

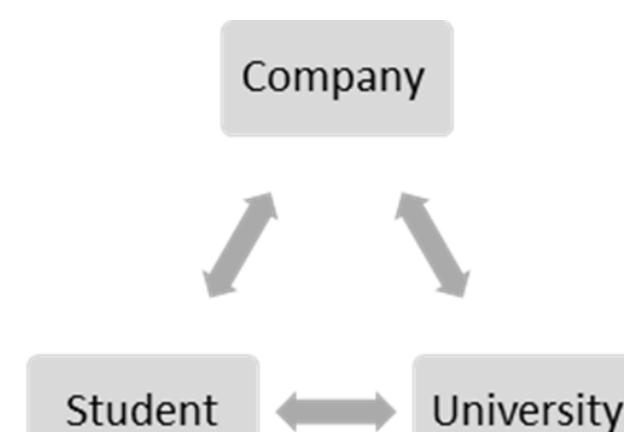
"On-the-Job" Projects and E-Journaling

Theory-to-Practice Transfer for Non-Traditional Students at Heilbronn University

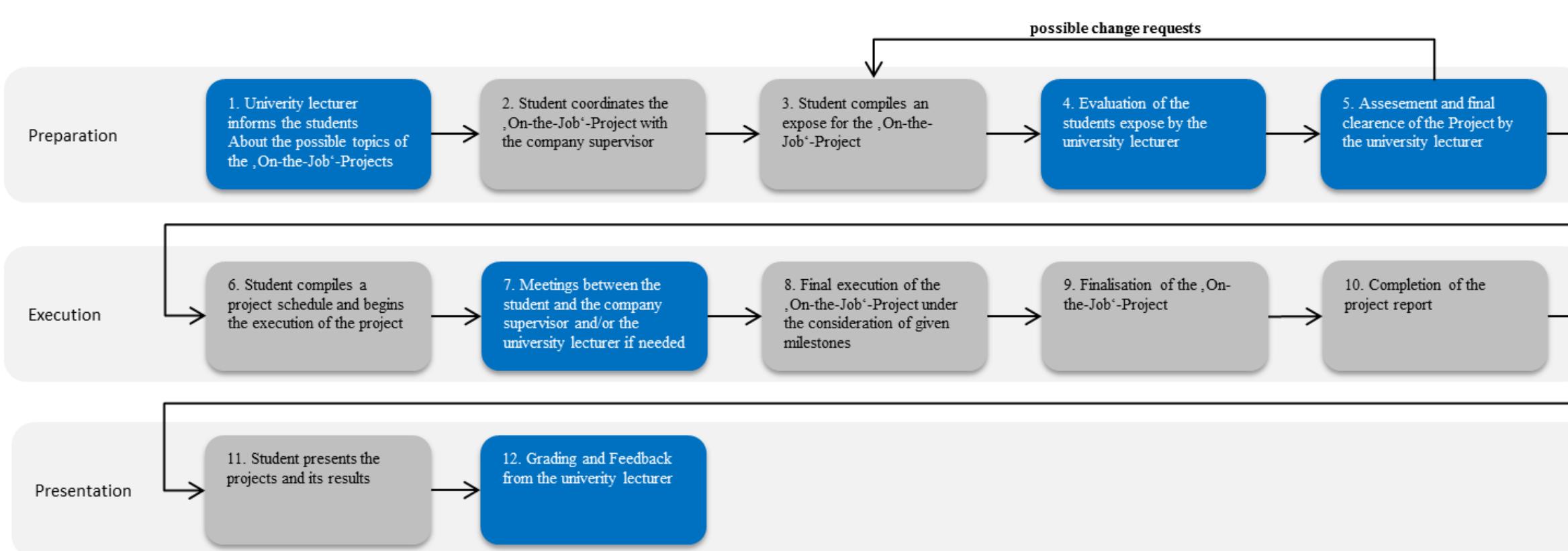


'On-the-Job'-Projects

The approach of the 'On-the-Job'-Projects is to secure a transfer between theoretical knowledge, which the student earns at the university, and its practical use for the companies. The goal of those projects is to solve actual issues, which are present at the company the students work for. Also the transfer back into the university via a presentation at the end of the semester is the key for a successful 'On-the-Job'-Project.



Cycle of the 'On-the-Job'-Projects



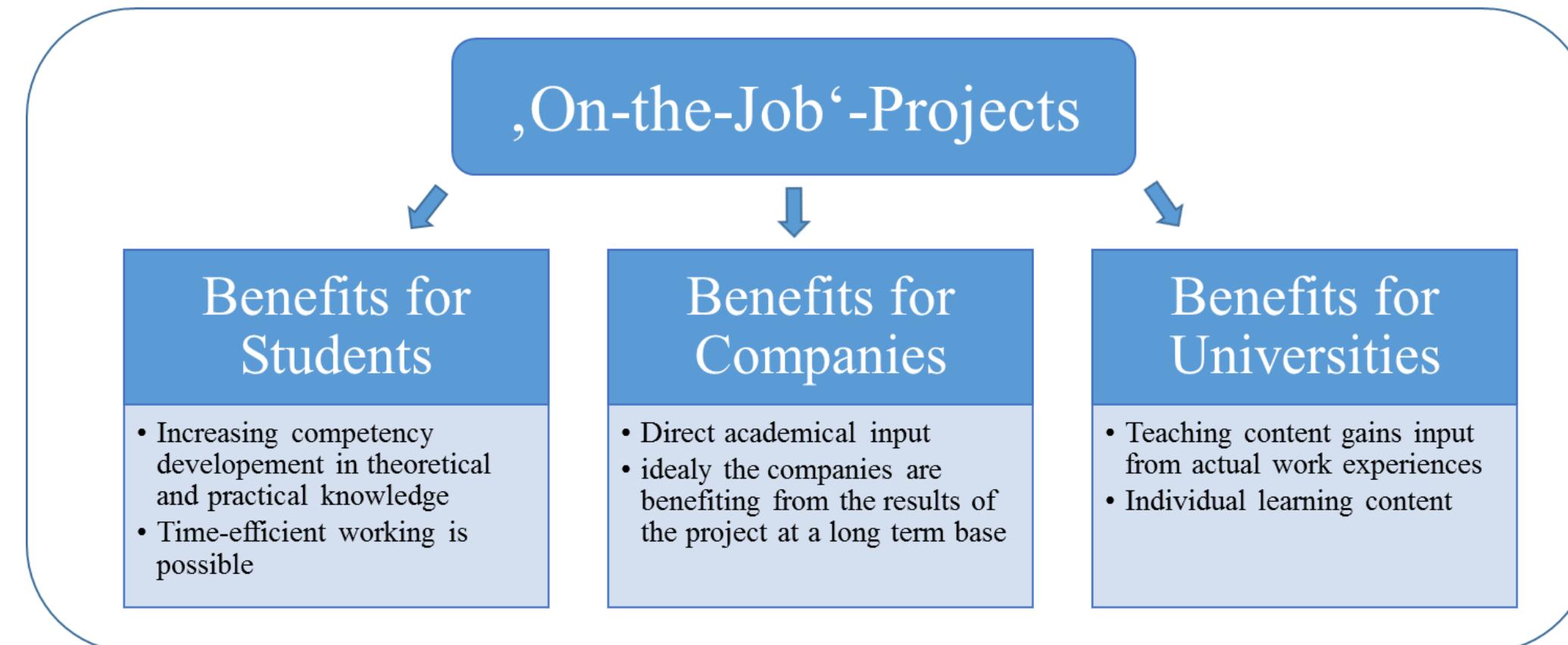
Challenges

Non-traditional students study under special circumstances. They often work full time for their employers. To study properly it is necessary to spend a huge amount of free time in order to achieve a degree. The 'On-the-Job'-Projects can provide additional time resources since it is possible to combine work and studying. A work-based task is given to the students, which they can ideally solve while being at work.

Outcome

Overall the participants are satisfied with the concept of the 'On-the-Job'-Projects and its development. Via group discussions, as well as individual interviews, we spoke with 50 students and 13 company supervisors. Mostly, the feedback was positive. The supervisors told that the company had a benefit from the project and they also saw the student adapted competences in the field of work as well as a personal grow. The students are able to show their newly achieved knowledge at their workplaces. This also helps to fortify the subject matters, since they are always present while working. Therefore a steady learning process and an increase of expertise is achieved by the 'On-the-Job'-Project (Köster, 2014).

Benefits of the Theory-to-Practice Transfer



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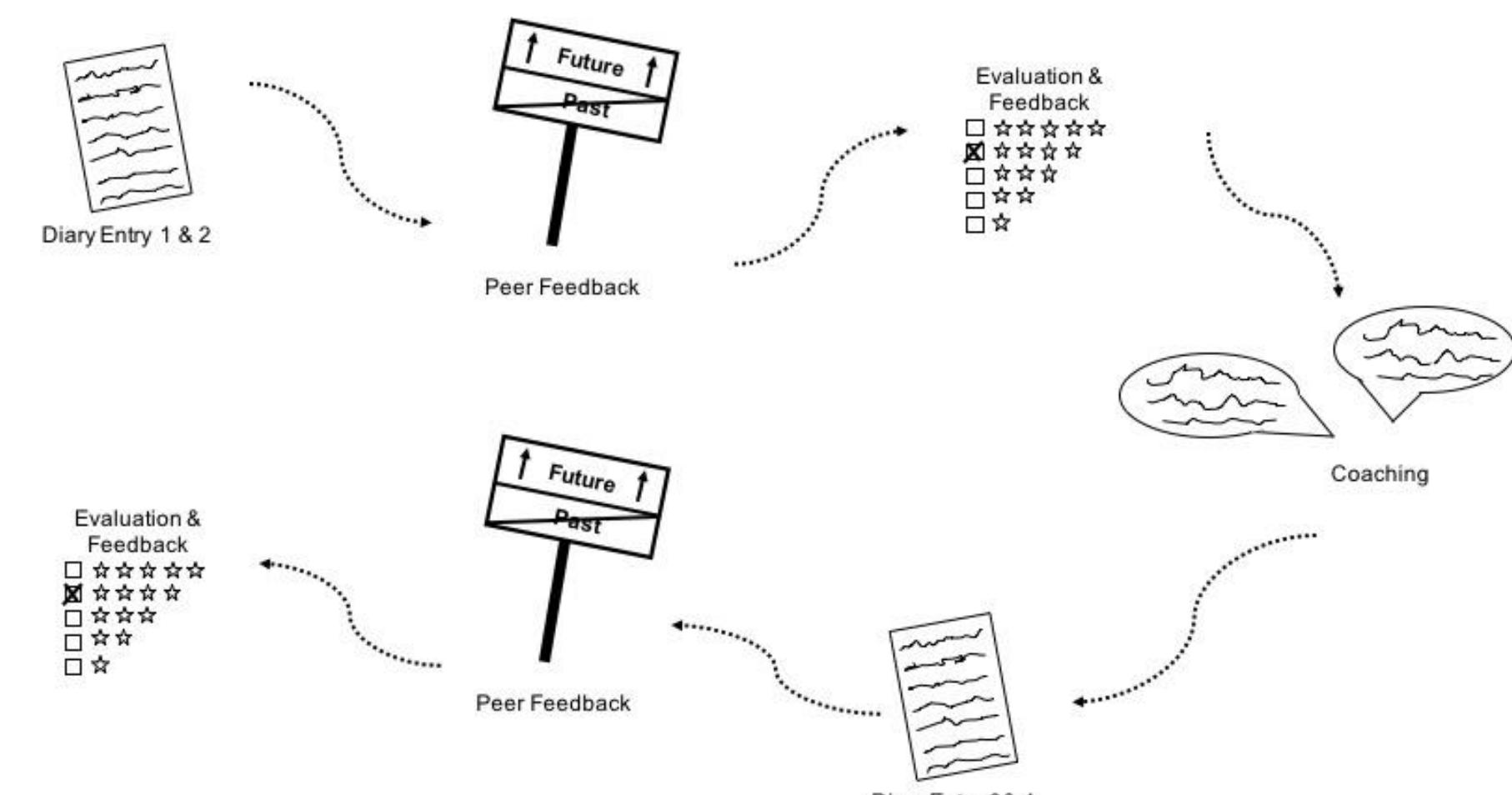
Applied Portfolio: (E-)Journaling and Coaching

(E-)Journaling and coaching are part of the curriculum of the non-traditional Bachelor engineering at the Heilbronn University with the aim to support and develop students' reflective faculties further.

„The (E-)Journal holds experiences as a puzzle holds its pieces. The writer begins to recognize the pieces that fit together and, like the detective, sees the picture evolve“
(Williamson, 1997, S.98).

Method

Students in the third, fourth and fifth semester are obliged to submit diary entries on the learning platform ILIAS. In each semester, the students are asked to submit two entries followed by peer-feedback, teacher's feedback and a coaching session (the session is obligatory in the third semester, voluntary in the fourth and fifth semester) and another two entries followed by peer-feedback and teacher's feedback. The class 2017 also engaged in a competence measurement.



Portfolio procedure in the 3rd, 4th and 5th semester. Cohort also underwent a competence measurement after each evaluation and feedback round.

Diary Entry

The following guiding questions were given to help students creating their diary entries:

- Did you experience any professional or interpersonal problems?
- Describe something you found interesting at your workplace. Why was it interesting?
- Describe something which did not work the way you intended. What was the reason? What could you learn from it and how could you avoid the problem next time?

Peer-Feedback

Feedback is a way to evaluate one's behavior and performance (e.g., Thachter, 1994) and has an impact on people. Negative feedback can easily suppress positive effects and evoke unwanted reactions (Smithier, London & Reilly, 2005; Goldsmith, 2003). To avoid these negative and unwanted reactions to feedback, we employed the so-called "Feedforward Feedback" (Goldsmith, 2003). This feedback method is future directed and prohibits looks into the past and aims to train students in thinking outside the box.

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