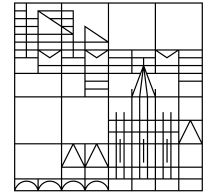




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"The German VET system: opportunities for policy learning in the UK?"

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Thomas Deissinger, University of Konstanz/Germany
„Rethinking Skills Symposium“, February 7th, 2019 – City of Glasgow College

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- **The German VET policy context**
- Parameters and principles of dual apprenticeships in the German context
- System sub-optimality
- Policy learning from Germany?

General outline – German VET

- Clear borderline both between **general** and **vocational** education and training (VET) as well as between the **dual apprenticeship system** and the **full-time vocational school system**
- Strong social and economic **importance** of the dual apprenticeship system as an important non-academic post-secondary pathway into employment
- **In contrast, full-time VET** is multi-functional, i.e. only partly has labour market links
- **Progression to HE not** from the apprenticeship system, but from full-time VET
- However: The „Meister“ now rates high in the GQF (level 6) and holders can get admission to HE without an Abitur (A level)
- HE entrance from work/employment is now more likely than in former years though still a minor phenomenon

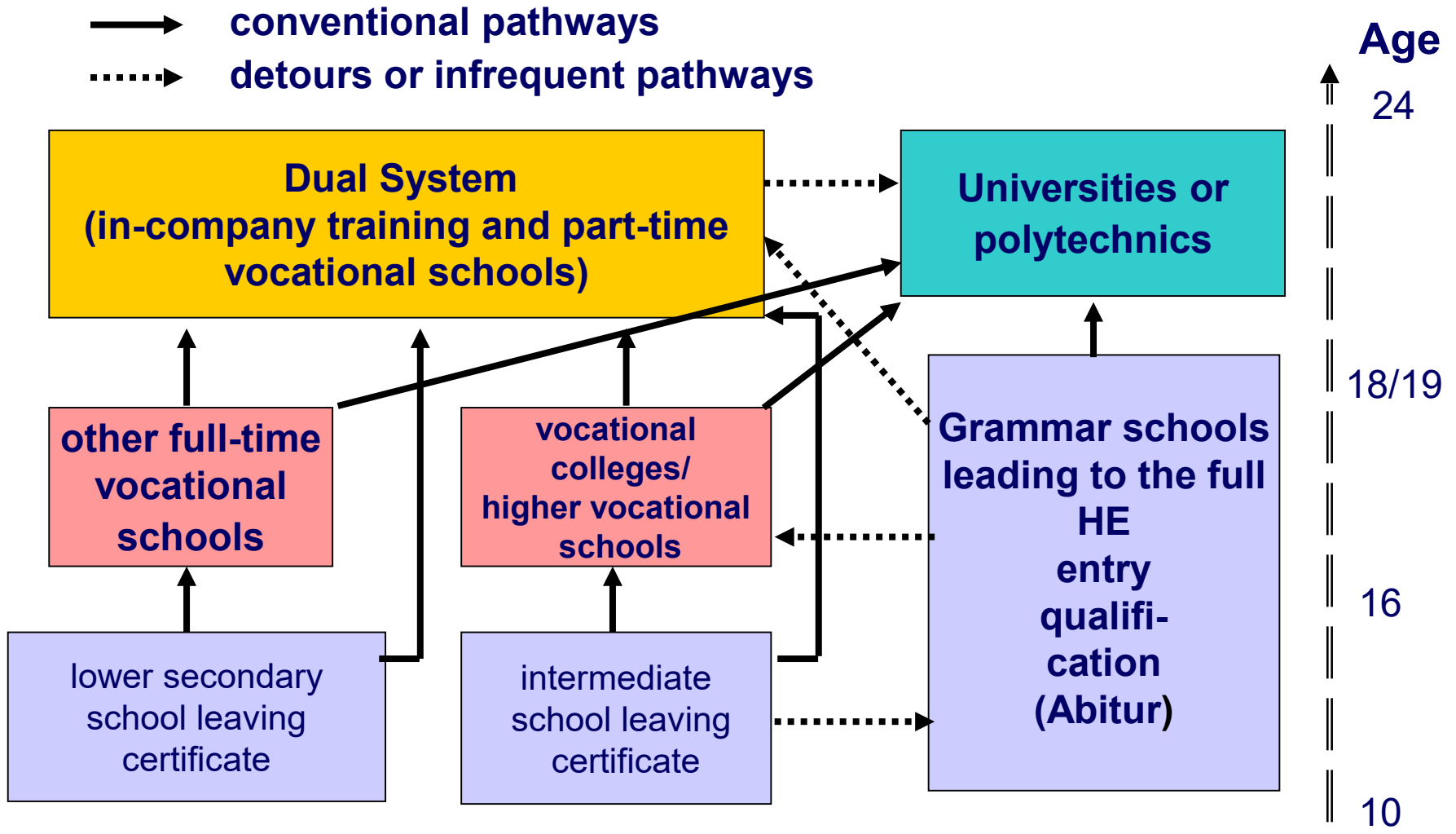
Sources: Greinert 1994; Deissinger 2019; Deissinger et al. 2013; Deissinger/Smith/Pickersgill 2006

VET in schools in the German context

4 types of courses/qualifications

- recognised skilled occupations based on the Vocational Training Act (dual system)
- „school occupations“ based on federal state law
- educational qualifications (progression routes)
- vocational preparation / ‚transition system‘

Sources: Deissinger 2019; Zabeck.1985; Deissinger/Smith/Pickersgill, 2006



Germany's Education and VET System

Some statistical facts – German VET

- Some **1.3 million** young people (2017) undergo **apprenticeships** in the dual system (mostly 3-year courses)
- Around **1.2 million** attend **full-time / school-based** courses in VET (2017)
- As against some **2.8 million students in higher education** (2017/18)
- Companies and vocational part-time schools train young people in 326 different training occupations (2017)
- Share of training companies = 19.8% % (2016)
- 28 % of apprentices (2017) get their training in the craft sector (trades)
- Apprentices amount to 4.9 % of the workforce (2016)
- 27 % (!) of apprentices (2017) have a HE entrance qualification (2 levels)
- “Transition system” still a reality (some 250,000 p.a. entering)

Source: BMBF 2016; BIBB 2016; BiBB 2018

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Key institutional elements of the German dual system

- Strong commitment of employers to offer training places
- Strong involvement of social partners / consensus principle
- Part-time education at school, both vocational and general subjects
- High degree of formalisation
- Qualifications portable on „occupational labour markets“ (330 occupations)
- Chambers as monitoring and examining bodies
- Trainer qualifications required for company-based training
- Specialised teacher training for vocational schools
- Still fairly high esteem of practical learning in society (dual universities)

Sources: Harris/Deissinger 2003; Euler 2013; Deissinger 2010; Greinert 1994

Standardisation of training schemes (occupations)

Section 5 Vocational Training Act

Initial Training Regulations (Training Ordinances)

The initial training regulations shall specify

1. the designation of the training occupation to be recognized;
2. the duration of initial training, which shall not be more than three or fewer than two years;
3. the vocational skills, knowledge and qualifications to at least be imparted in the course of initial training (training occupation profile);
4. an outline of the syllabus and timetable to be followed when imparting the vocational skills, knowledge and qualifications (overall training plan);
5. the examination requirements.

Sources: Stender 2006; Deissinger 1996

Essential: Employers' role in the dual system

- Offering and funding apprenticeships for school leavers
- Developing and revising training regulations, together with trade unions
- Functions in examination boards
- Functions in chamber commissions and at the BiBB
- Chamber presidents are always employers of the respective region
- Cooperation with vocational part-time schools through training and personnel departments
- Employers shape and influence VET policy through the chamber organisation and employers organisations

Sources: Stender 2006; Deissinger 2010; 2015

governing principle = self-government

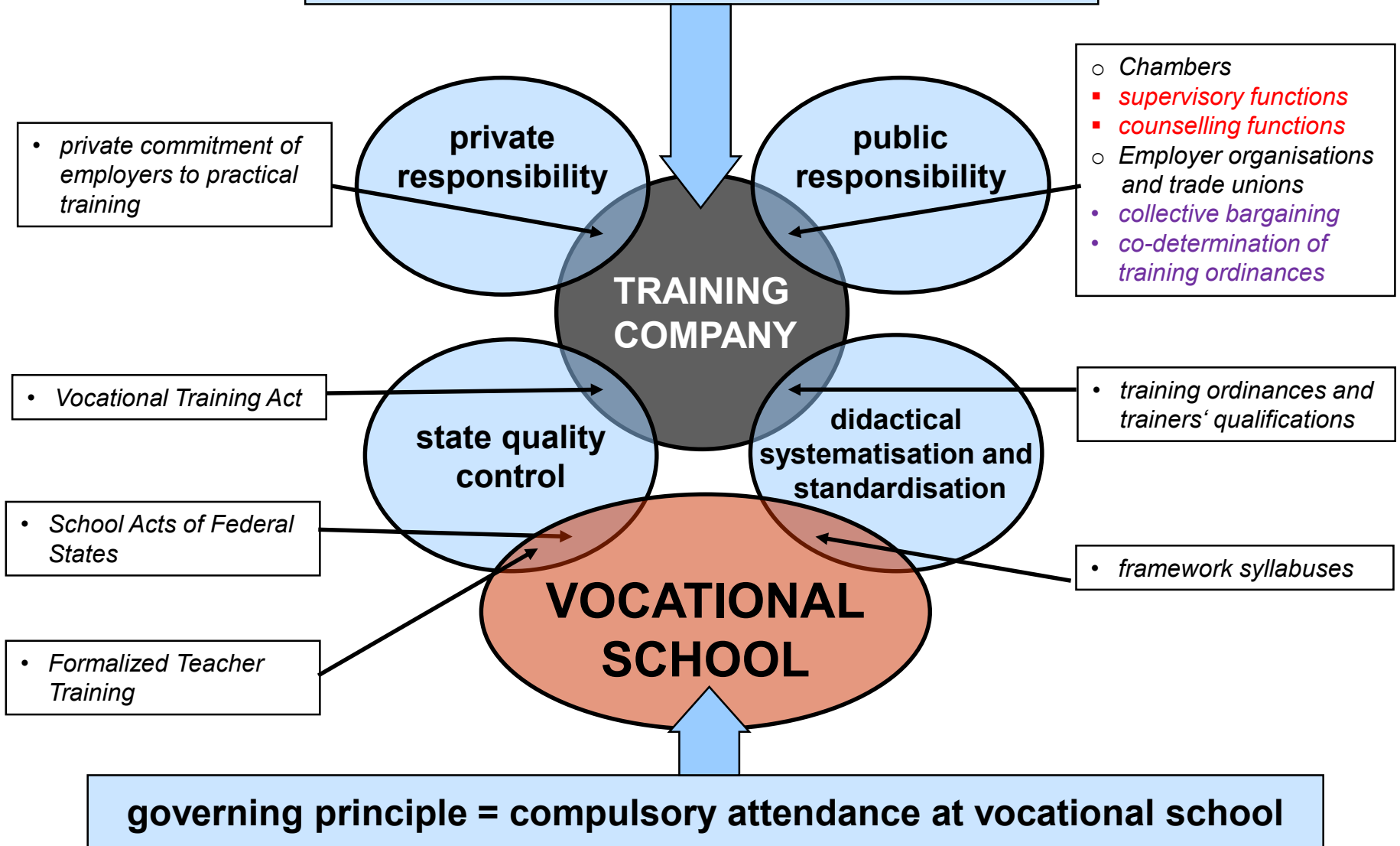
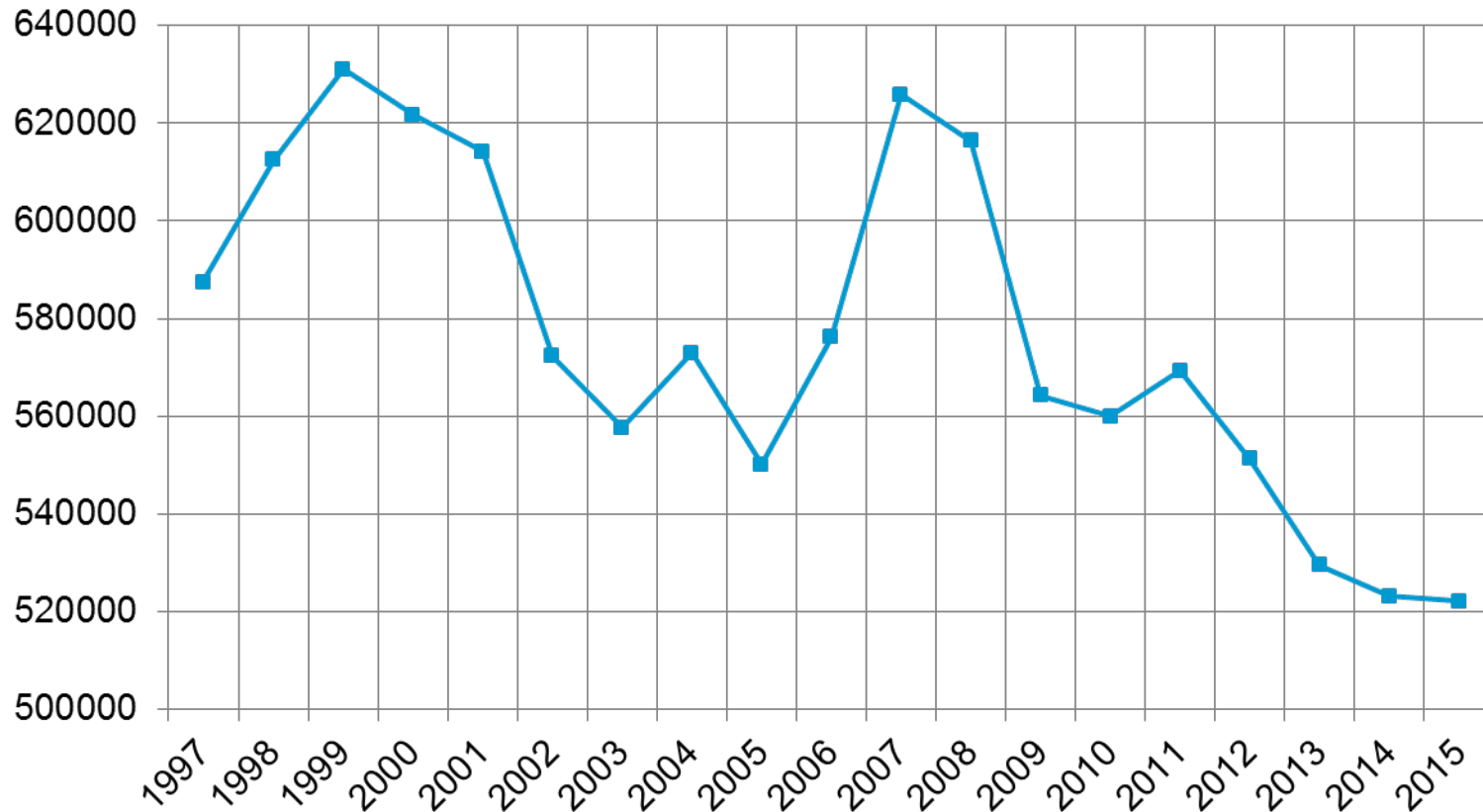


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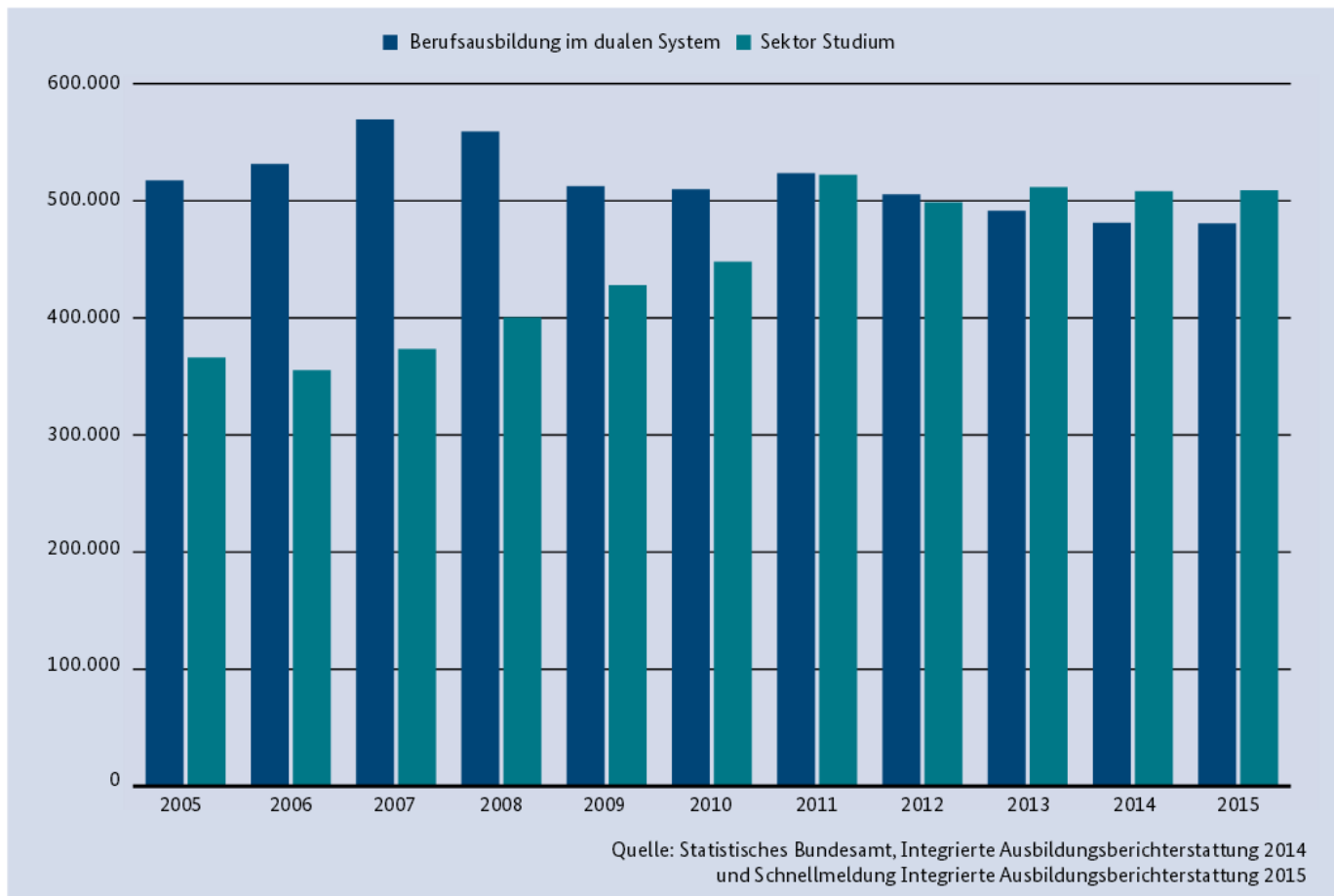
Number of new training contracts

(1997 – 2015)

Paradoxes on the training market

- Companies articulate the „battle for apprentices“
- Image campaign of the craft sector („we invented the wheel“)
- However, companies offering occupations that would normally be open for „disadvantaged“ school leavers cannot „fill“ their places
- Companies have high expectations in terms of social skills etc.
- Young people have high expectations, too, including academic aspirations
- Demographic change aggravates mismatches

Source: Matthes/Ulrich 2014; Ulrich 2011



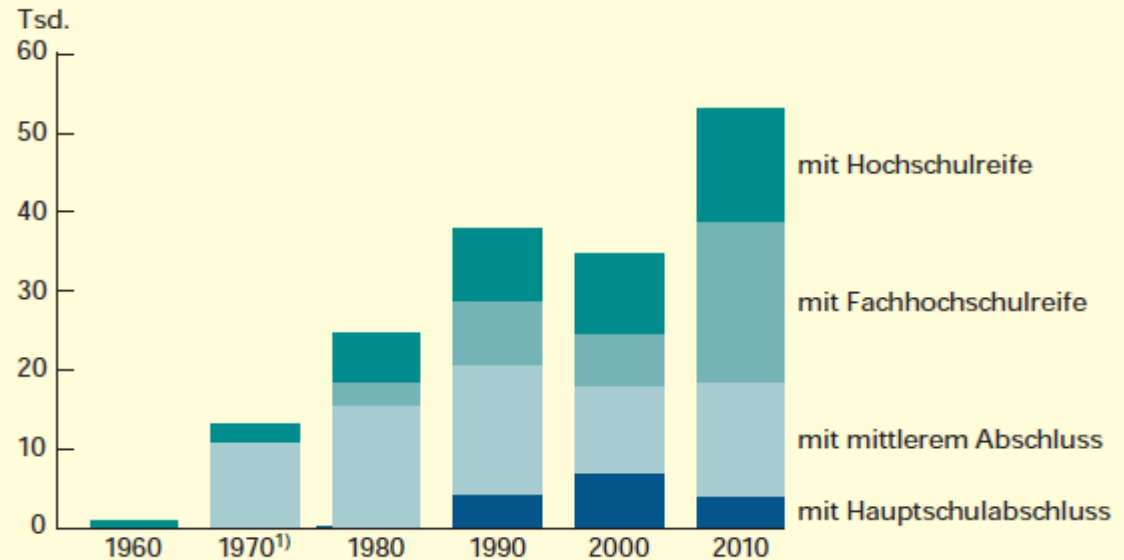
Intakes: Dual system vs. Higher Education

(Germany, 2005 - 2015)

Source: BMBF 2016, p. 42

S2

Entwicklung allgemeinbildender Abschlüsse an beruflichen Schulen in Baden-Württemberg seit 1960 nach Abschlussarten



1) Ohne Angaben zu Abschlüssen mit Fachhochschulreife.
Datenquelle: Schulstatistik

The contribution of full-time VET towards tertiarisation (1960-2010, Baden-Württemberg)

Source: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2012

The German context - ambivalences

- **Tertiarisation** is putting the dual system at risk where it has always worked comparatively well, i.e. in the commercial sector and regarding high achievers from secondary schools
- Dual system **still strong though losing appeal** among young people
- **Weaker learners and “problem groups”** will continue facing difficulties in getting an apprenticeship placement as employers have high expectations in terms of personality of applicants, social competences, learning skills, and school grades
- Training market will remain a problem despite a better supply-demand quota due to **matching problems**
- On the other hand, the dual system is now **spreading its “logic”** in a culturally defined manner, e.g. by “infecting” the higher education system

Universities

Polytechnics/
„Universities of
Applied Sciences“

**Vocational
Academies/
“Dual
Universities“**

„Universities
of Education“

Upper Secondary Education

Higher Education in Germany

(federal state of Baden-Württemberg)

Characteristics of vocational academies (dual tertiary institutions/„Dual Universities“)

- „Premium apprenticeship“ coupled with academic studies
- „Academic dual system“ (half/half)
- Full university entrance qualification required
- Training contract required for admission
- Attractive training allowances for students
- Three-year courses leading to Bachelor degree

Sources: Krone 2015; Deissinger 2000; Zabeck/Deissinger 1995

Vocational academies/dual tertiary institutions – lessons learnt so far

- Graduates are highly regarded by employers
- Students attain a good balance of academic and practical achievement
- Programmes are mostly specialised and innovative as companies are directly involved
- There is active cooperation between the academy and training companies
- Graduates can proceed to Master courses (even at universities)
- Dual tertiary institutions clearly represent a trend to “vocalionalise” the academic, but also to “generalise” the vocational by putting it up to the tertiary level

Sources: Institut für Arbeit und Qualifikation 2016; Krone 2015; Deissinger 2000

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Issues regarding Policy Learning (1)

Can the German system with its specific context, traditions and structural features be a transferable “model” for other countries?

(Examples: Spain, Ukraine)

- Certainly NO in a narrow sense since political and cultural parameters are too specific!
- POLICY BORROWING does not seem to be the right way!

But why is the “dual principle” so interesting for other VET systems?

- It includes various responsibilities for the training process and its quality although the “learning site configuration” seems to be the most attractive facet (closing the theory-practice gap)

Issues regarding Policy Learning (2)

Instead: What could the UK LEARN from Germany?

- Trade union involvement and “shared practices” between stakeholders can have a quality impact!
- Standardisation of training that aiming at a broad range of skills and underpinning knowledge
- Treating young people as learners, not normal employees

WHICH MEANS:

- including mandatory elements in the VET system, such as compulsory attendance at college classes or a VET law which specifies standards and responsibilities
- = no structural or institutional “copying” but looking at “principles” that underlie a comprehensive understanding of VET as an economic, social and pedagogical issue and challenge

Sources: Raffe & Spours 2007; Pilz 2017; Deissinger 2015; Winch 2006

Issues regarding Policy Learning (3)

However - We need to take a realistic perspective:

- Mindsets and cultural factors can neither be copied nor adopted exactly as a blueprint from the country with which we compare our own system!
- Limitations in the country trying to “learn” from another one have to be taken into account and cannot be shoved aside in an arbitrary way!
- Experiences and/or structural solutions that have proved to be functional in the country offering the “learning” may have to be adapted to the other national or regional context

From a German perspective: Employer commitment, the focus on quality of workplace learning, limitations of time for training, and the fragmentation within the VET system seem to remain a crucial concern in the UK VET policy and VET research context!

Issues regarding Policy Learning (4)

Is it therefore a “Mission Impossible” for the UK
(Busemeyer/Vossiek 2016)?

“Expaining factors”:

Voluntarism and a decidedly liberal market approach to VET

Trade unions rather weak compared to other countries

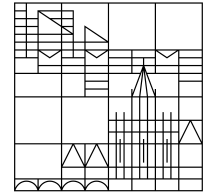
Apprenticeship model lost importance during the Industrial Revolution

Substitutes in the 1970s and 1980s were not able to fill this gap

Social reputation of non-academic pathways weaker than in the German-speaking countries

Sources: Keep 2015; Busemeyer/Vossiek 2016; Gospel 1995; Fuller/Unwin 2011; Deissinger 1994

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**Thanks for
your attention!**

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