (**African Universities Network for Work-Integrated Learning**), and a yearlong case study focusing on the National School of Applied Economics and Management.

KEYWORDS

Curriculum Development, International Co-op, Program Development, Economic Development, African Initiatives

INTRODUCTION

In collaboration with the Center for International Development and Social Economics (CIDSE) and the Center for International Environmental and Social Law (CIESL) in Cotonou, Benin, Professor Langford developed a five-day seminar titled Cooperative Education and Work-Integrated Learning. The impetus of the seminar was Mr. Toussaint Hinvi, Director of the CIESL. Six years earlier, he had visited the USA on an expedition to observe and learn about educational programs that might be useful in his own country. His visit included the University of Cincinnati (UC). Later he had heard of the reputation and success of the UC co-op program and wanted to learn about it. Later he met and heard that Professor Langford was involved with the co-op program and began discussions of how they could work together. She and Mr. Hinvi collaborated for approximately one year developing a program that would meet the needs of the Beninese

universities, students, businesses, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The methodology for developing the seminar and its outcomes are discussed in this paper.

OBJECTIVES

In addition to conducting the seminar to assist Beninese institutions in developing work-integrated learning programs, Professor Langford's objective for the visit was to increase her own knowledge on how to develop cooperative education and other work-integrated learning models to meet the cultural, political and social needs of other cultures (specifically Benin and other African cultures). In order to meet these mutually beneficial objectives, she planned and accomplished the following:

- Visited African companies to observe how and where students might work;
- Visited a newly-developed clinic to help determine how work-integrated learning can be utilized;
- Met Cotonou's Director of Economic Development;
- Met a Diplomat of United States Embassy to Benin who served as the Director of USAID;

BACKGROUND

Benin, a narrow, north-south strip of land in West Africa, is one of the smallest and most poverty-stricken countries in Africa. About the size of the state of Tennessee, it has a population of eight million people. The capital city is Porto Novo; however, Cotonou is the economic center of the country. The literacy rate for the total population is 40%, 47% for men, and 25% for women. Benin's economy is chiefly based on agriculture for export as well as national subsistence. The labor market is characterized by an increased reliance on informal employment, family helpers, and the use of apprentices. Training and job opportunities are not well matched.

Since the transition to a democratic government in 1990, Benin has undergone a remarkable economic recovery. A large injection of external investment from both private and public sources has alleviated the economic difficulties of the early 1990s caused by global recession and persistently low commodity prices (although the latter continues to affect the economy). Many previously government-owned commercial activities have become privatized in honor of Benin's commitment to the IMF and the World Bank. Beninese citizens privately own smaller businesses, but some firms are foreign owned, primarily French and Lebanese. The private commercial and agricultural sectors remain the principal contributors to growth. A large portion of the local economy is market oriented, where families sell their produce and wares. Essentially, there are not enough trained and educated citizens to support the nation's growth objectives. Though some universities have encouraged students to obtain internships and experiences, few institutions have formalized programs that combine work and education. (www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6761.htm)

Inflation has subsided over the past several years. In order to raise growth still further, Benin plans to attract more foreign investment, place more emphasis on tourism,

facilitate the development of new food processing systems and agricultural products, and encourage new information and communication technology. Specific projects to improve the business climate by reforms to the land tenure system, the commercial justice system, and the financial sector were included in Benin's \$307 million Millennium Challenge Account grant signed in February 2006. (www.mcc.gov/documents/csr-benin.pdf) The 2001 privatization policy continues in telecommunications, water, electricity, and agriculture in spite of government reluctance. Benin was one of the first West African countries to gain an internet connection. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) estimated that there were some 425,000 internet users by September 2006. (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/)

In light of the nation's progressive political, social, economic, and educational objectives, the collaborators of this seminar project considered their interests in work-integrated learning as well-timed. Professor Langford and Mr. Hinvi sought and obtained buy-in from the university leadership in Benin. The presidents of the National School for Applied Economics and Management (ENEAM), a School of the Université D'Abomey-Calavi, and of the Houdegbe North American University (both of Cotonou) gave their full support. These institutions will play an important part in the success of the project because of their strong infrastructures and their missions. ENEAM has set a progressive agenda for enhancing its distance learning program and Houdegbe is noted for its bilingual program in French and English.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEMINAR

At the beginning, it was very important to Professor Langford that she develop more than just a seminar. Considering the great need in Benin and other African countries, she wanted to work toward solutions that would be lasting. The week-long seminar could not be merely an exercise in learning. It would need to birth new strategies to move forward.

She and Mr. Hinvi determined that the seminar would have a "train the trainer" format. This way, others could learn about work-integrated learning and become part of the process long after she had returned to the US. Also, the seminar needed to be developed with a "nuts and bolts" format. Most of the recipients of the training would have no familiarity with the fundamentals of work-integrated learning. As a result, a comprehensive seminar curriculum was developed. (See Appendix 1.)

OUTCOMES

Houdegbe and ENEAM, two of the most prominent universities in Benin, sent representatives to the seminar. Also in attendance were a representative of the Benin Ministry of Finance, a medical doctor assisting in the establishment of a clinic in Porto Novo, members of the environmental NGOs of Cotonou, Benin and Lome, Togo, and a Nigerian church leader. Through the teamwork employed during the week's program, two critical positive outcomes were achieved:

- **African Universities Network for Work-Integrated Learning.** The establishment of this network of individuals representing higher education,

government, and non-government organizations will be a key determinant in the success of furthering work-integrated learning in Africa. Professor Langford and the participants will try to promote this new network to other educators, firms, and agencies in Benin.

- **Development of a Year-Long Case Study.** The National School for Applied Economics and Management volunteered to be the focus institution for this study. Professor Langford and the ENEAM faculty (Professors Koffi Bernard Ahou and Rémy Hounsou) will guide the case study in order to initiate a work-integrated learning program at that institution. The other members of the network will serve as a steering committee to ENEAM in its efforts as well as attempt to duplicate the success of case study into their own institutions and agencies. In August 2008, the network will assess their progress on this study. (See Appendix 2.)

CONCLUSION

This process has been a great opportunity for cultural understanding between individuals of different backgrounds, intellectual cooperation among international educators and leaders, and for knowledge sharing among groups with a commonality of issues and needs.

Once the participants of this seminar on work-integrated learning were informed about it, they were solidly in favor of moving full-speed ahead on implementing it. Ideally, development of the seminar was the first phase of an ongoing strategy toward addressing critical needs in Benin through the university system. The infrastructure of the country (or lack of in certain sectors) will make implementation of any type of work-integrated learning program a challenging endeavor. The network members will be faced with a lack of resources both from within the institutions and agencies, and from the government. Even more, they will have the daunting task of initiating a concept and methodology of education not currently practiced or well-known in Benin. Still the new proponents of this form of education are eager to spread their vision for their institutions and their country.

REFERENCES

1. www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6761.htm. The US Department of State, African Affairs Department.
2. www.mcc.gov/documents/csr-benin.pdf. The Millennium Challenge Corporation, Benin 2006.
3. www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/. The CIA World Fact Book.

APPENDIX 1



Cooperative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Seminar Programme Darnice R. Langford Associate Professor of Professional Practice University of Cincinnati

*RIVIERA Hotel
Cotonou, Benin AFRICA
July 16 – 20, 2007*

MONDAY, 16 JULY 2007

Nuts and Bolts of Work-Integrated Learning

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 8:30 am – 9:00 am | Coffee – Networking (This is an opportunity to meet other attendees and enjoy a morning beverage.) |
| 8:30 am – 3:00 pm | Registration Desk |
| 9:00 am – 10:00 am | Welcome and Introductions |
| 10:00 am – 11:00 am | “What is Work-Integrated Learning?” |
| 11:00 am – 11:30 am | Break |
| 11:30 am – 1:00 pm | Self-Assessment and Discussion Activity of Participants’ University Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) |
| 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm | Lunch |
| 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm | “Developing Program Objectives” |
| 3:00 pm – 3:10 pm | Break |
| 3:10 pm – 4:00 pm | “Developing Program Objectives” SWOT Analysis |

TUESDAY, 17 JULY 2007

Models And Infrastructures For Successful Co-Op And Work-Integrated Learning Programs

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 8:30 am – 9:00 am | Coffee – Networking |
| 8:30 am – 3:00 pm | Registration Desk |
| 9:00 am – 11:00 am | “Pedagogy of Work-Integrated Learning – What Makes WIL Academic?” |
| | Best Practices for Transferring Work into Learning – Group Discussion |
| 11:00 am – 11:30 am | Break |
| 11:30 am – 1:00 pm | Lunch |
| 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm | “Guiding Principles of WIL” |
| 3:00 pm – 3:10 pm | Break |
| 3:10 pm – 4:00 pm | “Faculty Involvement” |

WEDNESDAY, 18 JULY 2007

Development of a Curriculum for WIL

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| 8:30 am – 9:00 am | Coffee – Networking |
| 8:30 am – 12:00 noon | Registration Desk |
| 9:00 am – 11:00 am | “Developing Learning Objectives for WIL” |
| 11:00 am – 11:30 am | Break |
| 11:30 am – 1:00 pm | “Developing Learning Objectives for WIL” (Includes Group Discussion/Activity) |
| 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm | Lunch |
| 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm | “Developing a Curriculum and Syllabus” |
| 3:00 pm – 3:10 pm | Break |
| 3:10 pm – 4:00 pm | “Developing a Curriculum and Syllabus” (Continued) |

THURSDAY, 19 JULY 2007

Multi-dimensional Assessment

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| 8:30 am – 9:00 am | Coffee – Networking |
| 8:30 am – 12:00 noon | Registration Desk |
| 9:00 am – 11:00 am | “Assessing Student Learning” (Includes Group Discussion/Activity) |
| 11:00 am – 11:30 am | Break |
| 11:30 am – 1:00 pm | “Assessing Program Objectives” |
| 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm | Lunch |
| 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm | “Assessing Employer Effectiveness” |
| 3:00 pm – 3:10 pm | Break |
| 3:10 pm – 4:00 pm | “Preparing Employers to be Members of the Triad” |

FRIDAY, 20 JULY 2007

Institutional Buy-in

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| 8:30 am – 9:00 am | Coffee – Networking |
| 8:30 am – 12:00 noon | Registration Desk |
| 9:00 am – 11:00 am | “Funding Your Program” (Includes Group Discussion) |
| 11:00 am – 11:30 am | Break |
| 11:30 am – 1:00 pm | “Conclusion and Observations” |

SEMINAR BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Bruce A. Calway, Neil Diamond, Gerald Murphy and Dawn Watson; *Industry Participation In Teaching and Learning Outcomes*. Australia. World Conference on Cooperative Education. 1995 Conference Proceedings.
2. Cheryl Cates, Patricia Jones; *Learning Outcomes – The Educational Value of Cooperative Education*. The Cooperative Education and Internship Association
3. Johannes C. Esterhuysen; *A Structured Method For Effectively Administering An Experiential Training Syllabus*. South Africa. World Conference on Cooperative Education. 1995 Conference Proceedings.
4. James E. Garmon, Ronald A. Grant And Karl Stranberg; *Learning Objectives for Co-op Students*. Journal of Cooperative Education. XII, (1976) 80 – 88.
5. Emma W. Jordaan; *Twenty-one years of Experiential Training In Community Nursing, In A Third World Environment*. South Africa. World Conference on Cooperative Education. 1995 Conference Proceedings.
6. Darnice R. Langford, et. al: *Introduction to Professional Practice – Centennial Edition – A Student Text/Workbook*. University of Cincinnati, McGraw Hill ISBN 0-07-320721-7.
7. D. E. McNutt; *Developing Faculty Support for Cooperative Education through participation and Evaluation*. Journal of Cooperative Education. XVI, 3 (1980), 77-84.
8. Miriam Weisz; *How To Motivate & Train Academic Supervisors: Find the Missing Link to The Partnership in Co-op Education*. Australia. World Conference on Cooperative Education. 1995 Conference Proceedings.
9. You-Hai Wei and Mei-Fang Hou; *Work-Integrated Learning – A Powerful Educational Measure for Developing Countries to Catch Up With The Developed Countries*. China, World Conference on Cooperative Education. 1995 Conference Proceedings.

APPENDIX 2

AUNWIL STEERING COMMITTEE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR 2007/2008

Develop a case study utilizing the National School of Applied Economics and Management

- Arrange monthly meetings
- Select parts of Work-Integrated Learning
 - Translate PowerPoint slides into French
 - Reorganize and summarize PowerPoint slides
- Begin information sessions to faculty and administrators at university
- Reorganize teaching methods
 - Modify Learning Objectives
 - Changing some teaching techniques
 - Developing new assessment methods of students
- Enhance employer relationships
 - Develop lists of employers
 - Graduates hired last 2 years
 - Begin keeping a record of all student training worksites
 - Contact listed employers to develop partnerships
 - Visits
 - Letters
 - Emails
 - Invite employers to universities for
 - Meetings
 - Workshops & seminars
 - Infrastructure visitation
- Developing relationships between NGOs and universities
- Inform and sensitize new students on new Work-Integrated Learning program requirements
 - Develop requirements