WACE 2015 and SASCE study tour
By Dr Roelien Brink

The 19th WACE world conference on Cooperative and Work-integrated Education was hosted in Kyoto Japan, on 19-21 August 2015. A group of 36 delegates who represented the African continent were from, South-Africa (30), Namibia (5) and Nigeria (1).

The number of attendees supported the critical importance of WIL and as Dr R Brink, Editor of The African Journal for Work-Based Learning observed, this trend reaffirmed Cooperative and Work-Integrated Learning research is active, alive and evolving all the time. At the International Research Group meetings as Vice Chair of Africa, Dr R Brink was proud to report that the 4th Edition, Volume 3, Number 1 of The African Journal for Work-Based Learning was published in July 2015.
Dr R Brink is in the process of structuring an international editorial board for the journal. This editorial board will contribute to the promotion of high standards of quality papers, support the review of submitted papers and contribute to strategic themes and focus areas for future editions. These reviewers’ reports will contribute to and accelerate accreditation with the appropriate authorities in Africa. The accreditation of this journal will undoubtedly generate more interest in research and facilitate publication opportunities. The international research group at WACE supports Africa and is on board to assist Africa where possible. It is envisaged that Volume 4, Number 2 of the journal will be published in November 2015 and will be available on the SASCE website.

After a fruitful WACE conference, ten SASCE members from the following institutions: Durban University of Technology (DUT), Vaal university of Technology (VUT), Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), University of Johannesburg (UJ) and Polytechnic of Namibia partook in a SASCE study tour and visited the South African Embassy in Thailand, Bangkok University, Suranaree University of Technology and Western Digital Thailand.

The first stop of the tour was at Western Digital Thailand, the world’s largest manufacturer of computer hard-drives and external drives. The company did a presentation where they explained all about the Co-op process. Western Digital Thailand hosts 100 Work-Integrated Learning students from Thailand and 14 foreign countries including South Africa. The four students for 2014 from South-Africa are from Durban University of Technology (DUT) and in 2015, five students from DUT will be placed at this institution.

Western Digital very pleased with 4 DUT students. However, all the other international and Thai students only spend 4 months at WD, whilst DUT students spend 1 year (2 x 6 months). DUT may have to bring this in line so that DUT students will only be afforded 6 months.

Ayuthayya College is very keen to engage with DUT and DUT will visit the college on the next visit to Thailand.
After the presentation, the possibility was discussed on how other Universities of Technologies (UoT’s), Comprehensive Universities and Polytechnic of Namibia can access this opportunity and collaborate with this industry to secure placement opportunities for students. Placement of students is a critical part for WIL. To place students from South-African and Namibia in Thailand or vice versa for WIL would be beneficial. This visit was two fold as the DUT members visited their students currently fulfilling their WIL component at Western Digital Thailand. DUT members interviewed the students as well and it was a rewarding opportunity for the rest of the SASCE members, from other UoT’s and Comprehensive Universities to learn from this practice.

The SASCE team together with the Western Digital team

The second stop of the study tour was the Bangkok University, a private university with about 25 000 students. A presentation was done by the University of Bangkok and collaboration possibilities were discussed with the delegates from South-Africa and Namibia.
After these discussions, the delegation was taken on a tour of the campus and introduced to the different co-operative education projects that the university was working on. One of the interesting projects that fascinated the delegation was the Tourism classes presented in a replica of an aeroplane. All study tour participants were impressed with Bangkok University. Bangkok University commitment to student-centredness and being a creative university (even in the engineering Faculty) was very evident.

The third stop was at the South African Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. The visit was done to inform the Embassy about why Thailand was being visited by the SASCE team. Mr. Shakeel Ori explained to the embassy delegation, the purpose of the visit to the mentioned universities and industry partners. The purpose was to form possible partnerships between universities and industries of Thailand and Universities of Technologies, Comprehensive Universities and Polytechnic of Namibia in South-Africa and in Namibia. One of the SASCE delegation members, Mr. Pop, is a student at the Suranaree University of Technology in Bangkok studying towards a PhD in Work-Integrated Learning. Senior Consul that met with us remarked that they were very happy with DUT’s involvement in Thailand and suggested further engagement with Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar. The embassy was also aware of the DUT students and was distributing DUT material as well. The South African Embassy in Thailand was found to be very supportive of interaction in the ASEAN countries and promised support to engagements with industry and universities.
The fourth stop of the study tour was at the Suranaree University of Technology (SUT), a four hour drive from Bangkok and some bonding time for the SASCE team members. First a presentation was done by SUT about cooperative education at SUT. After the presentation and introductions as SASCE members and SUT cooperative education members, a meeting was held. The focus of deliberations was to discuss the way forward in collaborating with SUT and how the UoT’s, Comprehensive Universities and Polytechnic of Namibia can work together. After discussions, the meeting was adjourned.
The SASCE team joined the Suranaree team at the Hotel in Korat.
The last stop of this study tour MitrPhol, Sugar Mill, Danchang District, Supanburi. A presentation was done by MitrPhol. The divisions present at the presentation were Agriculture; Sugar Milling; Ethanol Production; Renewable energy; Research. MitrPhol are considering hosting DUT students. Dr Maggie Chetty can give workplace approval for Chemical Engineering students and Dr Jay Paramanund for Mechanical Engineering and Industrial Engineering and Mr Trevor Naidoo for Operations Management and Quality Assurance. Mr Themba Msukiwini could do the same for Analytic Chemistry. In addition, MitrPhol has a strong research division. There is therefore possibility of engaging with the research division on research (either via SUT or directly).