

# VET TRENDS 2016

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Permeability

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## VET Trends 2016



**BIRGIT THOMANN**  
Head of Department "Internationalisation of Vocational Education and Training/Knowledge Management" at BIBB

### Dear readers,

Vocational education and training (VET) aligned to the needs of the labour market is a powerful means to empower both young people and adult learners to participate in economic and social life. Currently, the United Nations are discussing the new sustainable development goals and fortunately, a proper education aim to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote life-long learning opportunities will be part of this.

At the same time, the UNESCO recommendation on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is being updated. The revised version will underline the importance of work-based learning and life-long learning approaches. Regarding the governance of (T)VET, all relevant stakeholders should participate in the development of modern vocational education and training that is oriented to the needs of the labour market. In order to still attract young people in the 21st century, VET needs to keep up with the fast changes in the world of work. It needs to provide flexible entry points as well as to prepare for professional career opportunities that are attractive and upgradable.

Having these developments in mind, we are dedicating the new special edition of our journal "Berufsbildung in Wissenschaft und Praxis" (Vocational Training in Research and Practice), generally referred to as BWP, to some main trends in VET. The focus is on topics that are of relevance to stakeholders shaping VET in research, policy and practice at a European and international level. In addition, the four chapter headings epitomise topics that are of strategic relevance to the BIBB in its capacity as the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training in Germany. The articles have been compiled thoroughly and published in English in order to give you insights into current trends within the German system of vocational education and training and to shed light on a number of developments in international VET cooperation.

In particular, the challenge of validation of non-formal and informal learning and respective learning outcomes have currently gained in importance to an extent that even exceeded our expectations when we worked on the composition of this edition. Considering the situation of huge numbers of refugees coming to the European Union and Germany in particular, it is becoming increasingly imperative to enhance the recognition of professional qualifications acquired abroad as well as means and instruments to validate knowledge, skills and competences that cannot be proved by written documents or are gained in non-formal or informal learning contexts.

Inclusion still remains both a commitment and a challenge for VET practitioners and experts. Good and promising practices need to be collated and disseminated in order to encourage others to join in. Many companies training young people with disabilities regard this experience as a positive one. This is encouraging in our efforts towards inclusion.

In all these areas, it is enriching to share points of view, learning experiences and promising practices in an international dialogue. The internationalisation of our institute will therefore continue. It is our belief that the future of vocational education and training cannot be discussed within national contexts only. More opportunities for reciprocal learning, exchange and joint projects need to be developed. For this reason, we would like to invite you establish contact with us at the BIBB in Germany.

Last but not least, enjoy your reading and take care!

*B. Thomann*

# International vocational education and training cooperation – a positive first-year appraisal



**FRIEDRICH HUBERT ESSER**

Prof. Dr., President of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)

**In the face of high youth unemployment and shortages of skilled workers in many countries, dual initial vocational education and training structures are more sought after than ever. International cooperations on vocational education and training take up this interest and often – in the course of a mutual learning process – culminate in efforts to reform national qualification systems accordingly. A large number of German stakeholders with a range of motives and approaches are involved.**

## A common strategy is essential

There is an increasingly important need for transparency about the different activities and for coherence, i. e. a common strategic approach to reform, so that these endeavours complement one another as far as possible. Just over a year ago, under the coordination of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the German government therefore passed a strategy for international cooperation on vocational education from a single source. Key components of this strategy are the establishment of the “Round Table for International Vocational Education and Training Cooperation” and the German Office for International Cooperation in VET (GOVET) at BIBB.

The “Round Table” now concentrates the expertise of representatives from the political, business and social sectors and provides a platform for the information and coordination needs already mentioned. GOVET is the central contact partner for all stakeholders in vocational education and training cooperation. BIBB contributes its own expertise, with the additional backing of staff seconded from the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

As a competence centre, for years BIBB has been the point of contact for numerous foreign delegations and a highly esteemed dialogue partner for its combination of research expertise and proven practice. Over the years a tight network of European and non-European partner institutes has grown up. For instance, BIBB is Germany’s UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre as well as a longstanding cooperation partner of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) in Thessaloniki and the European Training Foundation (ETF) in Turin. BIBB also maintains intense professional communication with the vocational training institutes in Austria and Switzerland. Joint research and development projects exist with partner

institutes in countries including South Korea and Australia. This cooperation will be strengthened with a particular emphasis on institutes in European partner countries.

## International cooperation thrives on communication among equals

BIBB also gains valuable impulses from international cooperation for its work at national level. This was evident just recently during the BIBB Congress in Berlin, where 800 participants from 35 countries discussed the detailed organisation of education and vocational training systems. The increasing internationalisation of VET makes high demands on the staff of BIBB, who support and instigate cooperations around the world with profound subject knowledge and intercultural sensitivity. The willingness to engage in reciprocal learning and an appreciative attitude towards dialogue partners are the fundamental prerequisites for successful advisory work and cooperation.

In establishing GOVET, the German government has expressed its trust in BIBB’s competence and expertise. When “Round Table” members met at the end of September 2014, their verdict on its first year was a positive one. The statements in this issue by the Education Minister and the State Secretary on the work of the “Round Table” likewise reflect the growing momentum of international cooperation. We take this as both an incentive and an imperative to keep up the common approach as we tackle future challenges. ◀

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Translation from the German original (published in BWP 6/2014):  
Deborah Shannon, Academic Text and Translation, Berlin



# Vocational education and training cooperation from a single source

Official statements on the Federal Government's common strategy and the work of the "Round Table"

**International cooperation on vocational education and training has intensified and diversified over the past few years. A variety of policy areas are involved: apart from education policy issues, matters of development and foreign policy come into play, as do economic and labour market policy considerations. A "Round Table" was established in October 2013 as part of the Federal Government's common strategy for international cooperation "One-stop International Cooperation in Vocational Training", and the German Office for International Vocational Education and Training Cooperation (GOVET) was brought into being. GOVET will pool expertise across departments and organisational entities so that German activities in international vocational training cooperation can be developed and showcased coherently. The statements by the Ministers of State and State Secretaries at the Federal ministries describe how this will happen.**

**BWP** Professor Böhmer, what are the Federal Foreign Office's priorities in international cooperation, and how do you feed them into the overall strategy?

**BÖHMER** International vocational training policy is closely linked to our foreign trade and investment promotion. The priorities are to tackle the shortage of skilled labour facing German companies both abroad and here at home, to lower the worryingly high levels of youth unemployment in many parts of the EU and to improve the social and economic situation in the many emerging economies and developing countries which are gradually discovering the value of vocational training.

To this end, the Federal Foreign Office cooperates closely with the other Federal ministries. Our main role is to provide legal and foreign-policy support for actors from the political, business and social spheres. We support vocation-

al training initiatives in many countries, "training partnerships", we do PR work in the countries concerned and work with the Chambers of Commerce Abroad to organise round tables. In this context, we are always seeking to convince companies in the host countries that it is worth investing in training. Complementary vocational training streams at German Schools Abroad can also help anchor the dual system of vocational training in a country.

The presentation created by GOVET is a good instrument which Germany's missions abroad can use to provide initial advice on the subject.

Reports by our missions abroad on vocational training can be used by everyone in the Round Table network. It is important that vocational training is a fixture in bilateral relations with the host countries so that we can carry out concrete initiatives there. Only if we know what the host country really wants to achieve in this area can we ensure that viable structures are put in place. "Projectitis" and insular solutions help no one.

"Our embassies and consulates general are often the first port of call when people want to get information about the dual system of vocational training or to launch cooperation."



Photo: Laurence Chaperon

**PROF. DR. MARIA BÖHMER**, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office

**BWP** Dr Schütte, what are the priorities of the Federal ministry responsible for vocational training when it comes to international cooperation?

**SCHÜTTE** Since the economic and financial crisis at the latest, cooperation with our European partners on vocational training has concentrated on improving job opportunities for young people.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) aims for sustainable reforms in the vocational training sys-

tems. We know that we can improve employment opportunities for young people in the mid to long term first and foremost if we initiate reforms aimed at the dual system of vocational training. Last year the OECD underlined the system's impressive success in moving people from training into the world of work, describing the transition in "A Skills beyond School Review of Germany" as "remarkably smooth". Against this background, we already launched measures for bilateral cooperation on vocational training with Greece, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain in 2012 and concluded cooperation agreements.

Our cooperation with countries outside Europe is also commercially motivated. By offering partners such as Brazil, India or China structural advice and passing on know-how we can help to ensure an adequate pool of skilled workers for German businesses, especially SMEs. German companies complain of a lack of skilled workers both at home and abroad. We can help counter this, for instance, by promoting vocational training measures abroad.

Our overall cooperation strategy is based on a mutual exchange of learning and experience. The aim is to adapt the principles of the dual system to conditions in the respective partner country and to put them into practice. It is particularly important that the partner countries independently implement and continue to develop the vocational training strategies we help them draw up.

As the lead ministry for vocational training, the BMBF is responsible for the Round Table and for the central contact partner GOVET (German Office for International Vocation-

al Education and Training Cooperation) at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BiBB).

**BWP** Let's stay with European partners for now. They are the main focus for the Federal Ministry of Labour, too, aren't they, Mr Asmussen?

**ASMUSSEN** That's right. Given the high level of youth unemployment in some EU member states and the comparatively low figures in Germany, our European partners are greatly interested in particular in measures for the transition from school to work and in the provision of jobs or training places. That's why we have signed bilateral memorandums of understanding with the Employment Ministries in Italy, Spain and Portugal. The aim is to cooperate to promote and support youth employment in particular, for example by promoting mobility or exchanging best practices. Activities within this framework are launched in response to requests from the partner states and are tailored to each specific country. To this end the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) works closely with the Federal Employment Agency. This bilateral cooperation is to be continued in the years ahead and expanded if other member states are interested. Memorandums of understanding can also play an important role in the international context. The BMAS can offer its expertise on the transition from school to work. The subject of youth employment also plays a prominent role in the G20 labour and employment ministers' process, where the main aim is to exchange best practices on tackling youth unemployment.

Diagram

The Round Table on international cooperation on vocational training



GOVET is the agency for the Round Table on international vocational training cooperation, which meets regularly at state secretary, ministry and working level. The aim is to implement the Federal Government's strategy on One-stop International Cooperation in

Vocational Training and to combine the expertise of the various actors.

For further information see: [www.bibb.de/de/govet\\_2353.php](http://www.bibb.de/de/govet_2353.php)

"As part of development cooperation, our partners' competences and capacities to develop their vocational training systems are continually being developed."



Photo: Bundesregierung/Berzel

**DR. FRIEDRICH KITSCHALT**, State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

**BWP** Dr Kitschelt, what role does vocational training play in development work?

**KITSCHALT** Germany is the world's largest bilateral donor when it comes to vocational training. In 2014 the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development's (BMZ) commitments total around 160 million euros. Our main priority is the development of practical vocational training systems in line with the needs of business. We are particularly concerned with training in the informal sector, funding for education and training, rural areas, and training in the context of fragility and migration, and we look to gender equality.

Together with our partners we are developing a consistent framework for vocational training, strengthening institutions, improving vocational training curricula and thus helping to safeguard and increase productive employment with a wide impact.

Our many years of expertise in vocational training cooperation feed actively into the Federal Government's common strategy for international cooperation in vocational education and training in the framework of a regular exchange, including in the Round Table, through the secondment of experts to GOVET and through coordination with German actors in the various countries with which we cooperate. The many years of experience of our implementing organisations, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and KfW (Reconstruction Loan Corporation), are also a factor in making use of established networks on the ground and providing partners with access to vocational training cooperation.

**BWP** Mr Machnig, where does the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs see the priorities in the Federal Government's common strategy?

**MACHNIG** As part of international cooperation, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) supports efforts by German companies to open up and secure foreign markets. The Ministry is in regular dialogue with institutions at home and abroad concerned with foreign trade. This dialogue aims not only to nurture bilateral economic relations but also to promote German companies abroad.

When it comes to developing bilateral economic relations, an important role is played by the mixed economic commissions. "Mixed" here means that representatives both of government and of interested businesses (associations and companies) take part in the regular meetings. The mixed economic commissions are concerned with a broad range of issues, in particular:

- promoting trade in goods between the economic partners,
- intensifying mutual investment relations, and
- improving technology transfer.

Recently the mixed economic commissions have also been expressing interest in Germany's dual system of vocational training. Such inquiries are passed on to GOVET or the Round Table.



Photo: Bundesregierung/Berzel

"We want our perspectives on and approaches to international vocational training cooperation to complement, not to duplicate, each other."

**DR. GEORG SCHÜTTE**, State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education and Research

**BWP** Dr Schütte, what specific benefits has the Round Table brought your ministry in its first year?

**SCHÜTTE** Above all, transparency and coherence. Our vocational training system is fairly complex due to the large number of cross-cutting policy areas it affects, and the diversity of actors involved. Representatives of the business community, the chambers, trade unions, the Labour and Economics Ministries, the Federal Foreign Office and the Ministry for Development, as well as instructors, teachers and vocational training researchers – they are all constantly working together to improve the vocational training system. And, although there is basically a high level of consensus, they all repeatedly bring different perspectives to bear. That's a good thing, and generally very fruitful. Nevertheless, it is important to us to present a coherent policy – particularly as our strategy continues to attract considerable interest from abroad. For example, the development cooperation approach and the BMBF's approach to system reform should, ideally, complement each other. The Round Table helps in this regard as a coordinating body, so that we can speak with one voice to partners and present them with a coherent approach to cooperation.

**BWP** What does that mean in concrete terms?

**SCHÜTTE** Within just a short time, the Round Table has made it possible for all the different actors to keep each

other informed. That creates the basis for genuine cooperation. For instance, GIZ and the BIBB are jointly conducting appraisal missions in India and Mexico on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

**KITSCHALT** The BMZ too regards coordination among German actors as very important. With its various regular formats at working level, ministry level and state secretary level, the Round Table is an appropriate and effective instrument to that end. It simplifies and improves exchange and coordination among the various German actors, particularly the Federal ministries. This means that Germany and its various actors present a coordinated front to our partners on the ground.

As well as the aforementioned vocational training projects in Mexico and India, we should also mention another one with South Africa, where we exchange and coordinate closely with other Federal ministries. The regular country specific consultations at working level with the BMBF also underpin this process. All in all, the Round Tables is an important element in ensuring that the Federal ministries present a more coordinated and more effective front in international vocational training cooperation, thus increasing the effectiveness of vocational training projects in the partner states.

**BWP** Mr Machnig, what specific developments can you see from your ministry's viewpoint?

**MACHNIG** At the fourth meeting of the German-Algerian Mixed Economic Commission in March 2014, the Algerian side again expressed profound interest in the dual system, and we were able to translate this interest into something concrete. In coordination with the BMBF, GOVET offered a range of instruments for developing and testing practice oriented, cooperative forms of vocational training in Algeria.

In addition, we welcome opinion-forming within the ministries with regard to extending the legal framework for training young people from non EU states in Germany. The BMWi published a study on this in April [2014], the "Impact Analysis of the Legal Framework for Qualified Professionals from Abroad". As companies which offer training are already noticing a substantial shortage of trainees in certain areas even now, we aim among other things to reach agreement among the Federal ministries on how to make it easier for trainees to come to Germany from abroad.

**ASMUSSEN** The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, too, has clearly seen an interest on the part of our international partners in Germany's vocational training system and in measures to ease the transition from school to work. We regard cooperation in the Round Table as particularly fruitful here: the exchange and the bundling

of activities help us to reach a successful outcome and to find joint solutions. Setting up the Round Table has helped to bring the Federal Government's activities regarding vocational training under one roof for the first time and to promote exchange between the various actors in the field of vocational training, with all the education, economic, labour market, migration, foreign and development policy interests they bring to bear. This can only benefit everyone involved.

"The Round Table gives us the chance to strategically coordinate and further develop international vocational training cooperation among the various ministries. That creates positive synergies!"



Photo: ddpimages/Timur Enek

**JÖRG ASMUSSEN**, State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)

**BWP** What specific benefit do you see in the Round Table, Professor Böhmer?

**BÖHMER** Over the past few years, vocational training policy has become more and more of a cross-cutting issue with considerable relevance to foreign policy. It concerns various Federal ministries, the entire business community, companies, trade unions, the education sector, schools, political and social foundations and many others. Abroad, these various German actors need to speak with one voice if possible and present a coordinated approach. That's what the Round Table is for.

The Federal Foreign Office was the driving force behind the establishment of the Round Table, which, in our view, has proved extremely valuable. It gives us the chance to present concrete project proposals and inquiries from abroad to all actors and to decide together whether they are viable. Thanks to GOVET and the Round Table, we can effectively handle information and enquiries and pass them on to the relevant actors.

**BWP** Can you give us a specific example?

**BÖHMER** One example of extremely successful inter-ministerial coordination is our cooperation with Ecuador. The Ecuadorian Government is planning to introduce the dual system across the country. It has set in motion the necessary legislation and intends to make available US\$ 310 million to build 15 new vocational training centres and to re-equip 25 others. We are putting our wide ranging expertise in this field at the disposal of the Government in Quito.

**BWP** Finally, one last question to you all, hoping for a brief answer. What measures do you think need to be taken now to develop the Federal Government's common strategy?



**BÖHMER** The centralised contact GOVET should be made even better known to all the important actors through targeted PR work. And the staff should be further increased, perhaps by seconding staff members from other ministries or business associations.

I could imagine GOVET looking after the round tables set up abroad. In the medium term, offices could be established abroad to advise and assist governments, authorities, businesses, schools, etc. with their projects.

I am particularly keen to involve even more German Schools abroad. Vocational training streams at these schools function as models and are a good and persuasive additional way to export our successful dual system.



Photo: BMWi

*"In view of the lack of trainees in certain occupations, agreement needs to be reached on how to make it easier for trainees to come to Germany from non EU states."*

**MATTHIAS MACHNIG**, State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy

**MACHNIG** The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) considers the continuation of the aforementioned activities as of benefit. To sum up, it can be said that GOVET has proven its worth. So we should thank the Central Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Educational Training for the work it has done. The BMWi is not aiming for any specific changes or additional measures at this point.

**KITSCHALT** We have made a good start on improving coherence among the ministries, but we should continue these efforts consistently. So we need to make targeted use of formats like the Round Table and GOVET and further develop them. Transparency, information and dialogue are important for even closer inter-ministerial cooperation. We at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development see the potential for additional joint activities in this regard. So coordination among the implementing organisations in German vocational training cooperation should be actively encouraged and intensified. Support for GOVET as a service agency independent of the ministries and as a central point of contact for vocational training cooperation will remain a key element of our approach in future. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development therefore advocates strengthening and developing GOVET as a central point of contact. This would allow GOVET to establish itself internationally as an instrument of the entire Federal Government and thus as a "German brand".

**ASMUSSEN** The common strategy is now just over a year old. It is already clear that the actors involved benefit greatly from this exchange and that it has been possible to intensify and improve strategic coordination. Nonetheless, I believe that in the year ahead we should continue to concentrate on attaining the agreed goals and implementing agreed measures, as well as intensifying the substance of the exchange. Only in this way can we present a united front to our international partners in vocational training and fully meet all the expectations raised. Particularly with an eye to the cooperation agreements we have concluded, it seems particularly important to implement them comprehensively, efficiently and with the practical cooperation of all actors.

**SCHÜTTE** GOVET's one-stop-shop function has proven its worth as the first point of contact for interested partners abroad and should be extended. It is becoming clear that many states which are interested in cooperation with Germany in the field of vocational training can meet their needs for specialist information and contacts through cooperation with GOVET.

The range of information available from GOVET should be further developed and expanded with this in mind. In particular, we would like to appeal to all actors to enter their activities in the relevant databases, some of which already exist, and to thus help make these instruments truly effective.

Basically the foundation has been laid for a close and trusting partnership between the German actors. Now it is a matter of continuing to cooperate in this spirit.

*(Interviews: Christiane Jäger and Arne Schambeck)*

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Lesley Ann Sims, Auswärtiges Amt

# Developing the Vocational Training Report of Viet Nam

## Lessons learned for international TVET cooperation



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**The Vocational Training Report of Viet Nam, the first of its kind in the ASEAN region, is a milestone in building the monitoring and reporting capacities needed for reforms in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The article provides insights into how the Vietnamese National Institute for Vocational Training (NIVT) strengthened its capacities (competencies of personnel, procedures, resources) in order to develop the Vocational Training Report in the frame of a trilateral cooperation with the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). It finally draws lessons learned from this process for similar undertakings in other countries.**

### The TVET reform process in Viet Nam: needs for monitoring and reporting

The Vietnamese government emphasises the role of TVET in improving the quality and competitiveness of human resources for industrialisation and modernisation. Accordingly, the Vietnamese Vocational Training Development Strategy (hereafter »TVET Strategy«), approved by the government in 2012, posits that by 2020 »vocational training will meet labour market demand in terms of quantity, quality, occupational structure and training qualifications, with the quality of training in a number of occupations reaching that of developed countries in the ASEAN region and the world«. This means, for instance, starting from a workforce in which 32 percent of workers are vocationally trained, to provide vocational training in order to increase the rate of vocationally trained workers to 55 percent by 2020, equivalent to 34.4 million people.<sup>1</sup>

Implementing the TVET Strategy – supervised by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) and its General Directorate for Vocational Training (GDVT) – is an enormous task, with national but also international scope. This is especially so, given that Viet Nam finds itself in the increasingly competitive regional context of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2015, where free

flows of goods, services, investment, capital and labour are to be realised. This task can only be effectively managed if reliable information and data on TVET in Viet Nam are available. That is also how quality and evidence, central to political decision-making within the TVET reform process, can be firmly established. To gather meaningful data on TVET reform progress, systematic TVET monitoring and reporting capacities based on institutionalised and standardised instruments are needed. Accordingly, among other things, the TVET strategy calls for vocational training research to be stepped up in cooperation with international partners.

### Cooperation between Germany and Viet Nam

Viet Nam selected Germany as a partner in developing its Vocational Training Report for two reasons.

First, the German Vocational Education and Training Report is regarded as a promising instrument to meet the monitoring and reporting needs in the TVET sector in Viet Nam. This is because in Germany, the Report is recognised by government, social partners, the academic community and society as a reliable, accurate and up-to-date source of information. It serves as both a monitoring and a political advisory instrument for the German vocational training system.<sup>2</sup>

Second, Germany and Viet Nam have a long-standing successful cooperation in TVET. The Vietnamese-German bi-

<sup>1</sup> Vietnamese TVET Development Strategy 2011–2020, No. 630/QĐ-Πg Hanoi, May 29, 2012.

lateral development cooperation »Programme Reform of TVET in Viet Nam« (henceforth »TVET Programme«), on the German side funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), implements measures to improve the demand-orientation of TVET. Implementation by GIZ jointly with the Vietnamese partners (Technical Cooperation) takes place both on the level of political reform as well as on the level of selected pilot TVET institutes, thus contributing to TVET system development as a whole. Furthermore, BIBB has an institutional cooperation with NIVT, supporting NIVT in becoming a TVET research institute.

A formal basis for jointly working on monitoring and reporting exists since a trilateral cooperation agreement between BIBB, GIZ and NIVT was concluded in 2007. For the German side the agreement meant moving from running parallel activities in Viet Nam towards working in a more integrated and coordinated manner. Renewed approximately every two years since, the agreement defines the basic content of cooperation, activities and resources each side provides.

### Key challenges for TVET reporting

In initial joint workshops in 2010 and 2011 experience was exchanged on TVET reporting and monitoring in Germany and in Viet Nam. As a result, several challenges for TVET reporting were identified:

1. No officially recognised indicators to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the TVET sector existed. A joint definition of TVET reporting needs by all relevant stakeholders was lacking. Accordingly, key questions on what should be measured in order to make meaningful statements on the TVET reform progress had not been developed yet.<sup>3</sup>
2. It was found that there is a lack of publicly and centrally available data on the TVET system. Apart from the lack of indicators, this is a major reason why TVET in Viet Nam is very difficult to monitor in the first place. There are many different institutions offering myriad

TVET qualifications. Furthermore, even when data is gathered, this is done by different agencies, which do not necessarily publish the data. Therefore, even with proper indicators in place, it would be difficult to accurately measure, for instance, the rate of trained workers in the overall population or to determine the number of qualified instructors nationally.

3. The TVET data which was available needed quality. The data's primary data sources are rarely accessible; data comes primarily in aggregated form. Accordingly, without the primary data sources, it is difficult to ascertain the quality of this data and even more so to extract meaningful relations between different data sets.

To sum up, tracking TVET developments in Viet Nam over time had proven to be almost impossible due to a lack of TVET indicators and sound data. These initial findings were the starting point for developing the Vocational Training Report Viet Nam.

### Developing a project proposal for the Vocational Training Report Viet Nam

Given the situation stated above, the objective of the first Vocational Training Report of Viet Nam was merely to provide an overview of the data already available and to arrange this data in a basic structure, reflecting the reporting needs of the Vietnamese government.<sup>4</sup>

With this objective in mind, the question turned to implementation. At the request of the Vietnamese government a project proposal was eventually drafted in 2011 by NIVT in collaboration with the TVET Programme. The proposal defined the objective, implementation procedure, organisational structure and necessary resources for developing the Vocational Training Report Viet Nam.<sup>5</sup> The approval of the project proposal, finally and most importantly, provided NIVT with a formal basis and the political backing for piloting the vocational training report.

### Piloting the Vocational Training Report Viet Nam

Based on the project proposal a series of technical workshops was conducted jointly by BIBB, NIVT and GIZ. Referring to the steps defined in the proposal, workshops dealt with different topics, from defining the basic structure of the report to collecting and arranging data, developing a story line and finally drafting the report. The workshops were not only designed as interactive learning experiences

<sup>2</sup> Since 2009, the Report has had two parts: the »Data Report« by BIBB featuring data on the current state of Vocational Education and Training in Germany, and on the other hand the »Political Report« by BMBF providing recommendations for Vocational Training reform based on the evidence of the Data Report. The Report is legally »enshrined« in the German Vocational Training Act. The Act assigns to the Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) the task of monitoring and reporting annually on the state of the art of Vocational Training in Germany. It defines BIBB as the responsible and competent institution in Germany for assisting BMBF in the preparation of this monitoring instrument.

<sup>3</sup> For example: what numbers of trained workers are needed in each sector in order to meet the demand of that industry, or, what are the training needs for management and teaching staff in order to meet TVET requirements in coming years?

<sup>4</sup> This was a particular challenge for the first report, as the TVET strategy had not been promulgated until May 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Project Proposal for Development of the National TVET Report, GDVT, 2011.



enhancing project management and team work capacities, they also served to mobilise expertise of different stakeholders in Viet Nam, and to provide networking opportunities, since a wider circle of Vietnamese agencies involved in data collection and publishing, such as the Ministry of Education and Training, the General Statistics Office and the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, took part and increasingly developed ownership, which was illustrated by high attendance and participation in the workshops.

This workshop series functioned because an underlying project structure and about ten project teams dealing with specific topics – such as labour market, vocational qualifications and vocational institution networks – had been set up as result of the advisory process. Before and after workshops, these teams also continuously worked on the report, together with the TVET Programme in Hanoi and with BIBB in Bonn, receiving support and expertise from the German partners BIBB and GIZ and from NIVT staff specifically trained in the frame of guest researcher and study visits to BIBB. Work on the report was, furthermore, combined wherever possible with ongoing capacity development activities of the TVET Programme, notably the piloting of tracer studies and enterprise surveys. As a result of the work, the first Vocational Training Report Viet Nam was published in October 2012 at the Regional TVET Conference in Ha Noi, hosted by MoLISA and the BMZ.

Based on this first report, work on the second report commenced. This time the partners focused on relating the available data to the objectives defined in the TVET Strategy and on developing and measuring indicators. Knowledge transfer was organised by means of thematic working groups working on core statements, validity, significance, reference variables and calculation formula of different indicators. The partners also transferred knowledge concerning quality standards, training regulations and cost-benefit analysis.<sup>6</sup> Additional measures included Skype and video conferences, guest researcher and study visits to BIBB, and continuous exchange with the integrated expert of the TVET Programme working at NIVT. The second report was published in Vietnamese in March 2014, in English in July 2014.

As a result of the piloting process, two reports have so far been developed. They are largely data collections, reporting on information extracted from secondary data sources. The structure of the reports attempts to match issues raised in the TVET Strategy, such as TVET policies, TVET Teachers, cooperation with enterprises and accreditation. Furthermore, the reports also combine labour market and population data with data on vocational training, which is

a novelty in Viet Nam. Finally, the reports come up with key findings based on the published data.

In reference to the original situation, some first steps have been taken. However, much more has to be done. The report does not yet provide a sufficient data basis for tracking TVET reform progress. A storyline, deriving from reliable data, facts and figures and meaningful statements on the progress of TVET reform is needed. As a result, policy recommendations on how to work towards and eventually meet the objectives set in the TVET Strategy could not be developed. One of the next challenges, then, consists in developing the data basis further, starting with further developing key indicators for the next report.

### Lessons learned

A national TVET report constitutes an effective instrument for TVET system monitoring. But what can be done to develop such a quality feature in other countries? The case of Viet Nam offers valuable insights not only for further developing monitoring and reporting capacities in Viet Nam, but also elsewhere.

First of all, an institutionalised mandate is crucial. TVET monitoring and reporting must be set as a political priority, the task should be assigned to a responsible institution and resources should be provided in order to build the capacities needed for piloting and implementing a TVET monitoring and reporting instrument such as a national vocational training report. Monitoring structures set up during the process of piloting a VET report have to be maintained after being established. In the case of Viet Nam, a permanent mandate for NIVT to publish the report as well as adequate human and financial resources are still needed. Such a mandate is crucial to raise ownership and improve access to external stakeholders' data.

Second, the German Vocational Education and Training report and its production process are no blueprint for TVET reporting in general. Simply »telling« partners how the German Vocational Education Report works, expecting them to copy the experience on their own is futile. As the case of Viet Nam shows, both structural conditions as well as capacities are too different from the German situation. For example, one main indicator of the German report measures the number of in-company training places offered and training contracts between enterprises and trainees concluded. In Viet Nam, however, this indicator has little relevance as the TVET system is school-based offering little formalised in-company training opportunities. This became also evident when questionnaires from a German cost-benefit analysis serving to find out the number of apprentices trained failed at Vietnamese enterprises, because the questions did not apply to Vietnamese circumstances. Vietnamese companies are not familiar with »apprentic-

<sup>6</sup> A cost-benefit analysis will be published in the Vocational Training Report of Viet Nam 2014.

es« but rather »vocational students doing internships«. To sum up, the German experience cannot be copied, but may rather serve as a reference point, against which the country's own system is reflected and its own questions and indicators for TVET reporting are formulated. Accordingly, for Viet Nam, and indeed for every country seeking to develop TVET monitoring and reporting, the challenge is to develop a monitoring system, capacities and indicators on its own terms.

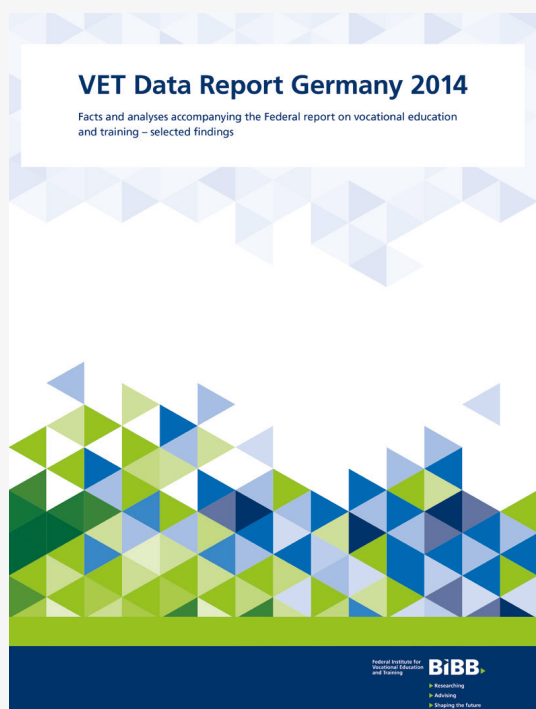
Third, what then can German international cooperation contribute? As the example shows, the answer is capacity development by means of (change) process moderation and management as well as expertise on specific topics. The cornerstone of such capacity development is working jointly with the partners on a concrete product, such as the Vocational Training Report, and learning within the process. In such a process, the role of the German partners is not that of external advisors, but moderators or facilitators, who jointly with the partners implement study tours, workshops, and continuous training activities. A learning environment is thereby forged in which competencies in research methods and project management, processes and networks of information exchange, and knowledge about TVET systems are developed on all sides of the partnership. Finally, for such a process, time, effort and trust are needed. And for this, partnership is the key, with partners' strengths and needs complementing each other. In the discussed case, NIVT is tasked to conduct TVET monitoring

and reporting and possesses the expert knowledge of the Vietnamese TVET system while lacking the means and the competencies to develop a national vocational training report by itself. BIBB, on the other hand, based on German experience, contributes technical expertise in how to conduct national TVET monitoring and reporting. However, BIBB's means to conduct the required intensive long-term capacity building process in Viet Nam in the context of a bilateral institutional cooperation framework are limited. The TVET Programme provides the bilateral political framework, the technical expertise and the organisational resources for extensive and continuous »on the ground« capacity development in TVET in Viet Nam.

To sum up, the present case provides a good example for integrated and fruitful action of the German BMZ and Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) together with the Vietnamese partner ministry MOLISA, bringing the different complementary competencies into play in a TVET system development context. It is also a good example for realising the institutional cooperation agreement between GIZ and BIBB showcasing the complementary implementation strengths of both organisations. Capacity development for TVET monitoring and reporting in the frame of a trilateral cooperation as presented here provides useful insights for developing TVET reporting in other countries. ◀

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# Continuing vocational teacher training for company-based tutors

## A German-Portuguese pilot project



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**At the end of 2012, Germany and Portugal concluded a vocational education and training cooperation agreement with the aim of supporting the reform endeavours in the latter country. One of the main focuses of cooperation thus far has been the training of company-based VET staff. This plays an essential role in supporting and implementing the reforms. The present article reports on a bilateral project, in which a vocational teaching training measure for company-based tutors was developed and piloted.**

### Vocational education – and training staff in Portugal

Portugal's training system is primarily school based. At upper secondary level, 56.3 percent of young people attend so-called science and humanities courses, which conclude with the *Certificado do Ensino Secundário* and prepare them for academic training. The second group of educational courses is vocationally oriented. In this case, young people acquire a double qualification in the form of the *Certificado do Ensino Secundário* and the vocational qualification of *Certificado de Qualificação Profissional*. The two most important vocationally aligned educational courses are the *Cursos Profissionais* and the *Cursos de Aprendizagem*, which are taken by a total of 32.1 percent of the annual cohort (cf. Table).<sup>1</sup> The vocational education and training courses offered by the German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce are usually also considered as *Cursos de Aprendizagem*. The German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce began to establish vocational education and training in Portugal based on the German dual system as long ago as 1983 and continues to develop this on an ongoing basis. It now maintains three training centres in Lisbon, Porto and Portimão and trains approximately 900 young people per year.

Despite their differences, both training models exhibit similar concepts regarding the role of training staff. In the companies, so-called "tutors" (*tutores*) are responsible for the implementation of the practical or company-based phase of training. In the schools and at the vocational training centres, the stakeholders responsible are referred to as "coordinators" (*coordenadores*). These are teaching staff who perform the main tasks within the scope of the company-based phases of learning alongside their teaching duties. Their remit also includes the acquisition of training places or practical placements at the companies.

### Reforms in Portugal and the German-Portuguese cooperation agreement

Since the financial crisis in 2008/2009, many European countries have faced higher youth unemployment. This particularly affects the countries of southern Europe. In February 2014, the rate of youth unemployment in Portugal was 36.1 percent. This compares with 18.7 percent in 2008.<sup>2</sup>

In order to combat youth unemployment, Portugal instigated a series of reform measures primarily aimed at improving the transition from school to the world of work. In June 2011, the government presented a programme

<sup>1</sup> [www.pordata.pt](http://www.pordata.pt). Data was sourced from the "DGEEC/MEC – Recenseamento Escolar" (retrieved 17.10.2014).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&plugin=1&language=de&pcode=teilm021> (retrieved 28.05.2015)

Table

## A comparison of Portuguese vocational training courses

Comparison criteria	Training courses	
	Cursos Profissionais	Cursos de Aprendizagem
Proportion of young people within an age cohort	21.6 %	10.5 %
Responsibility	ANQEP <sup>3</sup>	IEFP <sup>4</sup>
Learning venue for theoretical teaching	State vocational schools	State vocational training centers
Duration	3 years	3 years
Proportion of company-based learning time	approx. 10 % (about 12 weeks in total)	approx. 40 % (about 48 weeks in total)
Practical phases at the company	During or at the end of school-based training	Alternates with theoretical teaching at the vocational training centres

outlining a new educational system for the years 2015 to 2020. Within this programme, the objectives which include bringing about significant improvement at individual levels of schooling, technical training and vocational education and training are of central significance. In 2013, the Ministry of Education (MEC) introduced new VET pilot courses (*Cursos Vocacionais*) in order to reduce the number of school dropouts<sup>5</sup>. The objective of these two-year courses, which feature a higher proportion of company-based learning than is the case in the ANQEP and IEFP courses (about 50 %), is to facilitate more rapid access to the labour market for young people.

In order to support the reform process, the Portuguese Ministry of Education concluded a three-year cooperation agreement with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) on 5 November 2012. The fields of activity covered by this agreement were set out in detail at a subsequent European Educational Summit staged in Berlin (December 2012). It was agreed that the primary theme of cooperation would be the training of VET staff. Initial focus was placed on the issue of the pedagogical training of company-based tutors, given the fact that they play a key role in the promotion of work-integrated learning concepts. Within the context of direct experience with processes along the value-added chain, the aim is that they should support young people in the acquisition of employability skills. For this reason, they are faced with pedagogical and didactic requirements such as structuring of the learning

process, motivation of young people and the evaluation of performance. The purely professional training the tutors themselves have undergone does not usually equip them for such tasks.

Initial specific preparations for a joint pilot project for the pedagogical training of company-based tutors were made at the inaugural meeting of the German-Portuguese Working Group in Lisbon on 3 and 4 June 2013.

### Continuing vocational teacher training for company-based tutors

The pilot project was based on the following principles.

- In order to get to know one another and achieve a better understanding of the Portuguese training context, extensive networking initially needed to take place between all those involved in the project<sup>6</sup>. The aim was to use this as a basis to conduct an empirical research with a view to arriving at a more precise identification of the training requirements of the tutors.
- The objective was for the pilot project to encompass tutor activity within the two most important forms of vocationally-oriented training. Because, as described above, the responsibility for these courses lies with various ministries and institutions, the intention was for the broadly based approach selected for the project to integrate all relevant state VET agencies in Portugal.
- In accordance with the concept of the “appreciative comparison” (cf. UHLMANN/KREWER/ARNOLD 2014), the training measure was to be structured in a dialogue-based way. The aim was for the scheme to build

<sup>3</sup> Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional – ANQEP (National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training). ANQEP is a public body under the supervision of the Ministry for Education and Science (*Ministério da Educação e Ciência* – MEC).

<sup>4</sup> Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional – IEFP (Employment and Vocational Training Institute). IEFP is a public body under the auspices of the Ministry of labour and Social Solidarity (*Ministério da Solidariedade, Emprego e Segurança Social* – MTSS).

<sup>5</sup> According to EU figures, the school dropout rate in Portugal in the years 2011 and 2012 was 23.2 % and 20.8 % respectively. Cf. [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-324\\_de.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-324_de.htm) (retrieved 15.03.2015)

<sup>6</sup> The project participants on the Portuguese side were the Ministry of Education, ANQEP and IEFP. On the German side, the German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce acted as a link between the other partners. These were BIBB, GOVET and the BMBF, which coordinated and financed the project. The BIBB project group included SIGRID MARTIN (also a lecturer in trainer aptitude courses) and BERND RUDEL from the Board for Vocational Education and Training of the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK).

on the know-how of German VET experts and on the experiences of the training system for company-based training staff in Germany whilst also being implemented in a flexible manner so as to be adaptable to the general conditions governing Portuguese vocational education and training via a continuous networking process.

- In order to overcome language and cultural barriers, the intention was for the training measure to be conducted by Portuguese lecturers. Teaching staff from the vocationally oriented courses, who also exercise the function of a coordinator, were to be trained by German experts.
- The German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce acted as the main contact point and project sponsor. Because of its many years of training activities, its good networking with Portuguese agencies and its knowledge of the country and culture, the German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce was an important strategic partner for both the Portuguese and German stakeholders within the cooperation agreement.
- Finally, the plan was that BIBB would continue to provide assistance after the end of the official term of the project (February 2014 – November 2014) in the form of an impact analysis in order to maintain support for Portuguese reform endeavours in the field of VET staff.

### Empirical investigation

Due to the lack of sufficient empirical findings regarding company-based training staff in Portugal, interviews were initially used to help identify the structures of companies providing training and the fields of activity of tutors. In order to achieve the broadest possible base of information, coordinators and trainees were also interviewed alongside the company-based training staff. The aim in adopting this approach was both to arrive at a better understanding of the various training models and to gain insights into the central role played by the coordinators and into their possible support requirements. For this reason, the *Cursos Profissionais*, the *Cursos de Aprendizagem* and the *Cursos Vocacionais*, the new vocational pilot courses, were all included in the empirical investigation. The BIBB project group focused on the training needs of the VET staff by designing guided interviews based on the “circular questioning” method (cf. PFEFFER 2001) and subsequently agreeing these with the Portuguese partners.

Overall, interviews were conducted with 21 tutors, 17 coordinators and 23 trainees. Members of the German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce with good knowledge of the Portuguese and German vocational education and training systems sat in on each of the interviews, which usually lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Evaluation was carried out by the BIBB project group with

support from the German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

The essential results of the investigation can be summarised as follows:

**Profile of the tutors interviewed:** Two groups could be identified in the companies surveyed. These were tutors with responsibility and a management function and the group of tutors who provided direct support to the young people. The interview partners mostly belonged to the first group. In many cases, these tutors have a higher education qualification and comprehensive occupational experience. They had not usually been prepared for their tutoring task. The same applies to the second group of tutors, who also only have a professional qualification and not a teaching qualification.

**Spectrum of tasks:** The most important tasks of the tutors with management responsibility are to organise the company-based phases of training or practical placements and to manage the other tutors. This also includes reaching agreement with the coordinators with regard to the so-called “activity plan” (*plano de atividades*), which contains the requirements made of the young people for the company-based phase of training. This plan is drawn up by the coordinators on the basis of training standards stipulated by ANQEP. The significance of cooperation with the coordinators is also discernible when it comes to the assessment of learning success. This is conducted by the tutors at regular intervals and communicated to the coordinators.

One main task focus for both groups of tutors is to foster the motivation of the young people, especially at the beginning of the company-based phase, and to promote communication with and management of the young people in a way that is conducive to training. This is a major challenge for most interviewees. Some respondents pointed out a lack of discipline on the part of the young people, and others complained that in many cases the young people did not yet exhibit the behaviour expected of them in the company. One important reason for these assessments is likely to be the fact that in some cases many respondents had high expectations of the company-based phase of training. These ranged from a desire that young people should “know what work means”, that they should gather “plenty of practical experience” and that they should learn “how to deal with customers” and extended to include such expectations that young people nowadays should “acquire the social and professional competences” that will enable them “to cope effectively on the labour market”.

**Requirement for continuing training:** In overall terms, the tutors surveyed expressed a wish for continuing training in the following thematic areas:



- Dealing with young people in a more effective way
- Implementation of curricular stipulations (from the “activity plan”) into a company training plan
- Motivation of the young people
- Methods of learning in the work process
- Evaluation of trainee performances
- Organisation and self-management

After discussions with the project partners from the BIBB project group, the following five continuing training modules were developed on this basis:

- “My role as a tutor”
- “Planning training in the company”
- “Implementing training in the company”
- “Dealing with trainees”
- “Motivating trainees”

The guide for skilled workers providing training in Germany offers an important basis in this regard (cf. JABLONKA/MARTIN/ULMER 2013). The empirical investigation made it clear that the pedagogical challenges facing company-based training staff exhibit many similarities in both countries.

Following further coordination with the Portuguese side, this served as the basis for the design of a course with a total duration of 35 hours. Because of the occupational activity of the tutors, the plan was for the measure to be implemented in two parts.

### Implementation of the training measure

The initial step was to train Portuguese lecturers to deliver the tutor training course. The BIBB project group also developed materials and a course guide for this purpose. Eleven lecturers, all of whom were school-based teaching staff, took part in the continuing training course (October 2014). One of the main focuses was the practice of training methods to support company-based learning. The training, which consisted of short lectures, group activities and discussion sessions, was conducted by a German trainer with consecutive interpretation.

The first part of the tutor training directly followed on from the lecturer training. Three trained lecturers now organised the continuing training course in which the eleven tutors participated. Ongoing networking took place with the German trainer and the BIBB-German-Portuguese Chamber of Industry and Commerce project group in order to adapt the continuing training modules to the general conditions in Portugal on a continuous basis. Amendments and supplements primarily related to the proposed procedural plan, the weighting of the topics and the materials made available to the tutors at the end of the course. With regard to the topics, it emerged that the aspects of central

significance to the participating tutors were the training methods for company-based learning, the evaluation of performance, the formulation of learning objectives and the preparation of a training plan.

### Forecast and transfer

The continuing training was very positively evaluated by the lecturers and the tutors. They stated that it was very helpful in overall terms for the implementation of more practically oriented training. The Portuguese institutions were also highly satisfied with the results of the pilot project and now intend to introduce modularised training for tutors across the country on the basis of the measure conducted. At a policy level, the project fostered collaboration between the most important state VET agencies in Portugal and created a good basis for further bilateral projects to support the Portuguese reform process. A second project has already been agreed for the advanced training of teaching staff in the schools and training centers and is scheduled to be initiated in the second half of 2015. The experiences gathered within the scope of the German-Portuguese pilot project may in addition offer an important foundation for vocational education and training cooperation with other countries. VET staff are a key factor in the success of reform processes.

They are stakeholders in companies and schools and play a crucial part in the implementation of reform measures. They need to be trained and strengthened in order to perform this role. The tutor project has instigated fundamental steps in Portugal in this regard. The concept of the German-Portuguese pilot project and the approach selected could therefore be a model for reforms to the training systems in other countries, in particular in respect of staff providing training in companies. ◀

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 Martin Stuart Kelsey, Global SprachTeam Berlin*

# EU twinning in Ukraine

## Results of a vocational education and training cooperation in an unsettled environment

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**Vocational education and training in Ukraine was in upheaval even before the political events of the last year. In the year 2012 an EU twinning project was set up by the EU Commission and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine with a view to supporting reform processes. Results and experiences from this two-year international cooperation are presented.**

### Vocational education and training in upheaval

As in many countries, Ukrainian vocational education and training suffers from a poor reputation and is considered a stopgap for those who cannot go to university. The vocational education and training system does not incorporate occupational career-progression pathways nor accessible routes into higher education. The 2010 placement rate recorded a mere 6.7 percent of young people choosing vocational establishments. In parallel, the ILO Labour Force Survey for the same year forecast a level of demand for skilled workers which can only be 40 per cent satisfied by vocational provision, even in the medium term (cf. text of tender document UA EU ENPI 2011, p. 3<sup>1</sup>). Another problem is that vocational education and training and the world of work coexist alongside each other but are largely disconnected. Occupational skill-profiles ("occupational standards") do not exist or in many cases are not reflected in the initial vocational training standards, i. e. vocational school courses ("educational standards").

### The Ukraine twinning project

The EU twinning project "Modernisation of legal standards and principles for vocational education in line with the European policy on lifelong learning" was set up in 2012. (For general information on EU twinning projects, cf. box below). The objective was to advise decision-makers from politics and public administration on drawing up an education act, to bring about implementation of a Ukrainian qualifications framework and to work through the quality assurance and standards development questions that arose in the process of developing vocational curricula in

five economic sectors. Other aims were to promote workplace-based learning, to promote social partnership as the steering mechanism in vocational education and thus to forge stronger links between the "world of education" and the "world of work".

On the Ukrainian side, a broad alliance from politics and research threw their weight behind the project (cf. box on project partners, below). Assistance from EU Member States came from a Danish-German consortium consisting of Denmark's National Centre for Vocational Education (METROPOL) and the vocational education centre Aarhus-tech along with BIBB. The project was launched in January 2013 and because of the political situation in February/March 2014 its term was extended until April 2015.

### Dynamics and first milestones in the reform process

The Maidan events at the end of 2013 gave the project a major boost. Not only did the political turmoil result in a government that was receptive to the twinning project; it also directed overall attention towards the necessity for reforms in vocational education and training. Presumably the existence of this European project conveyed some symbolic strength – both domestically and in the direction of Brussels. This was manifested in the immense steps that were set in train and presented at the final conference in March 2015:

1. New educational legislation was outlined by preparing draft bills "On the amendment of certain legal acts on vocational education". The draft laws are aimed at measures for decentralisation: for instance, some steering tasks are delegated to local authorities, who will assume responsibility for adjusting the provision of vocational education to demand in the regional labour market. To this end, vocational schools will be amalgamated into

<sup>1</sup> URL: [www.esteri.it/mae/gemellaggi/tacis/ucraina/ua\\_11\\_enp\\_pca\\_so\\_33%20modernization%20of%20legislative%20standards%20in%20lifelong%20learning.pdf](http://www.esteri.it/mae/gemellaggi/tacis/ucraina/ua_11_enp_pca_so_33%20modernization%20of%20legislative%20standards%20in%20lifelong%20learning.pdf)



### EU twinning projects

EU twinning projects are implemented within the programme "Institution-building in the new EU Member States and neighbouring countries". Unlike the familiar European programmes for vocational education and training (Leonardo, Erasmus+), twinning is explicitly addressed to public administrations and state institutions which promote corresponding measures for institution building and knowledge transfer, within a partnership process, predominantly at administrative level.

A hallmark of twinning projects is that a long-term expert coordinates the project implementation in cooperation with a designated in-country official.

### Project partners in Ukraine

- Ministry of Education and Science (project leadership)
- Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
- Ministry of Social Policy
- Parliamentary Committee on Science and Education
- National Agency for Civil Service
- Employers' organisation
- Institute of Vocational Training of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences
- Institute for Innovative Technologies and Educational Content of Ukraine
- Regional vocational education, training and methodology centres.

large education and training centres operating across occupational fields. The draft law "On vocational education and training" documents the vocational qualifications at Levels 1 to 5 of the Ukrainian Qualifications Framework and a procedure for the accreditation/authorisation of vocational schools. It introduces a new autonomy for vocational schools and the possibility of generating financial resources which can be spent at their own discretion. Beyond this, a draft resolution of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine "On an amended procedure for the provision of work placements in production and for the practical training of vocational school pupils" was passed.

2. The basic features of the Ukrainian qualifications framework having been outlined at the beginning of the project, guidelines were developed to facilitate the assignment of qualifications to levels. An appendix deals with the integration of informal and non-formal competences. The levels of the qualifications framework, and the related approach of linking initial vocational training standards with occupational standards, were enshrined in law as Article 23 of the draft law "On vocational education and training". Furthermore, a procedure was approved for assessing individuals' skills and knowledge as a prerequisite for access to retraining programmes or advanced vocational training. The purpose of this procedure is to formalise competences acquired informally and non-formally so that these can be located within the education system.
3. Approval was also granted to methodological recommendations for developing curricular standards, which were drafted in collaboration with the Danish partners in selected vocational fields. Modular, competence-based standards for six occupations will be piloted for the first time in the vocational training establishments from August 2015.

### Lasting effects of the twinning project

The results can be expected to influence Ukraine's vocational education and training in the medium term. It would be presumptuous to ascribe all the system-relevant impacts described here to the twinning project alone. Nevertheless, it demonstrates how international cooperation can take effect:

1. It gives impulses.
2. It enables feedback on an equal footing and backing for new ideas.
3. It brings together partners within the country who have never or barely cooperated with each other before.
4. It improves visibility within the country so that the activities are noticed and taken seriously by broader groups.

Building on this experience, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine set up a pilot project for the introduction of dualised initial vocational training, which will be launched in three regions (Zaporozhye, Lviv and Kiev) and three occupational fields in September 2015. The work is being carried out cooperation with the joint committee of the Ukraine employers' organisations, which has founded its own vocational education and training institute during the twinning period and declared itself willing to play a substantial part in the shaping of vocational education and training. More than 1,000 Ukrainian vocational education and training experts (vocational school heads, teachers, social partners and representatives from universities in ministries) were involved in the twinning; more than 20 peer learning activities, seminars and training courses as well as five study visits to Denmark or Germany took place, along with a workshop series on capacity building with the Institute of Vocational Training of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. This exchange of knowledge and ideas is irreversible, and herein resides the potential that is essential – in addition to the legal foundations – to contribute to sustainable reform of Ukraine's vocational education and training system. ◀

## Cooperating as equals



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**Vocational education and higher education offer different, in part also competing educational pathways. Looking beyond the sometimes agitated debate about the competition between the two systems, what matters is building bridges. Because both sectors can learn from one another; in which case, vocational education must be a fully-fledged system, recognised as an educational phase of equal status.**

### Fostering permeability

In 2009 the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) gave an important impulse with its resolution on access to higher education studies for people with vocational qualifications. It resulted in a notable rise in the number of students without a conventional higher education entrance qualification: the count has almost tripled since 2007.

This development is gratifying – even if low-level in comparison to other European countries. It shows that the target group has a very definite interest in tertiary level study, particularly at universities of applied sciences. At the same time, reports from practice also highlight more problematic areas: these include academic counselling, credit transfer for prior qualifications, the provision of bridging courses or the organisation of studies. The Federal Government has taken action in a flanking role with programmes and funding measures for these areas. Nevertheless, further research and action is needed.

### Standards for vocational learning phases

Dual degree courses are a successful model. Growth can be noted particularly in the integrated-practice study courses, whereas integrated-training models have declined in importance. In many cases the formal, content-related and time stipulations bound up with the Vocational Training Act (BBiG), the initial vocational training regulations and mandatory part-time vocational school attendance are quite difficult to bring into harmony with the requirements of an academic degree programme.

Meanwhile the advantages of duality in the integrated-practice study courses are not fully exploited. The legal safeguards for learners are unclear; moreover, there are no minimum standards governing the implementation of the in-company learning phases, such as exist in dual system

initial vocational training in the form of specified learning objectives and qualification requirements for training staff. The development of such standards cannot be left to the higher education institutions or the accreditation agencies. This is a core task for the major stakeholders of vocational education and training.

### Mutual recognition

To foster permeability it is necessary to grant mutual recognition for prior learning and to award credit towards each other's courses. In the context of courses run in cooperation, or training and degree programmes which build upon each other directly (e.g. in health and social care) this is already being practised. In the vast majority of cases, however, recognition and credit transfer is based on individual review procedures. Blanket recognition and credit transfer arrangements have remained the exception.

The Vocational Training Act provides the basis for such review procedures but does not prescribe them in any mandatory form. Blanket credit transfer arrangements could, for example, be implemented through agreements between the stakeholders and flanked by recommendations of the Board of BIBB.

Cooperation between vocational education and training and higher education still harbours a great deal of potential. In order to harness this for the purposes of attractive, high-quality skilled worker training, the stakeholders of vocational and higher education alike are called upon to approach one another and to cooperate with each other as equals. ◀

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# Academisation or vocational drift?

## International developments in the tertiary sector of education

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The OECD data show an enormous increase in the number of participants in academic courses of education for the period from 1995 to 2010. In the same timeframe, occupation-related and practice-related courses in the tertiary sector of education are stagnating. The article deals with the question of whether it is justifiable to talk about an academisation in this context or whether the content of the tertiary education programmes is rather drifting into a "vocation-oriented" direction.

### Dynamic developments in the tertiary sector of education

In recent years, courses of education have evolved or gained importance in the tertiary sector of education which contain elements of both vocational and academic education or have been expressly developed for vocationally qualified persons. Their goal is to either increase the attractiveness of vocational education and training or to open up access to university programmes. One of the reasons for changes in the supply of educational programmes, in particular in countries with a high percentage of university graduates, is the increasingly apparent mismatch between the qualifications imparted and the demands of the labour market. By developing and expanding practically and vocationally oriented higher education programmes, an attempt is made to meet the demands for a more pronounced orientation towards the labour market and to make the transition from training into the labour market easier for the graduates. Questions about desired and required learning outcomes and the "employability" of graduates of higher education programmes have become key topics of education policy (cf. LUTZ 2003; KRAUS 2008).

### Quantitative development of certificates

Generally, the developments in the tertiary sector of education are diverse and inconsistent (cf. OECD 2008; Cedefop 2011; OECD 2012; OECD 2013), with a heterogeneity regarding both the quantitative development of educational programmes and the models of educational programmes in the tertiary sector of education as recorded by the ISCED-97.

While the share of tertiary A level certificates in the number of all first degrees has increased everywhere when com-

paring the years 1995 and 2011 in the countries selected (cf. Table) – the OECD average has increased by 19 percentage points; in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Finland it has even more than doubled –, the developments regarding tertiary B level certificates are more subdued. A marked increase of the first degree proportion has only been recorded in Spain and Ireland (and also in New Zealand and the USA; not shown here). In Finland, however, vocational education and training programmes have been allocated to ISCED level 5A exclusively after the introduction of the polytechnics (universities of applied sciences). Only moderate increases have been recorded in Germany, Denmark and Switzerland. The OECD average in the tertiary 5B sector has stagnated at approximately eleven per cent.

#### The empirical data according to ISCED-97

The international ISCED classification records the institutional educational programmes and educational pathways statistically and makes them internationally transparent. According to the ISCED-97 classification, the tertiary sector of education starts with level 5. ISCED 5B covers occupationally or practically oriented courses of study at technical schools, colleges of advanced vocational studies and the likes. The ISCED 5B educational programmes differ from those at the ISCED 5A level also by their shorter duration (at least two years, usually up to three years) and are generally not oriented towards an advanced university degree but rather towards immediate entry into the labour market. Master craftsman and technician certificates are statistically recorded only if they have been acquired in the context of a school-based educational programme.

The 5A level covers higher education below the doctorate level (e.g. at universities of applied sciences) while level 6 covers tertiary education as qualification for research activities.

Table

Comparison of first degrees at ISCED levels 5A and 5B (1995 and 2011, in %)

Country (selection)	Tertiary A (first degree)		Tertiary B (first degree)	
	1995	2011	1995	2011
Ireland	30*	43	15*	22
Spain	24	32	2	18
Australia	36*	50**	not specified	17
Switzerland	9	32	13	15
Germany	14	31***	13	14***
United Kingdom	42*	55	7*	13
Austria	10	35	not specified	12
OECD average	20	39	11	11
Denmark	25	50	8	11
Czech Republic	13	41	6	5
Poland	34*	58	not specified	1
The Netherlands	29	42	not specified	0,5
Finland	21	47	34	0

\* survey year 2000; \*\* survey year 2010;

\*\*\* break in the statistical survey between 2008 and 2009 due to a changed allocation to ISCED 2 and ISCED 5B.

Source: OECD (2013)

The numbers thus suggest that an academisation of the education systems is taking place. DELPLACE (2014), however, is talking about a »vocational drift«. At first this doesn't seem to make sense in view of the data.

### Changes in the content of the educational programmes

That it may indeed be possible to assume a more pronounced vocational and practical orientation in the tertiary sector of education, even if it does not become apparent from the international OECD statistics, will be illustrated below using the examples of Finland, Switzerland and Australia.

#### Finland

The "polytechnics" (universities of applied sciences, UAS) are a relatively new educational institution in Finland. They were introduced at the beginning of the 1990s in order to improve the quality of vocational education and training in the tertiary sector. Starting in 1996 they gradually became an integrated part of the Finnish system of higher education. They were intended to create a vocationally oriented educational pathway as a parallel to the traditional universities. The prerequisite for access is alternatively an upper secondary school-leaving certificate, a passed examination

for acquiring a university entrance qualification (matriculation certificate), a vocational qualification or corresponding foreign qualifications. In 2013 there were 138,000 students at the UAS, compared to 167,000 students enrolled at universities at the same time.<sup>1</sup> To make sure that the qualifications relate to the labour market and the regional demand for skilled labour and innovation in the desired way, practical phases are an obligatory part of the courses of study. The cooperation between educational establishments, regional institutions and enterprises takes different shapes and forms; consequently, the models of practical training vary widely. The educational programmes at the Finnish UAS are allocated to ISCED level 5A although they are expressly assigned to the area of vocational education and training.

#### Switzerland

Technical colleges in Switzerland are – unlike in Germany – higher education institutions explicitly established for doubly qualified applicants with professional maturity certificates.<sup>2</sup> Professional maturity, as a complement to a Swiss Federal Certificate of Competence (completed apprenticeship after three to four years of dual training), permits access to a course of studies at a university of applied sciences without an entrance examination. In 2008, a total of 58.3 per cent of all persons with professional maturity certificates have made use of this option (SBFI 2014). In 2013 the number of students enrolled at Swiss universities of applied sciences was 87,291, compared to 142,170 students at universities and similar institutions.<sup>3</sup>

The university of applied sciences as a type of higher education establishment in Switzerland developed since the mid-1990s. The technical college reform had the special aim of improving the quality of the Swiss vocational education and training system by connecting it with the tertiary higher education sector. The origins of today's universities of applied sciences lie in the former higher technical schools, some of which have been integrated into the new universities of applied sciences. Up to that point the system of vocational education and training did not contain a connection to higher education institutions. The Swiss universities of applied sciences offer both bachelor and master degree programmes. However, unlike Finland, Switzerland still offers the so-called »higher vocational training«

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Statistics Finland, [www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/kou\\_en.html](http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/kou_en.html) (retrieved 12.06.2014)

<sup>2</sup> It is currently controversial whether upper secondary general school graduates should continue to be required to complete a practical year before commencing their studies. Model regulations for exceptions to this rule already exist.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Swiss Statistics, [www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/15/06/tab/blank/uebersicht.html](http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/themen/15/06/tab/blank/uebersicht.html) (retrieved 12.06.2014)

as a parallel to university-type institutions and universities of applied sciences. The higher vocational training is allocated to ISCED level 5B.

## Australia

Higher education programmes combining academic and vocational elements or theoretical and practical learning have evolved in the Anglo-Saxon countries, as well. A common feature of these countries is a very high proportion of graduates from ISCED 5A programmes (2010): Australia 50 per cent, UK 55 per cent, Ireland 43 per cent.

In Australia, the so-called associate degrees (ISCED 5A), which are understood to be both academically and vocationally qualifying, have been introduced as a qualification in recent years. They have been integrated into the Australian Qualifications Framework in 2004. The educational programmes leading to an associate degree are open to all those who have acquired a vocational qualification (Certificates III or IV), as well. The programme duration is two years. Access to a bachelor degree programme is possible after completion; the bachelor course can be shortened through crediting regulations. Associate degree programmes are offered both by universities and by vocational education and training institutions such as the TAFE (technical and further education). An intense nation-wide debate about the character of the associate degrees, which may also be described as a hybrid qualification due to the combination of academic/theoretical with specialized/practical content and elements of »work-based« learning, is currently underway (cf. SMITH 2013). In particular since the 1990s, a trend towards promoting permeability and facilitating transitions can be observed in the educational establishments, as well. To achieve this objective, so-called »dual sector universities« have emerged, some of them as successors of vocational colleges such as the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) which has been granted the status of university in 1992. These »dual sector universities« offer educational programmes leading both to vocational qualifications and to academic degrees.

## Increasing practical vocational differentiation of tertiary educational programmes

The question about the learning outcomes of a higher education programme has become more relevant owing to the growing number of students and the increasing diversification and internationalisation of the higher education sector. In particular, the relation between key qualifications (general skills) and vocational skills is of central importance, but also the degree of orientation towards the demands of the labour market, the share of practical learning phases in the companies and the organisation of and

responsibilities for curriculum development. A wide range of models has evolved from the desire to create stronger links between academic and professional/practice-related learning, increase permeability and make the pathway of vocational education more attractive. These models do not become statistically visible in the current methodology of the ISCED classification. This is caused, on the one hand, by the national allocations and, on the other hand, by the way the ISCED classification is structured. It remains to be seen whether the restructuring of the tertiary education sector in ISCED 2011 will at least increase transparency and thereby facilitate a clearer statistical differentiation between the very different educational programmes and their orientation towards different fields of education.

In any case, academisation can currently indeed be observed insofar as the statistical numbers of graduates are clearly growing in the field of the ISCED 5A programmes. A »vocational drift«, however, can be identified as well when the content of the programmes with explicit labour market orientation is examined. These programmes are characterised by a cooperation between education providers and external partners in the field of practice or by their function as academic »bridging« and further education programmes for vocationally qualified persons. ◀

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# Integration of vocational and higher education in dual courses of study

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**Dual study courses were created as a form of educational provision offering both an academic and a practical vocational qualification. The coupling of competence acquisition in both higher education and practical company-based contexts is aimed at supporting learning transfer and hence achieving a benefit over purely academic or purely hands-on forms of initial vocational training. There is, however, a lack of clear criteria for describing this duality. The article presents different approaches and concludes with a plea for the future, to focus on the interlocking of content across learning phases and curriculum units as a matter of priority.**

## What characterises dual courses of study?

In recent years the number of dual courses of study has risen sharply. Dual study models have evolved into increasingly diversified forms with marked structural differences from one another (cf. AusbildungPlus 2014 and 2015). Discussions as to what constitute the essential characteristics of a dual study programme are taking place without ever having agreed upon a universal definition. In 2013 the German Science Council published its recommendations on the development of the dual degree programme and suggested some criteria. In view of the growing diversity and the debate about criteria for defining dual study programmes, it is worth looking at how the formats currently offered work in practice. Referring to the dimensions of diplomas, scheduling models and learning venues, this article outlines how duality is described in these courses of study. The basis is the AusbildungPlus database containing around 2,100 relevant course offers.

## Diplomas from dual courses of study

The first common feature of all dual courses of study is that they are framed as an academic degree programme leading to a tertiary qualification – normally a Bachelor's degree. Some dual courses of study lead to the acquisition of other recognised qualifications from the vocational sector in addition to the higher education qualification, meaning that these educational formats confer double or multiple qualifications. The most familiar at the level of initial vocational training in Germany is the training-integrated format, in which a qualification in a recognised training occupation is acquired in addition to the Bachelor's degree. Beyond this, there are multi-qualification dual courses of study which further incorporate advanced vocational qual-

ifications, such as Master Craftsman upgrading training (cf. LUTZ 2015) and some of which are also designated as triple study programmes; by the same token, there are courses of study which confer only one academic qualification but which, in parallel to the degree programme, offer units of an upgrading training programme which are eligible for credit transfer. By this analysis, dual courses of study lead to an academic degree and at least one additional qualification from the vocational education sector.

## Scheduling models for the organisation of dual courses of study

A further possibility for linkage is offered in terms of how the learning phases are scheduled between the institutions in both sectors. In the last evaluation of the AusbildungPlus database of these data in 2013, the preponderant structure in the initial vocational training sector, accounting for more than two thirds of courses, was the block model, in which the higher-education based and in-company phases are approximately the same length, rotating within the semester. In other courses of study, the practice phases always take place in the lecture-free period at the end of a semester (cf. AusbildungPlus 2014, p. 35). A special form of the block model is the semi-separated model with a preceding initial vocational training phase. In this case, training begins between 6 and 18 months before the study programme so that the bulk of the initial vocational qualification has been completed prior to starting the degree programme. These models with a preparatory phase of the initial vocational training frequently last considerably longer than three years; up to five years in individual cases (cf. AusbildungPlus 2014, p. 35). Other models shuttle between the higher education institution and the practice

establishment within a working week (rotation model) or work with self-study and distance-tuition elements so as to increase the frequency or number of days spent in the practice establishment.

### Learning venues for dual courses of study

The concept of the dual study programme, unlike classic types of degree programme, is derived from dual-system initial vocational training. “Duality” in this case refers to the interplay of the two learning venues, i. e. the part-time vocational school and the company. By analogy, the two learning venues of a dual study programme are the higher education institution or college of advanced vocational studies (Berufsakademie) and the workplace or practice establishment, which provide a joint education programme. Alongside these learning venues, a dual course of studies may also involve other institutions. For integrated-training courses of study, which comprise a dual or full-time school-based initial vocational training programme in addition to the Bachelor’s degree, an additional, third learning venue is the part-time or full-time vocational school. For certain training occupations, predominantly in the skilled crafts, parts of initial vocational training are also carried out at inter-company vocational training centres which complement the vocational training provided in-company. In such cases the competent bodies, i. e. chambers and occupational associations, are also involved in the dual courses of study. A whole range of institutions can play a part in the design and implementation of dual courses of study. In this case it would be more accurate to talk about multilateral than dual cooperations.

### Interlocking of learning venues and curricula

The three aspects – certificates, scheduling models and learning venues – approach duality in different ways. Each of them only sheds light on a sub-aspect of duality. Often, as well, it yields no information about how the content of curricula and diplomas interlock with one another. Those involved in the learning venue debate point out that the definition of learning venues in terms of mere institutions or distinct educational settings is too narrow and must be broadened by including a pedagogical perspective (cf. EULER 2014; LACHMANN/SAILMANN 2014). Learning venues in this pedagogical sense would be methodologically-didactically designed entities within the organisations. The distinction made between theory and practice phases – depending on attendance of the individual institutions – is inadequate. It would be much more helpful to determine which practical vocational learning content requires academic reflection, or how units of theoretical content will be assigned to practical (vocational) contexts, and which

institution should take charge of which elements. Transitions between the learning venues should be designed and supported so that they never leave student transfers solely to chance (cf. KUPFER 2013). Only in this way will genuine interlocking – not just of organisations or institutions but also of curriculum content – come about. In its Recommendation the German Science Council (Wissenschaftsrat 2013) proposes that in dual courses of study at least half of the study programme should be spent at the academic learning venue and at least two thirds of the credit points should be acquired from theory-based work, but not necessarily at the higher education institution. Furthermore it calls for at least organisational and/or scheduling coordination between the learning venues, and for the degree subject to be chosen for its affinity to the vocational training programme or job, in order to create content-based reference opportunities. Only provision which interlocks at the curricular level and is closely coordinated between all learning venues at the interface of vocational and higher education can honour the promise of duality. To strengthen the “brand of dual courses of study” brand, transparent and unambiguous minimum criteria for interlocking learning venues and curricula must be defined. Only in this way can dual courses of study be clearly profiled and differentiated from other hybrid formats at the interface between vocational and higher education, or indeed from regular degree programmes. ◀

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# Building (and extending) bridges between higher and vocational education through cross-cutting education programmes



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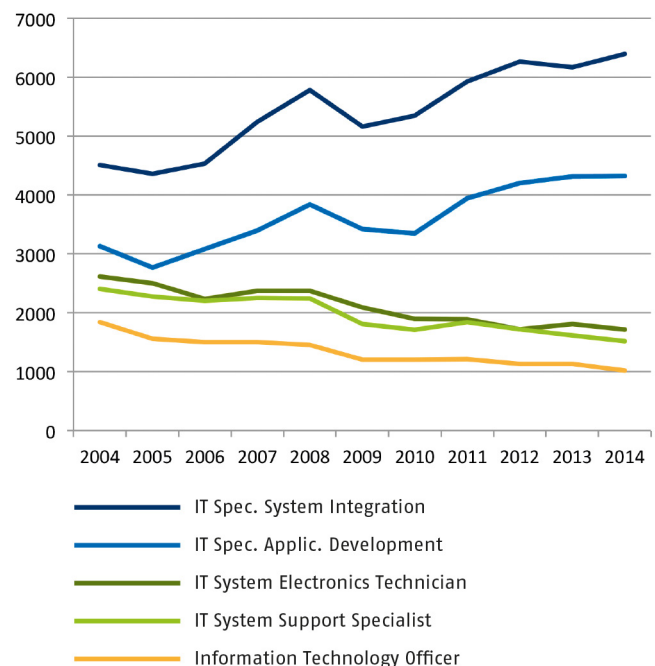
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It is clear from the example of the IT occupations that rising demand for skilled workers cannot be addressed solely with more higher education qualifications, but that differentiated competence profiles are necessary. Additional options are called for, which integrate elements of academic and vocational education and thereby facilitate reciprocal transitions between the different educational sectors. The article presents how the "DQR Bridge 5" project is developing cross-cutting education measures at Level 5 of the German Qualifications Framework (DQR), for which credit transfer can be granted within the framework of an upgrading training programme and a Bachelor's degree programme.

## Qualification needs and possible training pathways, exemplified by the IT occupations

Thanks to the digitalisation of the economy, the status of IT occupations and their penetration of the workforce structure has increased significantly in almost all branches of the economy in the last 15 years. A further indicator of this is the trend in initial vocational training contracts in this area. Trainee figures have risen particularly in the initial vocational training occupation of Information Technology Specialist ("Fachinformatiker"). Approximately 15,000 new training contracts (as of 2014) are concluded every year in the IT occupations (cf. Figure 1). The overall qualification structure in the IT sector, according to data from BITKOM (2010), shows that around half of those employed there possess an academic degree. More than one third has a dual-system initial vocational qualification and – an equally significant feature – around ten per cent are autodidacts and lateral entrants from other fields. The Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, BA) takes the view that a general shortage of skilled IT workers is not currently an issue. In the fields of informatics and software development, however, a shortage of experts is evident in almost all federal states (Länder) in Germany (cf. BA 2014, p. 11). The causes are not confined to technical developments but also include, for example, new integration approaches and interfaces between infor-

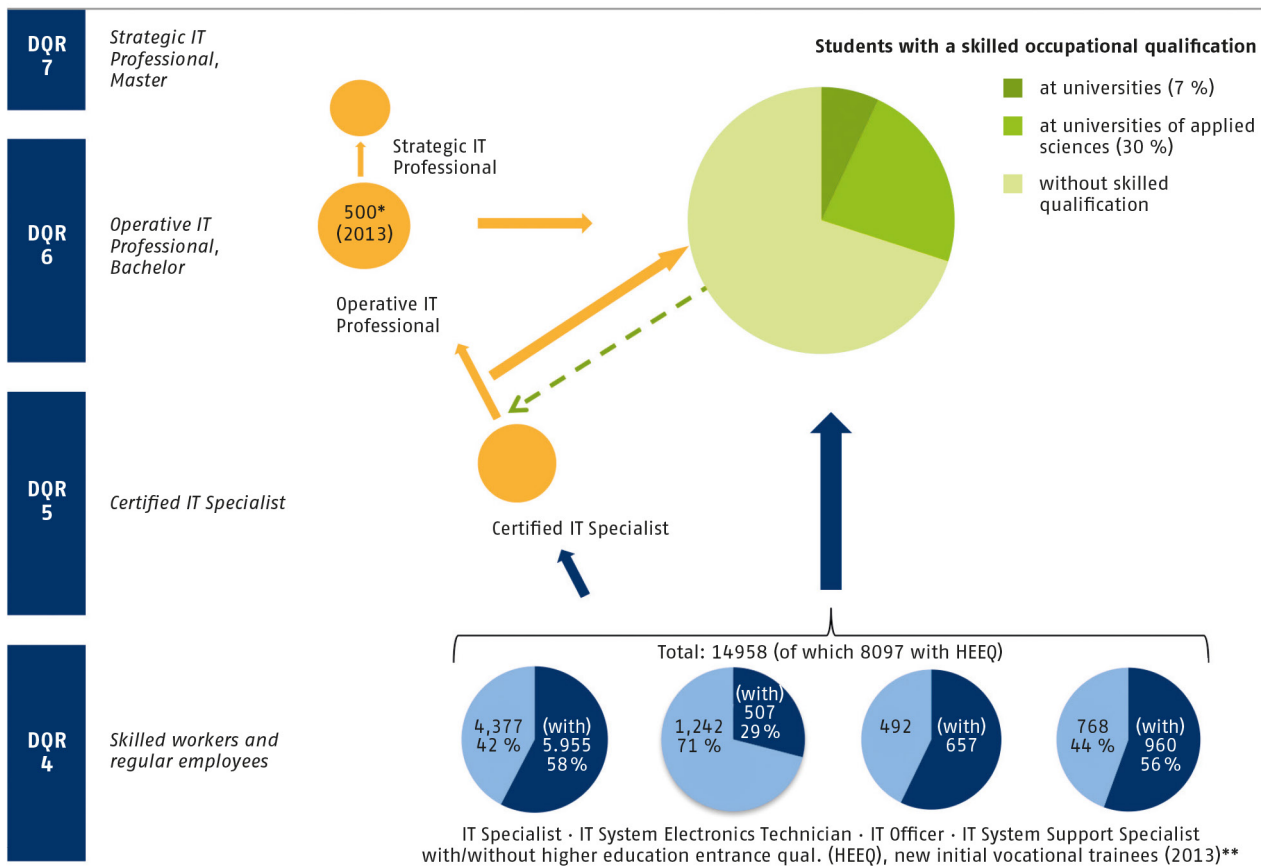
Figure 1  
Newly concluded training contracts as of 30.09., from 2004 to 2014



Source: BIBB (2014), data taken from the BIBB survey "Newly concluded training contracts as of 30.09." Tab. 46

Figure 2

Possible education and training pathways within the IT occupations



Sources: \*German Association of Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) advanced training statistics,

\*\*BiBB: Newly concluded training contracts as of 30.09.2013

mation technology, production technology and work. This gives rise to very complex bundles of work tasks for skilled IT workers, which demand specialisation and continuing vocational education on the basis of the initial vocational qualifications in recognised training occupations.

The options for advanced vocational training within the framework of the vocational education and training system are wide ranging. Figure 2 gives a general overview of possible training pathways in the framework of upgrading training within the IT occupations. Upgrading training programmes are regulated according to Länder and Federal law and are possible within the framework of higher education courses. In contrast to many other occupational fields, however, no Master Craftsman qualifications have yet been introduced in the industrial IT occupations. In 2002, instead, a nationally standardised advanced vocational training concept came into force. The three-tier advanced training regulation for IT<sup>1</sup> aligned to the German national qualifications framework (DQR) provides for 14 Certified IT Specialist ("IT-Spezialist") profiles on the first

tier (DQR 5). Evidence of certification as a Certified IT Specialist is part of the admission requirement for examination as an Operative IT Professional (DQR 6). On this tier there are four different Professional profiles in total. On the third tier, qualification as Strategic Professional (DQR 7) is possible by gaining certification as either a Certified Information Technologist ("Geprüfter Informatiker") or a Certified IT Business Engineer ("Geprüfter Wirtschaftsinformatiker").

Counter to the expectations vested in this concept, compared with Master Craftsman regulations in other vocational fields it is little used. In the year 2013 only 500 skilled workers in the whole of Germany gained certification as Operative Professionals. Statistics for the Strategic Professional and the Certified IT Specialist qualifications are not available. Certificates for the latter may be awarded not only by the competent bodies but also by companies. Consequently there is a certain lack of transparency. Higher education degree courses present an alternative for individuals interested in advanced vocational training. These can be taken either as a full-time study programme or by distance learning in conjunction with employment. This

<sup>1</sup> Cf. BGBl. I (Federal Gazette) No. 30 of 17.05.2002, pp. 1547–1565

option is favoured by many thanks to the fact that more than one out of two initial vocational trainees in these occupations is in possession of a general or subject-specific higher education entrance qualification (HEEQ). Furthermore, on the basis of the resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (Kultusministerkonferenz, KMK) of 06.03.2009, even skilled workers without an HEEQ are eligible to commence higher education studies if they have three years of occupational practice or an advanced vocational qualification involving a minimum of 400 taught hours. For the training/employing company, however, the direct degree course route usually means losing the employee, in the first instance, as well as uncertainty as to whether they will return after completing their studies. To that extent, from the perspective of company human resources staff, training pathways which tend to strengthen or at least uphold retention within the company are advantageous. For characterisation of the situation in the higher education sector, reference can be made to the following data: according to the BIBB Transition Study (BIBB-Übergangsstudie) 2011, of the 1,341,091 18- to 24-year-olds who started a degree programme between 2005 and 2011, 40,866 majored in computing as their first subject.<sup>2</sup>

### Potential for cross-cutting training measures at Level 5 of the DQR

In order to meet a rising demand for skilled workers, efforts in recent years have been focused on raising the proportion of graduates. Current projections of labour market development show, however, that boosting university graduate numbers alone does not solve the skilled workforce problem; indeed, precisely in the IT sector, high-value vocational qualifications are needed (cf. MAIER et al. 2014). It is therefore problematic that in the education and training policy discourse, permeability is understood and fostered very one-sidedly: namely by means of new access pathways into higher education for those with vocational qualifications. This weakens dual education and training. Measures are called for which build bridges between the sectors in both directions so that the permeability achieved is reciprocal, strengthening vocational education and training as a receiving system, too. For this purpose, training offers should be designed so as to be directly transferable towards the desired qualifications in the respective sectors of education and training. They could be placed at Level 5 of the DQR. DQR Level 5 can offer a promising platform for education and training measures since it can facilitate both

the step-through to advanced vocational qualifications, for instance from Certified IT Specialist to IT Professional, as well as access to Bachelor's degree programmes, for instance in Informatics, both at DQR Level 6. Transitions into vocational training for university dropouts can also be facilitated. To this end, models are being developed in the "DQR Bridge 5" project (cf. box) for the IT sector<sup>3</sup>, among others, which are based on interlocking curricula in vocational and higher education. The DQR serves as a foundation and, equally, as a vehicle for education and training formats of this kind, since it defines the equivalence of qualifications and makes these transparent and comparable by means of competence descriptions.

In its Recommendation of March 2014, the Board of BIBB put forward a systematic classification of advanced vocational qualifications which describes career progressions within the vocational system and enables the mapping of advanced vocational training levels to the DQR. Certified IT Specialists are assigned to the first tier of advanced vocational training and to DQR Level 5. This gives the qualification a multiple bridging function which is being fleshed out in the "DQR Bridge 5" project: within vocational career-progression concepts it represents an important stepping-stone up to the Operated IT Professional qualification; at the same time it marks a transition point into higher education. From the viewpoint of the higher education institutions it lends itself as a bridge into vocational education, which can be crossed in both directions: as well as being an access route to higher education institutions it can also facilitate a pathway into compatible vocational training for those dropping out of degree courses. In the case of the Certified IT Specialist advanced vocational qualification within the "DQR Bridge 5" project, this holds true even for individuals without an initial vocational qualification and is in keeping with the specific recruitment strategies in the IT sector, where lateral entry from other fields is always

#### The "DQR Bridge 5" project

The BMBF-funded project "Promoting permeability to produce skilled workers – developing cross-cutting education and training measures in higher and vocational education at Level 5 of the DQR (DQR Bridge 5)" (term: Q4 2013 to Q3 2016) is exploring the potentials of Level 5 of the DQR. In cooperation between vocational education and training providers, chamber organisations and higher education institutions with academic backup, interlocking forms of curricular provision are being developed which are valid for both sectors of education and training – i.e. as the first tier of upgrading training and also eligible for credit towards a degree. The educational and training provision is coupled with advisory measures which are, in turn, being developed and realised across educational sectors by higher and vocational education. Further information (in German): [www.bibb.de/de/25789.php](http://www.bibb.de/de/25789.php)

<sup>2</sup> Calculations of the Research Data Centre of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) on the basis of the BIBB Transition Study 2011

<sup>3</sup> Alongside the IT sector, measures are being developed in the context of motor vehicle service technology in a second sub-project.

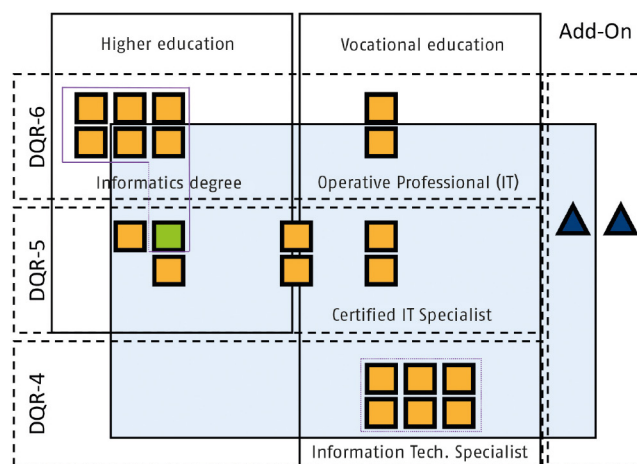
an option. The recommendations of the German Science Council on “Shaping the relationship of vocational and academic education” (Wissenschaftsrat 2014) are aimed at reinforcing hybrid education and training formats. A desk study of international research papers shows that DQR Level 5 is used in many countries as a platform for the integration of general education, vocational education and training and academic education (cf. WILBERS 2014). On this basis, new impulses can be created by means of interlocking vocational and higher education measures, both in the course of enlarging vocational education provision in the context of career-progression concepts as well as in academic continuing education, such as in the form of certificate courses – “low-threshold study programmes of a short-term nature which are certified but do not in themselves lead to an academic degree” (Wissenschaftsrat 2014, p. 87). Apart from the “broad competence profiles” also proposed by the German Science Council to dependably meet the demand for skilled workers, the “DQR Bridge 5” project also envisages further-reaching innovative effects in the different educational and training sectors. Thus, curricular development requires a common understanding and a common language so as to be able to describe competences across educational sectors. Stakeholders from the vocational and higher education sectors are involved in the cooperative development of measures within the project. So far no provision is made for DQR Level 5 in the German higher education sector, i.e. there are no higher education qualifications below the Bachelor’s degree at Level 6. Therefore clarification is also necessary within the scope of the project as to whether and how education and training measures, or elements of them, which lead to an advanced vocational qualification at DQR Level 5 can be credited towards degree programmes and integrated in the system.

### Design and extension of education and training offers across educational sectors

The design of education and training measures across educational sectors can combine learning outcome units from different sectors of education, e. g. modules from degree programme, units of learning outcomes from advanced vocational training and qualifications such as a recognised initial occupational qualification. In Figure 3, units of learning outcomes are shown as squares; qualifications are represented by the outlined grouped units of learning outcomes, and triangles stand for the add-ons which are explained further below. In this respect, courses taught across educational sectors represent flexible structures. An individual assemblage of units of learning outcomes, qualifications and add-ons is denoted by the part of the diagram shaded in light blue. The individual provision represented by the light blue area contains a “complete” qualification

Figure 3

Cross-cutting learning arrangement in the IT sector



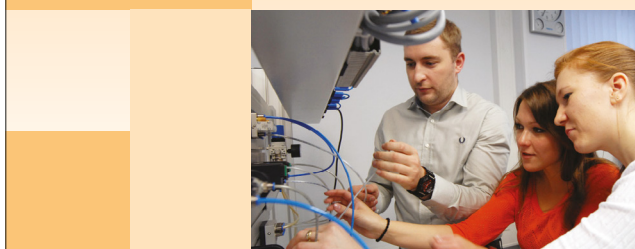
from vocational education and training – the initial vocational qualification as an Information Technology Specialist (“Fachinformatiker”). A higher education qualification – a degree in Informatics at Bachelor’s level – is only partially integrated in this case. Cross-cutting courses may combine higher education degree programmes or certificate courses, but also other modules; bridging courses, for example. Add-ons are additional elements which increase the attractiveness of the learning arrangement; for example, the prospect of taking over a skilled crafts enterprise.

Qualifications and units of learning outcomes are mapped to a specific level in the German national qualifications framework (DQR). For the DQR, as for the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the “principle of best fit” is applicable. A qualification is assigned to the level where it fits best on overall consideration of the competences. This also means that individual units of learning outcomes making up part of a qualification on one level may belong to a different level. These “exception modules” – shown in Figure 3 as a green square – are of strategic significance for the design of permeable structures. Credit for units of learning outcomes within a qualification, for example in a Bachelor’s degree programme or on the second tier of advanced vocational training (DQR Level 6), depends upon some level-referenced equivalence according to the general rules of credit transfer. Exception modules, however, also offer credit transfer options in cases where the DQR levels are at variance. Thus, a degree in Informatics (DQR Level 6) may include, as an exception module, a unit of learning outcome one level down at DQR Level 5: a programming course, for example. Equally the DQR Level 5 course may contain a higher-level exception module which is placed at the level of an Informatics degree. In both cases, with due regard to the credit transfer principle of level-referenced equivalence, credit towards a qualification at a higher level is possible. Combining units of learning outcomes across





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educational sectors can give rise to flexible education and training courses which accommodate the requirements of a variety of groups and appeal to a variety of target groups. The aim of the project will now be to turn the “bridging concept” for the IT sector presented here into a workable reality. To this end, the next step will be to undertake so-called coverage analyses: on this basis vocational education and training experts together with the participating higher education institutions will describe the envisaged competence targets, devise units of learning outcomes and assemble these into education and training measures. A flanking advisory concept will be developed for these courses, which will likewise be implemented across educational sectors. This is of interest particularly in the IT sector in order to make the advanced vocational qualification of Certified IT Specialist more attractive. It can be designed as a course for especially high-achieving young people or skilled workers, whilst at the same time offering prospects to individuals who leave university after completing a few modules but without gaining a degree. ◀

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# Dual initial vocational training following degree course dropout?

## Findings of the BIBB Experts Monitor

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**With the growing number of unfilled training places, the demand for more permeability in the education system has extended to asking how degree course dropouts might be recruited for dual initial vocational training. For this purpose, knowledge about the interests and possible reservations of companies and higher education dropouts is helpful. The article investigates these on the basis of a survey of experts.**

## Extending permeability in the education system

Efforts to improve permeability in the education system are nothing new. The idea of enabling vocationally qualified individuals to access higher education without a formal higher education entrance qualification was already being discussed back in the 1960s and 1970s (cf. inter alia JAHN/BIRCKNER 2014). Attention has turned only very recently to permeability from higher education into vocational education. Key contributory factors, in equal measure, have been the rising number of degree course dropouts as well as unfilled in company training places, and the associated concern about the future supply of skilled workers.

In the meantime a series of initiatives has been set in train within view to integrating higher education dropouts into dual initial vocational training (cf. inter alia Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks 2013). As of the start of 2015, 18 new projects are being supported under the heading of "Boosting support to small and medium-sized enterprises to recruit degree course dropouts as apprentices", a line of funding within the JOBSTARTER plus<sup>1</sup> programme.<sup>2</sup> The great number of initiatives indicates that both companies and degree course dropouts can certainly be matched up; equally, it suggests that certain factors may exist which deter them from engaging with each other. Knowledge of these is still very sparse, however. For example, evidence exists that a good proportion of the training companies

would provide dual initial vocational training in recognised occupations to degree course dropouts (cf. inter alia Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks 2013). Equally there are indications that a certain proportion of degree course dropouts are intent on obtaining a dual initial vocational qualification (cf. HEUBLEIN/SPANGENBERG/SOMMER 2003; BECKER/GREBE/BLEIKERTZ 2010). Little or no research has been done, however, into which factors might underlie companies' as well as degree dropouts interest or lack of interest (cf. JAHN/BIRCKNER 2014, p. 6).

## Investigation based on a survey of experts

Findings on interests and reservations can be expected to yield not only pointers for the development of initiatives to integrate degree course dropouts into dual system initial vocational training but also points of reference for quantifying the available potential. Therefore the BIBB Vocational Training Experts Monitor (cf. box) took up these themes in 2014 in order to explore them through analysis of the assessments of vocational education and training experts. Along with various other questions on the integration of degree course dropouts into dual initial vocational training

### BIBB-Vocational Training Experts Monitor

The Vocational Training Experts Monitor (or Experts Monitor for short) is an online survey system operated by BIBB. Its aim is to collect the expert opinion of vocational education and training experts on current vocational training policy issues and to feed it into the education policy debate (cf. EHRENTAL/KREKEL/ULRICH 2004). The experts surveyed for this purpose are recruited from individuals who are professionally engaged with vocational education in different institutional contexts (cf. Figure, below).

<sup>1</sup> This is one of the total of four lines of funding from the first funding round of the programme "Jobstarter plus – training for the future" delivered by BIBB on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (cf. [www.jobstarter.de](http://www.jobstarter.de) and [www.bmbf.de/foerderungen/23755.php](http://www.bmbf.de/foerderungen/23755.php) (in German); retrieved 22.12.2014).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. press release by BMBF (Federal Ministry of Education and Research) of 22.01.2015 ([www.bmbf.de/press/3729.php](http://www.bmbf.de/press/3729.php); retrieved 13.03.2015).





Table 1

Arguments **supporting** company provision of initial vocational training to degree course dropouts

	Totality of experts		Experts from companies	
	Agreement rate (%) <sup>1</sup>	Mean value <sup>2</sup>	Agreement rate (%) <sup>1</sup>	Mean value <sup>2</sup>
<b>Qualifications of degree course dropouts</b>				
Degree course dropouts can be trained as junior staff destined for management positions.	56	3,68	46	3,27
Degree course dropouts are equipped with special technical and methodological competences.	53	3,50	49	3,41
Vocational training of degree course dropouts requires less supervisory manpower.	47	3,31	39	3,10
The risk of losing degree course dropouts to higher education after initial vocational training is low.	45	3,25	46	3,28
<b>Recruitment difficulties</b>				
It has become more difficult generally to fill training places.	79	4,10	78	4,22
It has become more difficult to recruit school-leavers with a higher education entrance qualification as trainees.	68	3,75	64	3,60

**Explanatory note for all tables:**

<sup>1</sup> The agreement rate states what percentage of all experts and of those from companies agreed (on balance) with the given statement. For example, 56 % of all experts agreed with the statement that degree course dropouts can be trained to become junior staff destined for management. The same figure for experts from companies was 46 %.

<sup>2</sup> The mean value quantifies the average agreement with the given statement, calculated using the scale points from 1 = "do not agree at all" to 5 = "agree completely".

Table 2

Arguments **detering** company provision of initial vocational training to degree course dropouts

	Totality of experts		Experts from companies	
	Agreement rate (%)	Mean value	Agreement rate (%)	Mean value
<b>Inflated expectations</b>				
Degree course dropouts have unduly high expectations of in-company dual initial vocational training.	43	3,21	29	3,05
Degree course dropouts want to shorten the training period so much that benefits are too low to offset training costs.	36	3,00	22	2,59
Degree course dropouts expect to be able to advance their careers rapidly after dual initial vocational training	31	3,19	39	3,00
<b>Insufficient willingness to integrate socially</b>				
Companies fear that degree course dropouts cannot fit in with a group of trainees who have come directly from school	45	3,24	37	2,85
Companies fear that degree course dropouts will continue their track record of dropping out.	26	2,79	29	2,70

### Future potential of a dual occupational qualification: a major incentive

Likewise, the arguments that might support or deter higher education dropouts from taking up dual initial vocational training are also influenced by two different motivations. Supporting factors are the qualification and development opportunities opened up by dual initial vocational training as well as the social status it secures. Detering factors are focused on social stigmatisation and unattractive material conditions (cf. Tables 3 and 4).

That said, very similar assessments of the motivations are arrived at by the totality of experts and by the subgroup of company-based experts. While there is no denying that reasons might exist which could deter higher education dropouts from taking up dual initial vocational training, the experience of dual initial vocational training as a drop down the social ladder and as proof of failure at university is the barrier thought to carry the most weight, both by all experts and by the company-based experts. Nevertheless, the arguments supporting a shift of orien-

Table 3

Arguments **supporting** commencement of dual initial vocational training by degree course dropouts

	Totality of experts		Experts from companies	
	Agreement rate (%)	Mean value	Agreement rate (%)	Mean value
<b>Qualification and development opportunities</b>				
Skilled workers with a dual qualification are in demand in the labour market.	87	4,11	93	4,34
Interesting occupations can be learned in the dual system.	80	4,00	85	4,20
Dual initial vocational training includes a very high proportion of practical training.	76	3,97	78	4,05
Dual initial vocational training makes it possible to take advanced vocational examinations.	45	3,27	49	3,40
<b>Securing social status</b>				
Dual initial vocational training helps to boost the sense of self-esteem.	63	3,67	68	3,65
A dual initial vocational qualification secures social status.	59	3,52	61	3,63

Table 4

Arguments **detering** commencement of dual initial vocational training by degree course dropouts

	Totality of experts		Experts from companies	
	Agreement rate (%)	Mean value	Agreement rate (%)	Mean value
<b>Social stigmatisation</b>				
Dual initial vocational training is perceived as a drop in social status.	42	3,24	34	3,05
Commencing dual vocational training makes the failure at higher education visible.	40	3,17	32	2,97
Degree course dropouts do not want to put themselves on the same level as trainees coming directly from school.	34	3,09	32	2,95
Degree course dropouts fear being stigmatised in the workplace as a failure.	24	2,74	20	2,53
<b>Unattractive material conditions</b>				
Trainees' pay is too low compared to earnings in the case of immediate employment.	38	3,12	27	2,73
Labour market opportunities for degree course dropouts are very good even without a vocational qualification.	9	2,25	7	2,12

Explanatory notes on the tables, cf. Table 1

tation within the dual system are given distinctly stronger emphasis, and particularly the future prospects that open up in the labour market. It is striking that experts from companies give even greater emphasis than the totality of experts to the advantages for higher education dropouts, and consider the deterrents to be less prevalent. For example, 93 per cent of all company-based experts agree with the statement that the demand for skilled workers in the labour market might motivate degree course dropouts to take up dual initial vocational training, in contrast to 87 per cent of all experts (cf. Table 3). Conversely, 42 per cent of the totality but only 34 per cent of company-based experts take the view that degree course dropouts might therefore refrain from dual vocational training because they categorise this as a drop in social status (cf. Table 4).

### Wide-ranging activities necessary to make full use of the potential

It is hoped that the recruitment of higher education dropouts will unlock further potential for dual vocational training. In recent years the dropout rate from Bachelors' degree courses has been a relatively constant 28 per cent (cf. HEUBLEIN et al. 2014). The majority of new entrants to higher education – and hence also of subsequent dropouts – have not previously completed an initial vocational training programme (cf. SCHELLER/ISLEIB/SOMMER 2013). Dual vocational training thus provides higher education dropouts with a possibility of gaining a vocational qualification in a recognised occupation regardless.

The surveyed experts also see an added value. They make the assumption that both companies and degree course dropouts stand to gain if those who quit higher education

without graduating can be integrated (more intensively) into dual initial vocational training. From the companies' point of view this mainly relates to securing the supply of skilled workers, and for higher education dropouts as individuals, most essentially it relates to securing their prospects of future success.

But the findings also show that the integration of higher education dropouts into dual initial vocational training is not necessarily an automatic success. Even if the arguments that support the commencement of dual initial vocational training are overwhelming from the experts' perspective, there are still reservations.

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Although the company-based experts assess these to be lower overall than the totality of experts, the nature of the reservations nevertheless implies that isolated interventions are most unlikely to be sufficient to break them down and ultimately overcome them. Thus, counteracting the potential concerns of higher education dropouts about the loss of status associated with switching to dual initial vocational training will only be possible if measures addressed specifically to both higher education dropouts and companies are accompanied by broad-based information campaigns, in order to retrieve dropping out of higher education from the taboo zone, but also to reinforce (once again) the social prestige of a dual initial vocational qualification. ◀

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## Validity of validation



**REINHOLD WEISS**

Prof. Dr., Deputy President of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BiBB) and Head of Research

**Under the banner of “Recognising competences”, a new initiative is announced in the coalition agreement. Competences that are not documented with formal certificates will be made transparent, and granted recognition as far as possible. Procedures for doing so will be developed and piloted. Importantly, this announcement can be taken as the coalition partners’ response to the EU Council Resolution whereby Member States have undertaken to introduce national strategies for the validation of informal and non-formal competences by 2018. Its aim is to foster permeability and create a pathway which enables working people without formal qualifications to attain a vocational qualification.**

### Requirements of validation procedures

As long as the aim is to make existing competences transparent, descriptions, self-assessments and informal assessments by others are suitable procedures. If the aim is to achieve recognition of qualifications, however, procedures are necessary that incorporate a credible and legally robust validation of competences. In other words, access entitlements, partial recognition of qualifications or statements of equivalence with existing qualifications call for a procedure that meets the same criteria and requirements as the standard admission and examination procedures embedded within the education system. The issuing of “carte blanche” certificates of equivalence serves nobody, certainly not the applicants. If the word spreads that qualifications and certificates are easier to obtain in this way, their value is soon eroded. Routes for the recognition of informally acquired competences already exist. The most important are the “external candidates” system for admitting mature candidates to the chamber examinations taken by apprentices, and the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad within the framework of the Federal Recognition Act. The external candidates’ examination is a recognised instrument, take-up of which accounts for approximately six per cent of each year’s examination participants. Informal evidence can only be used to gain admission to the final examination; the examination itself must still be taken. In other countries, in contrast, there are instruments and procedures permitting direct assessment of equivalence with recognised vocational certificates.

### Learning from other countries’ experiences

In Switzerland, for example, it is possible to obtain partial or full recognition of a vocational certificate by means of a special validation procedure. This might be a model and an example that Germany could follow. Regarding the level of take-up, however, expectations should not be pitched too high. Although the potential target group – individuals without vocational certificates – is large in numerical terms, relatively few fulfil the criteria to take advantage of the opportunity to gain recognition for competences acquired outside the formal system. This is partly due to the demanding requirements, but also the fact that employment in unskilled positions offers limited opportunities to acquire competences in the sense of occupational proficiency. Experience gained in other countries points to the necessity for institutional embedding of the procedure. Any recognition of informally acquired competences should best be undertaken by the same institutions as are responsible for, and experienced in, the recognition of informal competences. In Germany, these are the competent bodies pursuant to the Federal Vocational Training Act. Establishing a parallel structure of institutions would be neither efficient nor conducive to the acceptance of the certificates issued. At some point, there will also be a need for a statutory base. Meanwhile, support programmes and pilot projects are creating a suitable framework for gathering and evaluating experience. ◀

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Translation from the German original (published in BWP 5/2014):  
Deborah Shannon, Academic Text & Translation Berlin

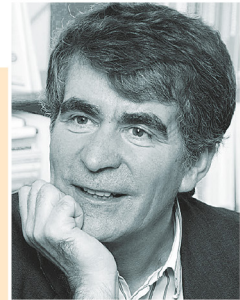
## Placing a recognised value on experience

An interview with Professor Peter Dehnbostel on the opportunities and conditions of a national validation system

**Current results regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning at a European level illustrate that the EU Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 is having an effect on the structuring of national strategies and general prevailing conditions. Against this background, how is the situation in Germany to be evaluated? In this interview, Professor Peter Dehnbostel reveals the role played by non-formal and informal learning in vocational education and training and in the world of work. He describes how these experiences can be used to inform the development of a national validation system that will enable the benefits of validation to be recognised by individuals, company and educational institutions and facilitate the implementation of validation concepts at this level.**

### PROF. DR. PETER DEHNBOSTEL

Professor of "Company Training Management" at the Berlin University for Professional Studies



- From 1999 to 2010, Professor of Vocational Education and Workplace Training at the Helmut Schmidt University of Hamburg
- Lecturer for in-service Masters courses of study at the Carl von Ossietzky University in Oldenburg and at the Friedrich Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg since 2006 and 2007 respectively, teaching activities at further institutes of higher education in Austria, Switzerland and Germany
- Worked for the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training from 1987 to 1999, latterly as Head of the Department of "Teaching and Learning Processes in Vocational Education and Training"
- Primary work and research focuses: company training and company training management; occupational development pathways and continuing vocational training; evaluation research for training concepts

**BWP** Professor Dehnbostel, the EU Council Recommendation calls upon the member states to introduce national strategies for the validation of non-formal and informal competences by the year 2018. How should the current status of development in Germany be evaluated?

**DEHNBOSTEL** There cannot really be any talk of a national strategy in Germany. The focus is much more likely to be on the development and piloting of validation concepts and measures that may lead to nationwide arrangements and regulations by 2018. The situation is, however, similar to that regarding the German Qualifications Framework in that reform initiatives are lacking and there is an absence of any will to shape educational policy. Processes are being administered rather than moulded. To many, the inclusion and recognition of informal and non-formal learning in educational and occupational biographies seems an insoluble task which is leading to uncertainty and resistance in many quarters. Power and vested interests are also at stake. Validation may, for example, be perceived as a threat to the existing monopoly of formal learning and the associated bestowing of entitlements. It can, however, also be

welcomed as a new and lucrative field of business. As far as the actual objective of validation is concerned, the Federal Council has put the situation in a nutshell. Its official resolution of October 2012 responds to the draft EU Recommendation by saying that the creation of national validation systems constitutes a comprehensive change in learning, credit transfer and recognition culture. We should also add that such a cultural switch takes time, particularly in a country with traditionally established and highly developed formal educational and VET structures.

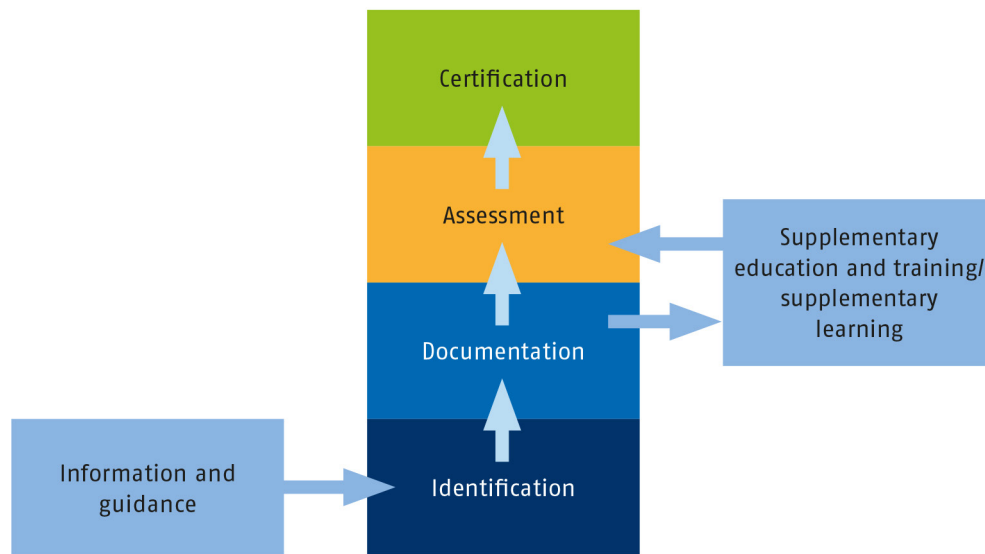
**BWP** In its Recommendation, the European Council stresses the need to increase employability skills, particularly for the socially disadvantaged and for semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Are there any further arguments for the introduction of national validation procedures?

**DEHNBOSTEL** The validation of competences acquired by informal and non-formal means is essentially justified by lifelong learning, by discontinuities in occupational biographies and by the virtually exponential development in innovation and knowledge in our society. Skills require-



Figure 1

Model multi-level validation procedure



ments in modern companies are characterised by professionally, socially and personally integrated competences that are developed on an in-service basis. Such a view of comprehensive employability skills is becoming the most important productive force. Certificates recording formally acquired qualifications lose meaningfulness as the date of issue recedes into the past. It is essential for companies and employees to identify and assess the respective status of competence development in the form of a current analysis of occupational proficiency. This should then be compared with target values and strategic goals to draw conclusions for company development and for individual and professional company-based continuing training.

The question you addressed as to whether validation can serve as a vehicle for giving socially disadvantaged target groups a second chance and improving their occupational and social status is very difficult to answer at the moment. The opportunity of a second chance was postulated as long ago as the 1990's, when new work and organisational concepts emerged and the significance of informal learning began to grow.

There is now plenty of empirical evidence that the distance between qualifications levels has increased in the wake of the rise in informal continuing training. Instead of an increase in permeability and equality of opportunity, inequalities from school biographies are being reproduced and entrenched. The occupational and social effectiveness of validation therefore crucially depends on the alignment and quality of the procedures. The EU Council recommendation and other EU documents suggest a multi-level validation process.

**BWP** What does this mean with regard to the development and implementation of such procedures?

**DEHNBOSTEL** With regard to validation, as is generally the case with competence assessment procedures, two fundamental approaches can be differentiated – a development-oriented approach and a requirements-oriented approach. The development-oriented approach targets competences which have been acquired in life and in the world of work and accords particular consideration to individual resources and strengths. The process of reflection involved constitutes a learning process in itself. Guidance and support have a particular role to play in this procedure. By way of contrast, the requirements-oriented approach mainly focuses on competences which are relevant to work and skills requirements and which are stipulated in instruments such as initial and advanced training regulations and skeleton curricula. Assessment of competences takes place with a view to firmly defined standards. Further areas of knowledge or further competences are of no or very little importance in the case of this approach. Validation procedures fundamentally combine both approaches.

As far as semi-skilled and unskilled workers are concerned, this means that they are detached from the validation process if there is insufficient development orientation for them. In such a case, validation predominantly strengthens the position of those who are already highly qualified and educationally privileged. Validation comes to nothing for the social groups that make up the so-called labour market reserve.

**BWP** Does this mean that we need to invest even more in individual experiences? What positive examples have we already seen of this?

**DEHNBOSTEL** There has long been a focus on placing a recognised value on experience. This is locked out by the formal educational system, which is aligned towards cognitive and academic knowledge. Vocational education and training represents an exception. The Vocational Training Act and the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code offer a range of opportunities for the recognition and credit transfer of learning outcomes. These include admission to the final examination in a recognised training occupation for persons who do not have a training contract but are in possession of certain experiences in the occupation forming the object of examination. As many as around seven percent of skilled workers complete their final examination via this route. There are also possibilities to credit prior occupational learning to the duration of training and to obtain equivalence for examination certificates. In advanced vocational training, exemption from parts of the examination may be granted in certain circumstances and examination certificates can also be deemed as equivalent. These positive examples need to serve as a starting point.

In addition to this, there are diverse recognition and assessment instruments practised in companies and by training providers. The ProfilPASS is just one example of many in this regard.

**BWP** Gathering experiences in the work process requires there to be occasions for learning. How can work tasks and

working environments be shaped so as to make them conducive to learning? And what does this mean for validation?

**DEHNBOSTEL** Since the 1980's/1990's, workplace analyses and projects have been conducted to foster learning at work. Company-based training work is now focused on organising work in such a way so as to promote learning and competence development rather than merely learning. A series of criteria, such as scope for activity, social support and reflectiveness, have shown themselves to be relevant within this context. These are applied both to the organisation of forms of work such as group work and rotation as well as to forms of learning organisation within the work itself. These future-oriented forms of work and learning are characterised by a high degree of informal learning. Continuing improvement processes and personal development address the learning processes in a targeted way and combine them with competence assessment and validation procedures.

**BWP** You are involved in projects in which validation plays a part. Could you give us a few brief details and state some of the findings for the development of validation?

**DEHNBOSTEL** I am currently participating in four such projects. The EU project "VALERU" focuses on the development of a national system for the validation of competences acquired via informal and non-formal means in the higher education system of the Russian Federation. The

### Structure of a ProfilPASS folder



#### My life – an overview

The ProfilPASS begins by looking back at the holder's life thus far. School, training and occupation are equally as important as family, leisure and voluntary work.



#### My activities – a documentation

This part of the ProfilPASS folder describes and evaluates all activities from vocational training to special hobbies. This section gives holders a feeling for how to evaluate their own abilities.



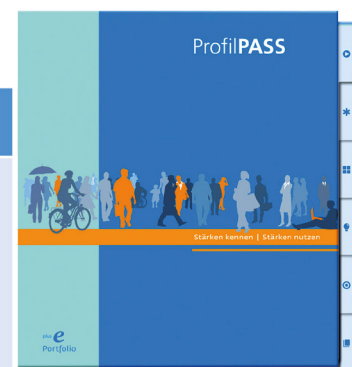
#### My competences – a summary

The focus here is on drawing a conclusion and on compiling a summary of particular individual abilities and competences.



#### My goals – and the next steps

Finally, the findings arrived at are used for further life planning, e.g. which preferences, personal objectives and interests should be pursued further.



findings on which the EU Recommendations are based and the findings arrived at by the participating European countries including Germany show the irreversibility of the validation processes. At the same time, it is apparent that the approaches adopted need to correspond to the different national educational systems and traditions. A “continuing training system for energy technology” (WBS ET) is being developed in a project conducted in Berlin and Brandenburg. In this case, we are striving to create a competence-based validation concept that is intended to have a dual effect. Firstly, competences acquired by informal and non-formal means will be surveyed at the time of entry into the continuing training system in order to be able to undertake recognition and categorisation processes. Secondly, the continuing training leading to certification will be recorded as validation of competences acquired via a non-formal route. The tests and competence assessment instruments deployed in the participating companies will be systematically included and developed further. If the Berlin-Brandenburg project already covers regional requirements and circumstances to a high degree, this is even more true of two other projects in Hessen which are addressing training in the field of old age care. These are the projects “AiQuA” and “aufwärts! In der Altenpflege”. The basis in these cases is the strong regional shortage of skilled workers.

For semi-skilled and unskilled staff, achieving a qualification as an old age care worker essentially takes place via learning in the work process whilst continuing with existing contracts of employment. The competence development that occurs is supported and guided, and competences acquired are assessed with regard to their equivalence to the competences listed in the skeleton curriculum for Hessen. This is the first time that such work-integrated and qualifications-related training models have been piloted in Germany, and they are based on the many years of experience of the participants in the care sector together with their diverse range of competences acquired via informal and non-formal routes.

**BWP** What opportunities do you believe that validation concepts provide? And it is not the case that significant progress has been made at federal state and Federal Government level over the past few years in the recognition of competences acquired by informal and non-formal means?

**DEHNBOSTEL** Validation concepts that address the real needs and requirements of different regions, branches and educational areas are an absolute necessity. There has, however, been insufficient funding for such concepts thus far. As far as education policy and ministry-based recognition of educational and learning achievements is concerned, for years we have been experiencing virtually inflationary Federal Government and federal state regulation relating

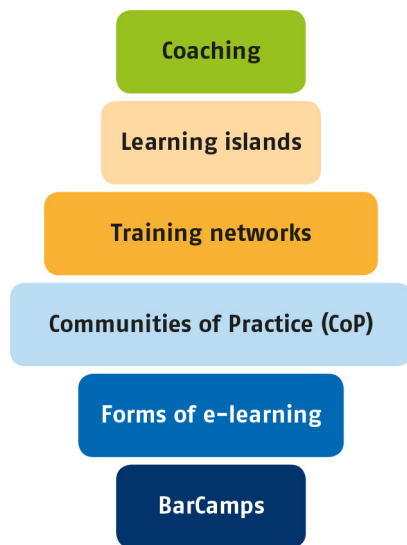
to the equalisation of vocational qualifications and higher education entrance qualifications and to the credit transfer of competences obtained vocationally to higher education courses of study. These educational policy edicts completely circumvent the competence assessments and validations that are actually necessary. Well intentioned equalisations or equalisations that are opportune in terms of educational policy are undertaken instead. One example is the 2009 agreement of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK), which provides for 50 percent of a course of higher education study to be recognised via evidence of competences previously acquired. But why only 50 percent? Why not 100 percent, such as in accordance with the VAE System in France or pursuant to the Vocational Training Act in Switzerland if this is what the validation produces? How and on the basis of what criteria are the 50 percent recognised? There are definitely established approaches and concepts at individual universities, not least thanks to initiatives such as “ANKOM” and “Offene Hochschule”. Nevertheless, there is a lack of nationally applicable valid and objective procedures. This is an area in which the higher education sector still stubbornly shuts itself off from vocational education and training.

**BWP** Let’s stay with vocational education and training. The question that constantly arises here is as follows. Is the validation of competences acquired outside the formal educational system compatible with the principle of the regulated occupation?

**DEHNBOSTEL** That’s a sensitive point! There is no doubt that considerable risks are associated with the binding integration of informal and non-formal learning outcomes into recognised training pathways such as the dual system and the advanced training occupations. In light of the system developments in many countries, critical evaluations which assume a dissolution of the principle of the regulated occupation and of the dual VET system are justified. One-sided outcome and market orientation produces the danger of giving up on the objectives of comprehensive employability skills and on education that is related to the individual. Fragmentation and segmentation of vocational training through modularisation in regulatory policy terms would in particular bring about such a development. This contrasts with the integration of informal and non-formal competences for expanded vocationalism. The initial and advanced training regulations form the reference and standards for the recognition of competences acquired by informal and non-formal means. Corresponding recognition of modules in higher education courses of study can serve as a positive example in this regard. If a proper validation concept is in place, there is no need to fear a dissolution of courses of study and study qualifications.

Figure 2

Future-oriented forms of learning



**BWP** Can the upgrading of informal and non-formal consequences lead to inequalities or examples of unfairness vis-à-vis formal qualifications? How should the Recognition Act be viewed within this context?

**DEHNBOSTEL** As already explained, validation concepts which are purely requirements oriented tend to exclude the socially disadvantaged and consolidate existing inequalities. Generally speaking, however, validation creates a higher degree of transparency and fairness in comparison with formal qualifications because actually existing occupational proficiency and employability skills and identified and assessed. The Recognition Act is accorded a special status within this context. Its purposes are the recognition of foreign professional and vocational qualifications and the transfer of partial vocational qualifications. Since 2012, there has been a general legal right to a recognition procedure which relates professional and vocational qualifications acquired abroad to the initial and advanced training qualifications regulated under Federal Government law, which are some 600 in number. The central question is whether there are essential differences between the foreign professional or vocational qualification and the German reference occupation and, secondly, whether any such differences could possibly be compensated for by occupational experience or further evidence of competence. Inequalities and instances of unfairness vis-à-vis formal qualifications and certifications arise when documents used for the equivalence assessment procedure are not objective and drawn up in a valid manner. The consideration of occupational experience to compensate for missing partial qualifications or for absent documents represents a welcome recognition of competences acquired by informal and non-formal means that should take place via a skills analysis. In order to

create fair benchmarks and recognition processes, this also means that the two processes which up until now have run in parallel, namely the development of nationally applicable validation procedures and the equivalent assessment procedures pursuant to the Recognition Act, need to be undertaken in accordance with comparable and equivalent criteria and procedural rules.

**BWP** One final question. Which central aspects should be considered for the development of a national validation system so that such a system can achieve broad recognition and dissemination and ultimately be effective?

**DEHNBOSTEL** In this instance, would like to restrict this complex topic area to four main points: the institutional framework, alignment to the German Qualifications Framework (DQR), pilot development and quality assurance. Institutional and organisational assurance to secure the binding integration of standards under public law is indispensable for the development of a national validation system. Recourse to competent bodies is an obvious step in institutional terms, whereby a nationally responsible certification body is additionally recommended by the EU. Rather than creating new organisations, existing organisations should be used where possible and their task and performance spectrum expanded. Accreditation procedures such as those introduced in the higher education sector and in parts of continuing training could serve as examples. Within his framework, alignments of informal and non-formal competences to the DQR should also be undertaken. These will not be possible until a broadly based validation system is in place.

The pilot development of validation concepts has previously taken place in various branches and in various federal states. National funding is long overdue in order to foster developments and coordinate effects nationwide and within the European context. And finally, more attention needs to be paid to aspects of quality assurance and development in driving forward the development of a validation. A quality assurance system that stipulates processes and areas of responsibility in a binding and transparent manner is certainly a prerequisite for broad acceptance of the validation of informal and non-formal learning within the educational and VET system. This applies to comprehensive validation concepts and procedures as well as to the individual procedural stages of competence assessment, the description of learning outcomes and evaluation. As in other areas, internal and external quality assurance systems are also necessary here.

*(Interview: Dr. Christiane Eberhardt, Christiane Jäger)*

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Translation from the German original (published in BWP 5/2014):  
Martin Stuart Kelsey, Global SprachTeam, Berlin

# The process of validation of non-formal and informal learning

Specification of terminology and the status of debate in the German-speaking countries



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On 20 December 2012, the Council of the European Union issued a "Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning", which calls upon the individual member states to introduce relevant regulations by the year 2018. The Recommendation states the main elements of a validation process. The present article begins by outlining the background and intentions of these endeavours before moving on to specify the terminology used to describe the individual elements in more detail. Finally and by way of example, a brief consideration is undertaken of national developments with regard to the implementation of the Recommendation whereby particular attention is paid to the individual stages of the process.

## Initial situation

As a result of the promotion of lifelong learning processes over the past two decades, increasing educational policy focus has been placed on non-formal and informal learning as forms of learning that have equal status with formal learning. The impetuses set by the European Union enable a development to be traced in this regard (cf. GUTSCHOW 2010, pp. 16 ff.), and it is clearly discernible that strategic considerations at the macro level are increasingly leading to specific actions at the micro level. An orientation towards learning outcomes was key to the introduction of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning in April 2008 and of the German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (DQR) in May 2013. Although the DQR's eight reference levels have thus far "only" been aligned to qualifications acquired within the scope of formal learning processes, there are prospective plans that the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning processes will be included. The current Recommendation calls upon the EU member states to introduce suitable regulations for validation by 2018 at the latest.

The delineating criteria of the various forms of learning are nature of organisation, purpose and certification (cf. Cedefop 2009). Formal and non-formal learning are characterised by the fact that there is external organisation with regard to learning venues, learning contents and learning times, whereas informal learning takes place via the individual and frequently occurs unknowingly. This

unconscious aspect in particular means that it is necessary to undertake retrospective identification of the individual learning outcomes. Informal learning processes do not usually lead to certification, whereas formal learning is always certified. Non-formal learning also mostly result in certification. These forms of learning also differ with regard to the market value of the certificates acquired, i.e. in terms of the associated entitlements within the educational and employment system.

## Functions of validation

As long ago as 2000, the key messages regarding "evaluation of learning" formulated in the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning contained the objective "to enhance the status of education by improving the ways in which learning participation and outcomes are understood and appreciated, particularly non-formal and informal learning" (Commission of the European Communities 2000, pp. 18 ff.). Against the background of increasing discontinuities in employment biographies and curricula vitae, the reason given is the "increasing demand for qualified workers and ever more fierce competition for jobs" (ibid.). In the initial documents produced by the European Union to address the issue of non-formal and informal learning, the sole thrust of the argumentation used is the usability of evidence of learning on the labour market. The extended focus of promotion of citizen involvement and broadly based personal



development is not added until a later stage (cf. e.g. Commission of the European Communities 2001, p. 9).

## Validation procedures and their central elements

The term validation is understood to mean “a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard” (Council of the European Union 2012, p. 5). Four distinct consecutive phases – identification, documentation, assessment and certification – are also differentiated (cf. box). The aim is for these elements to be used separately or in combined form as individually required. The idea that there is no single ideal pathway for such a process was formulated as early as 2004 in the “Common European principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning” (cf. Commission of the European Communities 2004).

The stages stated in the Council Recommendation are considered more specifically below, and their significance for the overall process of validation is identified.

### Identification

Recognition of learning outcomes, whether of a formal, non-formal or informal nature, initially requires reflective recognition of such outcomes. This fundamental stage of identification can take place within the scope of a “closed system” of defined learning outcomes in a way that is related to pre-stipulated standards. One example of this is

#### Elements of validation

... The member states should, with a view to offering individuals the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned outside formal education and training – including through mobility experiences – and to make use of that learning for their careers and further learning, and with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity... include, as appropriate, the following elements in arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, whilst allowing each individual to take advantage of any of these, either separately or in combination, in accordance with his/her needs:

- a) Identification (...)
- b) Documentation (...)
- c) Assessment (...)
- d) Certification of the results of the assessment of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning in the form of a qualification, or credits leading to a qualification, or in another form, as appropriate...

(Council of the European Union 2012, p. 3)

the so-called reference occupations, which are used as a benchmark to ascertain the equivalence of qualifications acquired abroad within the framework of the Professional and Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG). In contrast to this, however, it is also possible to adopt an “open” approach which is aligned to the biography of an individual and which infers competences on the basis of activities in various areas of life. Both approaches can also be combined, whereby an “open” approach may progress to a “closed system”. The main basis of the nature of identification lies in striving to adopt a summative approach, which later leads to an assessment or even to certification of learning achievements, or a formative approach, which is more strongly aligned to individual self-assurance (cf. also the section “Assessment”). The stage of identification may take place autonomously or with the assistance of third parties.

### Documentation

The documentation of learning outcomes is of central importance to their subsequent assessment. Because non-formal learning processes are always externally organised, documentation of such processes can take place via third parties in order to create a certain degree of objectivity via reference to pre-stipulated standards. The documentation of the outcomes of informal learning is considerably more difficult by dint of the fact that such outcomes are, by their very definition, not necessarily intentional. In such cases, it is possible to document “materialised products” which are the result of learning processes. This may, for example, take place in the form of the examination instrument of an “examination product/examination piece”. In such cases, the candidate is given the task of making a product typical to the occupation. This may be, for example, a product manufactured in metal or wood, a computer programme, a marketing concept or product documentation (cf. BIBB Hauptausschuss 2013, p. 19).

### Assessment

A clear understanding of the term assessment is important in order to understand the associated institutional arrangements within a validation process (cf. WERQUIN 2007, p. 27). Assessment is essentially a referencing process. Learning outcomes documented are referenced against a specific standard (e.g. a skills or requirements profile) or against certain expectations. Both occupational and educationally related standards may be used, and a variety of methods may be deployed. A differentiation between the *summative* and *formative* forms mentioned above can also be made (cf. COLARDYN/BJÖRNVOLD 2005, p. 106). Within the scope of the equivalence assessment of qualifications acquired abroad on the basis of the BQFG as referenced

above, the so-called reference occupations form the benchmark or standard.

According to the definition of GNAHS (2003, p. 91), assessments are a form of external evaluation which is recorded in writing and is the result of investigatory procedures that are based on certain standards and reference levels. Assessment is also understood to include self-assessment processes on the part of learners on the basis of their own individual appraisal. This produces a broad spectrum of possible forms of assessment, particularly with regard to learning outcomes acquired via non-formal and informal means. The figure provides a summary of various methods of self-assessment and external assessment.

### Certification

Assessment is followed by certification – “an external assessment recorded in writing which is usually based on an external examination, is output-oriented and is aligned towards professional competences” (GNAHS 2010, p. 48) – which takes place on the basis of certain (minimum) standards and reference levels. Certain entitlements are linked with certification in some cases. Certification means that a competent and legitimised body confirms that an individual is in possession of the relevant skills, abilities and competences and that these have been assessed in accordance with stipulated standards (cf. Cedefop 2008, p. 41). Certification always takes place on the basis of the results of the preceding stages.

### Interim conclusion

More detailed consideration of the individual stages of a validation process as stated in the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union makes it clear that these stages build upon one another and that the results of the previous stage are of significance for the following stages. It is also revealed that the individual steps cannot always be delineated in a fully clear-cut way. With regard to the stages of identification and documentation, it should be remarked that these require a certain alignment insofar as the intention is to continue with assessment and certification as further stages within the validation procedure.

Guidance should be mentioned as a further relevant element in the validation process. This extends to provide integrative support for the elements named. Guidance, or information provided at the outset of a validation process, also appears to be necessary to make the overall procedure transparent and provide guidance as to expense and possible benefits.

### Examples of developments in German-speaking countries

The four stages of a validation process stated in the Council Recommendation are reflected in the German debate on procedures for the recognition of competences acquired via non-formal and informal means. Mention should be made at this point that in Germany the term recognition procedures often tends to be used rather than validation procedures and that a differentiation is sometimes drawn between the two. Whereas the term “recognition” is more strongly associated with the formal legal aspect, the term “validation” frequently primarily refers to aspects of a more methodological nature.

GUTSCHOW (2010, p. 13) makes a textbook distinction between the following phases in assessment procedures:

1. Information, guidance
2. Evidence of competences acquired (within the meaning of documentation)
3. Presentation of the competences to an evaluating committee
4. Confirmation of the competences identified
5. Certification by the competent body.

DEHNBOSTEL/SEIDEL/STAMM-RIEMER (2010) undertake a similar division of the phases:

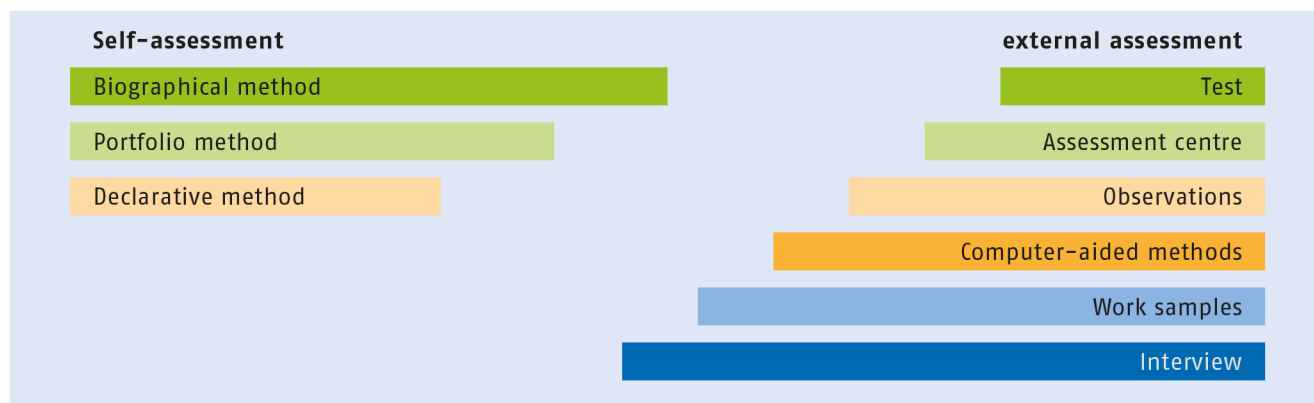
1. Information and guidance
2. Investigation
3. Assessment
4. Validation
5. Certification.

They also point out that the main purpose of such a differentiation is analytical and that such a clear-cut division seldom occurs in practice (cf. *ibid.* pp. 15 ff.). Various approaches and procedures are used in practice that do not necessarily encompass all the stages named above. Once again, a differentiation needs to be drawn between procedures which are of a more summative and application-oriented nature, such as the external examination in Germany, which aims at formal certification, and procedures which tend towards being formative and development-oriented. An example of the latter is the ProfilPASS System, which aims at individual competence development.

The possibility of obtaining validation of non-formal and informal learning has existed in Switzerland since 2005 (cf. Art. 9 (2) BBG – Swiss Vocational Training Act). The so-called validation of learning achievements is deemed to be a “different” but equivalent qualifications procedure for the certification of competences with regard to the acquisition of a recognised vocational qualification (alongside further “different” qualifications procedures). Admittance to these different qualifications procedures, which must re-

Figure

## Methods of self-assessment and external assessment



Source: ANNEN 2012, p. 224

ceive Federal Government recognition pursuant to Article 33 BBG, is not dependent upon attendance of certain educational courses (Art. 34 (2) BBG). Overall Swiss guidelines for the procedure to validate educational achievements differentiates between the following five phases (cf. BBT 2010, pp. 10 ff.):

1. Information and guidance
2. Consideration
3. Assessment
4. Validation
5. Certification

This shows that the Swiss validation process deviates only slightly from the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union. The process ultimately includes the essential phases called for in the Recommendation. The “consideration” phase contains the identification and documentation of individual skills, abilities and competences. As in the Council Recommendation, the term “validation” is used as an overarching term to designate the whole of the procedure whilst at the same time also representing a phase between assessment and certification. Within the scope of this process, a so-called validation organ decides which employability skills have been achieved and which requirements criteria from general education have been fulfilled and then issues a confirmation of learning achievement. This committee also stipulates which supplementary education and training a candidate still must complete in order to receive the qualification aimed at (cf. BBT 2010, p. 13). Intensive debate surrounding the implementation of procedures for the validation of competences is also taking place in Austria. There is, however, a delineation from so-called recognition procedures. Validation procedures directly address the learning outcomes of individual persons and are less concerned with the comparison of qualifications on the basis of curricula, something which is an essen-

tial characteristic of recognition processes. To this extent, a differentiation is made in the Austrian debate between the recognition of qualifications and procedures for the validation of competences. The latter are also further differentiated into formal, summative and formative processes. Within the framework of *formative procedures*, a description and assessment of individual competences is made. Standardised certification does not, however, take place. By way of contrast, *summative* validation procedures involve certification outside the formal educational system. The ultimate aim of a formal validation is to arrive at equivalence with qualifications within the formal educational system (cf. BIFFL/PFEFFER/SKRIVANEK 2012, pp. 29 ff.).

It is thus revealed that the Austrian understanding of the stages of identification, documentation and assessment as described in the Council Recommendation are also reflected in the formative validation procedures. The certification stage is, on the other hand, added in the case of summative and formal validation procedures outside or inside the formal educational system.

### Functioning validation practice despite a lack of terminological clarity

A deeper analysis of the terminology used shows the problem of the definition of the concept of “validation” itself, which is used both as an overarching term for the whole of the process and as a term for an autonomous stage within this process. Within the overall process, the stage of validation is always localised between the stages of assessment and certification (for the problem of the definition of the term “validation” cf. ANNEN 2012, pp. 135 ff.). These overlapping terms do not, however, seem to create any problems in practice due to the fact that the delineation of the individual stages tends anyway to be more analytical in nature.

The Council Recommendation has sent out an important policy impetus at European level in terms of driving forward the development and implementation of validation procedures in the individual member states. The present article is an attempt to flesh out the terminology of the policy stages demanded and to illustrate their significance within the scope of a validation procedure. The sample consideration of the national debates fundamentally demonstrates awareness with regard to validation or recognition procedures. It is also clear that the stages differentiated in the Council Recommendation are viewed as a textbook characterisation of validation procedures and are being adapted and contextualised at a national level. ◀

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# The role of formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the Recognition Act



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The Professional and Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG) also permits competences acquired by informal and non-formal means to be taken into account in checking the equivalence of a foreign professional or vocational qualification with a German professional or vocational qualification. As long as the prerequisites for a vocational qualification obtained abroad are met, assessment of equivalence takes place on the basis of documentary examination regardless of the route via which competences were gained. Under certain conditions, vocational competences may be assessed on an individual basis. This article highlights the opportunities provided by the BQFG and presents the initial experiences of the chambers.<sup>1</sup>

## The BQFG as a comprehensive validation procedure

The BQFG<sup>2</sup> provides for a recognition procedure that checks whether documentary evidence can demonstrate the equivalence of a foreign professional or vocational qualification with a current German professional or vocational qualification (the so-called "reference occupation"). This check takes place on the basis of stipulated criteria such as training content and duration. Possession of a foreign professional or vocational qualification certificate is required in order for an application to be made. The certificate is the most important document for the formal assessment process. This first stage of the procedure involves taking formal learning outcomes into account in assessing equivalence. The certificates demonstrating successful participation in the respective training course constitute a third-party assurance that the relevant qualification is held.

The central question is whether there are essential differences between the foreign professional or vocational

qualification and the German reference occupation and, secondly, whether any such differences could possibly be compensated for by occupational experience or further evidence of competence. This applies in particular to deficits in respect of the practical elements of training, which play such an important role within the German dual system. The consideration of occupational experience constitutes one of the major USP's of the German recognition procedure (cf. the statement of the Danish Ministry of Education)<sup>3</sup>. This stage of the process, therefore, moves beyond formal training to take account of learning outcomes that have been acquired informally (occupational experience) or via non-formal means (participation in continuing training, additional training or other advanced and continuing training certificates). This step also involves the necessity of providing evidence of the learning outcomes achieved on the basis of documents in order to enable these to be used to compensate for significant differences.

Apart from such documentary examination, so-called "other suitable procedures" (cf. § 14 BQFG and § 50a (4) HwO – Crafts and Trades Regulation Code), still facilitate the recognition of competences that cannot directly be evidenced as a result of the absence or lack of meaningfulness of paperwork or certificates from the applicants' home countries. The inability to submit the required documentation must not be the fault of the applicant. This procedure is

<sup>1</sup> The present article deals exclusively with the recognition of foreign vocational qualifications within the field of non-regulated occupations. These particularly include the training occupations within the dual system, which number approximately 330. The area of regulated occupations is not taken into account.

<sup>2</sup> The Professional and Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law forms Article 1 of the "Law to improve the assessment and recognition of professional and vocational education and training qualifications acquired abroad" (referred to in abbreviated form as the "Recognition Act"), BGBl. I (Federal Law Gazette) 2011, p. 2515. URL: [www.bmbf.de/pubRD/bqfg.pdf](http://www.bmbf.de/pubRD/bqfg.pdf) (retrieved 05.08.2014).

<sup>3</sup> [www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/daenisches\\_bildungsministerium.php](http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/daenisches_bildungsministerium.php) (retrieved 15.08.2014)



Table

Consideration of various learning outcomes with regard to the German reference occupation

	Type of learning outcomes	Method
Formal check	Outcomes of formal learning (qualification acquired abroad)	Document check
Checking of individual evidence	Outcomes of informal and non-formal learning (occupational experience and continuing training)	Document check
"Other suitable procedures"/ skills analysis	Consideration of the outcomes of all forms of learning (employability skills)	Competence assessment procedure

referred to below as a "skills analysis"<sup>4</sup> (cf. OEHME 2012). This opportunity to establish equivalence represented the first time that specific measures for the assessment of competence below the level of final examinations had been stipulated in law. The main focus of this procedure is on the question of "whether the applicants are in sufficient possession of the necessary skills for proper exercising of the occupation or for carrying out essential tasks within the occupation" (ibid., p. 32).

The BQFG thus integrates formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes into the validation process via the procedural stages described here. Alongside the checking of documents, competence assessment procedures are also stipulated as a form of the identification and evaluation of professional and vocational competences. Against this background, the BQFG provides the foundations for a comprehensive recognition procedure (cf. Table).

### Relevance of occupational experience in the recognition procedure

Many of those interested in obtaining recognition have both a professional or vocational qualification obtained in their home country and many years of occupational experience in Germany and abroad. However, can occupational experience be used to compensate for significant differences? Within the scope of the monitoring of the Recognition Act, BIBB conducted a survey of chamber of crafts and trades staff responsible for recognition (cf. box). This shows that it was frequently possible to use recognition of occupational experience to compensate for significant differences. 79 percent of the chambers of crafts and trades which received applications during the period of the survey confirm

the high degree of relevance of occupational experience for the recognition procedure (cf. Figure).

### Cost of including occupational experience

Many of the chambers of crafts and trades that responded to the survey (44 %) described taking occupational experience into account as time-intensive and therefore costly. The recognition bodies surveyed reported that one of the reasons for this is the fact that documents presented are often not meaningful enough to enable existing occupational experience to be used to compensate for significant differences. It is frequently the case that documents are unable to provide evidence of specific occupational activities and experiences. Learning outcomes acquired by informal means need to be inferred from the paperwork submitted. In many countries, however, the culture of documentary recording is less marked than in Germany. Testimonials, particularly in the form usual in Germany, are frequently absent. If such documents exist, they may simply provide an indication that a person has spent a certain period of time with a company without going into detail regarding the contents and duration of the activities performed or providing any information on the quality of work. These findings, which were obtained from interviews with experts, are also reflected in the standardised survey of the chambers of crafts and trades. Two thirds of the chambers

#### BIBB Recognition Monitoring Project

##### Aim

Obtain transparency in respect of the implementation of the law and accompanying processes for the identification of adaptation and support requirements.

##### Task areas

- Support in the establishment of federal statistics on recognition procedures to take place under the responsibility of the Federal Statistical Office and the statistical offices of the federal states.
- Field observations of aspects relating to the Recognition Act according consideration to the various parties involved in the recognition system.
- Preparation of an evaluation of the law to be tendered externally at a later date.

##### Database for the presentation of results to follow

- Written standardised survey of the 53 chambers of crafts and trades (survey period May to June 2014).\*
- Five expert interviews with persons responsible for recognition from five chambers of crafts and trades (survey period June to September 2013).

##### Further informations

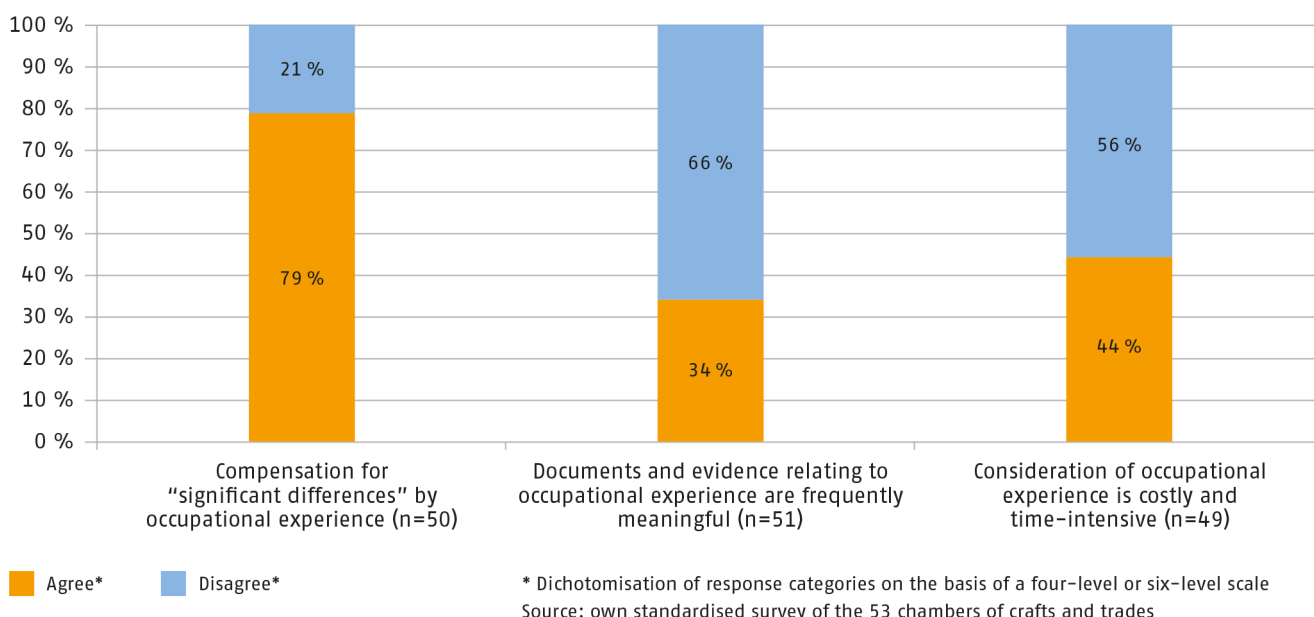
- Recognition monitoring: [www.bibb.de/de/wlk64579.htm](http://www.bibb.de/de/wlk64579.htm)
- Full report on the Recognition Act: [www.bmbf.de/ipub/bericht\\_anerkennungsgesetz\\_2014.pdf](http://www.bmbf.de/ipub/bericht_anerkennungsgesetz_2014.pdf)

\* All values presented here relate to weighted data by number of applications, i.e. responses from chambers with a high volume of applications are accorded greater consideration than responses from chambers with a low number of applications.

<sup>4</sup> Within the scope of the cooperative PROTOTYPING project, which was financed by the BMBF and lead-managed by the West German Association of Chambers of Crafts and Trades, procedures and tools were developed that help in using so-called "skills analyses" to identify the professional competences of applicants (cf. [www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/prototyping.php](http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/prototyping.php); retrieved 21.07.2014).

Figure

Role of occupational experience, meaningfulness of relevant evidence and costs involved in taking occupational experience into account within the scope of the recognition procedure (data weighted by volume of applications, responses in percent)



surveyed believe that the documents submitted are not very meaningful (cf. Figure). If insufficient evidence is available, the competent bodies need to make a follow-up request for relevant documentation. This in turn increases the costs of the procedure and takes up a considerable amount of time. The main consequence is also a greater expenditure of time and money by the applicants themselves. They may have to request a former employer to provide further evidence, a process which may involve a visit abroad and thus further delay the processing of the application.

It is, however, not always the case that applicants have any opportunity to provide such evidence. They may, for example, be refugees who are not able or no longer able to submit meaningful documentation.

### Skills analysis – identification of learning outcomes without documents

If occupational competences, whether acquired by formal, non-formal or informal means, cannot be evidenced or cannot be evidenced in full by documents thus meaning that a check on the basis of documentation is not possible, the competent body may notify applicants for which essential activities of the reference occupation a skills analysis is required. The aim of skills analyses is to identify the knowledge, skills and competences of a person situationally and to assess whether this knowledge and these skills and competences essentially cover the training contents of the relevant German reference occupation for which evidence cannot be provided via documentation. Within this

context, the skills analysis can be viewed as a competence assessment procedure (cf. ANNEN 2012, pp. 137 ff.)

The law states specific methods for the conducting of this process. These methods “particularly include work samples, specialist discussions and practical and theoretical examinations” (BQFG § 14 (2)). The competent body selects professional experts and notifies them of the occupational activities for which essential knowledge, skills and competences need to be assessed. On the basis of this information, the experts identify the most useful method for the skills analysis as well as determining the associated cost and duration of implementation. Following the agreement of the applicant, the skills analysis, which usually involves the completion of various tasks, is conducted on the basis of the dual control principle. One professional expert and a second observer jointly evaluate the performance of participants.

### Use of skills analyses

In order to be able to make statements on the relevance of the skills analysis, the experiences of the chambers of crafts and trades responsible were surveyed. Two years after the entry into force of the BQFG, 73 percent state that they have already conducted one or more skills analyses. During these analyses, particularly frequent use is made of “work samples” (88 %) and “specialist discussions” (87 %). Other methods are deployed less often. The expert interviews, in which initial experiences with the implementation of skills analyses were surveyed, make it clear that the

organisational expense involved is too great for the competent bodies. Although the assessment is that costs fall as implementation practice becomes greater, each skills analysis ultimately needs to be organised individually. Experts need to be instructed in the procedure to be followed, and workshops and specific materials are also required depending on the method used. Cost of implementation vary, but may be relatively high depending on the amount of time needed. The spectrum ranges from tens of euros (such as in the case of office management clerks) to four-figure sums (e.g. in metal working; cf. ERBE et al. 2014, p. 125). Cost reasons also mean that a skills analysis is primarily only useful in areas where applicants themselves believe that they have the right employability skills or are professionally competent. The labour administration authorities may pay the costs of those who are in receipt of benefits in accordance with German Social Security Code (SGB II and SGB III).

### Benefits of wide-ranging recognition opportunities

In summary, we can say that the BQFG provides for learning outcomes of persons with a qualification acquired abroad to be taken into account on various levels. The law offers this target group comprehensive consideration of their learning outcomes. Experiences gained with the validation of learning outcomes pursuant to the BQFG could be used or the creation of further opportunities within a new legal framework that also includes those who have gone through the domestic educational system without achieving a formal qualification.

The statutory provisions also provide development possibilities for applicants and for companies by dint of the fact that an application process may be reinitiated or a new application may be made following the identification of “partial equivalence”. In this way, continuing training courses to compensate for significant differences could, for example, be taken into account within the application procedure after assessment of “partial equivalence”.

During the first year of the law’s existence (April to December 2012), approximately 66 percent of assessment notices in the area of non-regulated occupations awarded full equivalence, whilst nine percent granted partial equivalence. In the case of the latter, it is important for companies and continuing training providers that training requirements can be inferred from the assessment notices. Persons with qualifications acquired abroad who are in possession of a notice of assessment granting full equivalence enjoy the same legal status and the same rights of disposal as persons with a German professional or vocational qualification. Nevertheless, the question arises of whether employers actually perceive a notice of assessment granting full equivalence as being of equal value to the famil-

iar German professional or vocational qualification. Are those who hold such notices presumed to have the same competences as colleagues with a vocational qualification acquired in Germany?

No data is yet available that permits comprehensive statements to be made regarding acceptance of the assessment notices on the labour market. Within the scope of the BiBB project “Monitoring of the Recognition Act”, a survey of companies and of persons interested in seeking recognition will be carried out in 2014. This will permit deeper analyses and statements regarding the extent to which the opportunities afforded by the Recognition Act have found their way into the recruitment strategies of companies and could inform such strategies in future.

It is clear that immigrants need to be “employment ready” to be able to meet the requirements of trade and industry. On the other hand, companies increasingly need to be “migrant ready” if they are to cover their requirements for skilled workers (cf. ENGLMANN 2012). In order successfully to employ qualified migrants, certain general provision such as language courses and support with such matters as finding accommodation and dealing with government authorities should be offered as and when needed.

The decision as to whether to submit an application ultimately depends on an individual assessment of costs and benefits undertaken by those affected. Persons with relevant qualifications in the non-regulated sector can in principle exercise the occupation in question without formal recognition. For this reason, those interested in seeking recognition need to give careful consideration as to whether the time commitment needed to submit an application (which may include making subsequent request for documentation) and the associated costs (particularly for persons who are only able to acquire equivalence via the skills analysis) are worthwhile (for information regarding the reasons not to submit an application cf. ERBE et al. 2014, pp. 87 ff.). ◀

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# Inclusion as a task for vocational education and training



**FRIEDRICH HUBERT ESSER**

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**It's not all about winning but taking part! This slogan from the sports world proved its timeless global validity once again in the year 2008, when the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities declared that inclusion was a human right for people with a disability. After the Convention took force in Germany in 2009, inclusion became central to a societal, education-policy and academic debate in our country.**

## The goal is beyond dispute – but how can it be achieved?

From now on, intensive work will pave the way for autonomous participation in society for all. UNESCO understands disability, then, as a social category which includes all forms of possible barriers to participation.

The question that fuelled controversy was how the desired result can best be achieved. Only after some rigorous exchanges did it become clear that inclusion does not mean the mere integration of “divergence” in an otherwise unchanged environment, but adaptation of the environment to each person's given abilities. So inclusion is not “integration” in another guise but looking at individual needs, and giving attention to how adequate help and assistance can be obtained.

Initially the main perceived disputes over inclusion revolved around kindergartens and schools of general education. This may create the impression that it has nothing to do with vocational education and training, which is certainly not the case! Vocational rehabilitation grants and assistance for disadvantaged individuals in the vocational training system, which have existed since the 1960s, underline that point. Equally, there is no denying that there are still not enough companies with experience in providing initial vocational training to disabled young people, for instance.

## Examples of good practice show how it works

This makes it all the more gratifying to report that BiBB recently awarded the Hermann Schmidt prize to some innovative company models for inclusion. Among them was a model whereby trainees spend the first two years in a vocational training centre and then train in-company for one-

and-a-half years. A notable feature is that the courses take place in mixed teams led by trained instructors.

The advanced vocational training landscape is beginning to address the changing demands upon trainees. Beyond this, it is an important task of trainers to create new forms of initial, advanced and continuing vocational education which are more integrated into the company context.

The different forms of provision – at least for people with disabilities – should be geared towards facilitating accessibility, compatibility, permeability and occupational proficiency. We should bear in mind that half of companies training young people with disabilities rate that experience as positive. The glass is definitely half full. At the same time we must persist with the prevention of exclusion, and achieve universal, sustainable employability and labour-market compatibility. A modern, future-oriented vocational education and training system which learns lessons from international experience must open up flexible entry and exit points for everyone – and not just because of demographic change and skilled-worker shortages. In addition, it is necessary for business and industry to be willing and able to make appropriate jobs available. Another interesting debate in this context concerns whether the “model provisions” pursuant to Section 66 of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) for the initial vocational training of people with disabilities have not actually outlived their usefulness. ◀

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# Routes to inclusive vocational education and training



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**The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified by Germany in 2009, has focused attention on the topic of inclusion both in educational policy and academic research terms. The aim of inclusion is to secure the societal participation of everyone regardless of individual disposition. This article examines the background to the concept of inclusion and presents implications for vocational education and training. Taking risks of exclusion as its starting point, it goes on to outline possible approaches towards the development of inclusion strategies at various action levels.**

## Education and work as a basis for societal participation

Article 24 of the UN Convention includes the *rights of persons with disabilities to education* and the assurance of access to vocational education and training on the basis of equal opportunity. In order to realise this, the States Parties seek to "ensure an inclusive education system at all levels" (Paragraph 1). The *right to work and employment* of persons with disabilities is enshrined in Article 27. One of the principles of the Convention is to remove the negative view of disability and individual attribution of deficit and instead to focus attention on contextual factors which hinder or prevent people's equal participation.

## From heterogeneity to diversity – difference as a benefit and as a resource

The programme of the German UNESCO Commission (2009) formulates "Education for All" as a universal objective: All young people and adults should receive learning opportunities and the same chances to access high-quality education. This involves aligning the educational system to the learning requirements of learners rather than integrating learners into an existing system. This means that adaptations to structure and content are necessary across all educational areas, including in vocational education and training.

Beginning with the assumption that learning in heterogeneous groups is viewed as the basis for inclusive development, the perspective is being expanded to recognise difference, to identify such difference as a benefit and to perceive it as a resource for individual and reciprocal learning (cf. SONNTAG/VEBER 2014, p. 288).

## Inclusion as expanded integration – a firm foundation in regulatory structures

Whereas integration was based on the "principle of normalisation" (FRÜHAUF 2012, p. 16) and has thus led to the emergence of a multitude of special needs education concepts and learning venues, the intention of inclusion is to move beyond special measures to provide a firm foundation and security within social regulatory structures (cf. *ibid.* p. 21). HINZ (2012, p. 33) characterises inclusion as "turning against dichotomous ideas, each of which constructs two categories: Germans and foreigners, men and women, disabled and non-disabled, rich and poor etc." As a consequence, inclusion takes individuals themselves as the starting point of pedagogical intervention, not the belonging to one particular group or a certain characteristic. Whereas *inclusion* is emphasised as a new key concept in disability policy, *integration* remains the main guiding concept in the field of migration (cf. WANSING/WESTPHAL 2014, p. 18). This indicates a fear that the *concept of inclusion* could lead to the "dilution" of specific problem areas. For this reason, a major challenge for the design of vocational education and training processes consists in developing educational structures and provision that open up the same opportunities to everyone whilst securing the *necessary specific individual support and assistance*.

## Vocational education and training of disabled and disadvantaged young people

The foundations of vocational education and training are the Vocational Training Act (BbIG) and the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO). The stipulated objective is the acquisition of *employability skills*.

### Statutory vocational education and training provisions for “special groups of persons”

The *vocational education and training of disabled persons* is enshrined within the BBiG (§§ 64–67) and the HwO (§§ 42k–n). It is also included in German Social Security Code III (Participation in working life, § 112 SGB). The aim is for disabled persons to be trained in occupations approved by the state (§ 64 BBiG/§ 42k HwO). At the same time, there is the possibility of a so-called compensation for disadvantage (§ 65 BBiG/§ 42l HwO), which relates to aspects such as the time structure of training or the use of aids. There is also an opportunity for the vocational training of disabled persons to be delivered in accordance with separate training regulations put in place by the competent bodies (§ 66 BBiG/§ 42m HwO). These (special) training courses for “professional practitioners” feature a reduced amount of theory and are predominantly used for the training of young people with learning difficulties who are seldom categorised as being severely disabled (cf. BIBB 2013, p. 210). The courses are mostly offered by vocational training centres, and only a small proportion is company-based. Regulations relating to the *vocational education and training of “young people who require support”* (§ 78 SGB III) – this includes young people with learning difficulties and young people suffering from social disadvantage – are exclusively governed by Social Security Code (SGB), in particular by SGB III (promotion of VET) as well as by SGB II (occupational integration) and by SGB VIII (youth social work).

### Funding system for vocational rehabilitation and for supporting VET for disadvantaged young people

Since the end of the 1960’s, a differentiating, and also separating, funding system has been in place to integrate young people affected by exclusion into vocational education and training processes. Although alignment to the characteristics of *disability* and *disadvantage* represents a necessary initial prerequisite, the learning groups feature a heterogeneous composition.

If we monitor the initial integration of pupils with special educational needs, it is conspicuous that only a small proportion enters regular vocational education and training following attendance of a school for pupils with learning difficulties (cf. NIEHAUS/KAUL 2012, p. 52). Because 76.3 of these young people nationally are not in possession of a lower secondary school leaving certificate (cf. KLEMM 2010, p. 45), many progress to a measure within the transitional sector, to specific rehabilitation support schemes or to educational and training provision for disadvantaged young people (cf. NIEHAUS/KAUL 2012, p. 53).

There is also the supposition that not all young people trained in occupations for disabled persons actually ex-

hibit a disability (cf. GERICKE/FLEMMING 2013, p. 8).<sup>1</sup> It is noticeable that the proportion of such persons is higher in East Germany than in West Germany (4.4 % opposed to 1.7 %, cf. *ibid.* p. 7). The highest levels of this were reached in 2005, when the situation on the training market in East Germany was exceptionally tight. Higher rates of contract dissolution in occupations for persons with disabilities as compared to the recognised training occupations (cf. Autorengruppe 2014, p. 183) and the fact that their usability on the labour market has not been demonstrated mean that these (special) training occupations are increasingly being subjected to scrutiny (cf. e. g. EULER/SEVERING 2014). Because of the shortage of training places, young people (so-called “labour-market-disadvantaged persons”) have ended up in measures aimed at providing VET support for disadvantaged young people. The result was a fragmented funding and support system lacking in transparency and with different areas of responsibility (cf. BIBB 2013, p. 254).

### Disability and disadvantage as a social category

According to KANTER (1977, p. 106), persons are considered as having *learning difficulties* if they have a “serious, extensive and long-standing impairment to learning and thereby exhibit significant deviation from the norm in terms of performance and behaviour.” By way of contrast, disadvantaged young people are deemed to have an *impediment to learning* (SGB III) and are ascribed individual and social disadvantages. They include persons “who, according to existing access regulations, have a low chance of successfully applying for dual vocational education and training because they are not in possession of the *personal, social and organisational resources* which facilitate progression to a VET place” (ULRICH 2011, p. 6). In practice, assignment is characterised by uncertainties due to the fact that there are differing views as to what constitutes disability (cf. ENGGRUBER/RÜTZEL 2014).

The terms learning difficulties and impediment to learning are thus revealed to be a relative parameter value which is tied in with the cultural context. The special educational perspective takes societally relevant (action) situations as its basis and places the primary emphasis on the social dimension. As a consequence, the focus needs to be on looking at the different societal barriers which cause people to enter situations of disability and disadvantage and hinder societal participation (cf. LINDMEIER/LINDMEIER 2012, p. 10).

<sup>1</sup> The situation of disabled persons vis-à-vis dual vocational education and training pursuant to the BBiG/HwO cannot be adequately presented in statistical surveys because the Vocational Education and Training Statistics do not collect any information on the personal characteristic of disability (cf. GERICKE/FLEMMING 2013, p. 2).

Table

## Structuring of inclusive vocational education and training

Development of concepts for the <b>professionalisation</b> of (company based) training staff for inclusive vocational education and training	<b>Level I</b> Development of inclusive educational structures (in a regional context)	e. g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory and analysis, educational monitoring aligned towards inclusion</li> <li>• <b>Networking</b> of education, teaching and support and of control mechanisms (local government coordination)</li> <li>• Support structures (e.g. regional education offices, inclusion remit for the chambers)</li> </ul>
	<b>Level II</b> Development of inclusive (company-based) organisational forms	e. g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive cultures, inclusive structures and inclusive practices as reciprocal dimensions</li> <li>• Firm structural, organisational and cultural establishment of inclusive values in all VET institutions</li> <li>• New <b>forms of cooperation</b> between the stakeholders involved, e.g. companies, vocational schools, training service providers, vocational training centres</li> </ul>
	<b>Level III</b> Development of inclusive training concepts	e. g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Flexibilisation</b> of access and training routes</li> <li>• Shortening and extension of period of training and part-time vocational education and training</li> <li>• Recognition of (partial) qualifications</li> <li>• Abandonment of separated (special) training routes in favour of inclusive training settings in heterogeneous learning groups, giving priority to the company-based context</li> </ul>
	<b>Level IV</b> Development of inclusive learning arrangements	e. g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>"Pedagogy of diversity"</b> (appreciation of difference)</li> <li>• Didactics of inner differentiation (PRENGEL 2014)</li> <li>• Inclusive methods in learning contexts (REICH 2014)</li> </ul>

### Exclusion risks and development of inclusion strategies

The findings of both the National Education Reports (since 2006) and of the Reports on Vocational Education and Training indicate considerable exclusion risks. Selection processes take place at all transitions within the educational system. They are particularly marked at the transition from school to vocational education and training in accordance with prior school learning, gender, migrant background or nationality and region (cf. Autorengruppe 2012, p. 103).

To this extent, the route to inclusive VET requires a general pedagogical and educational policy strategy (cf. Dt. UNESCO-Kommission 2009, p. 8) and thus necessitates change processes at the system and structural level. The emphasis needs to be on investigating risks of exclusion in order to develop a basis for inclusion strategies.

*The objective of inclusive vocational education and training is to open up routes and options to recognised vocational education and training and to the world of work for all (young) people. In order to achieve this, the legal foundations need to be exploited, adapted and further developed in all fields*

*of activity and inclusive vocational education and training needs to be established at various system levels.*

### Expansion of differentiated vocational education and training

*Individual and flexible educational, support and funding provision which creates connectivity and permeability is of particular relevance to inclusive vocational education and training. Designing educational processes in a way that is aligned towards the individual means conceptualising pedagogical intervention in a way that is based on the young person and realising this via networking or cooperation between the institutions and education professionals. Individualisation requires extensive flexibilisation of educational and training provision in order to be able to address aspects such as different life situations and different (learning) prerequisites. Permeability within and between the individual segments is crucial in terms of facilitating entry to and exit from vocational education and training processes at any time. This means linking educational opportunities in terms of content, providing credit for periods of training*

and imparting usable (partial) qualifications. VET policy has an important design role to play in this regard.

### Further development of tried and tested funding and support instruments

Inclusive vocational education and training requires the further development of tried and tested support and funding provision. *VET at extra-company institutions* can be structured in different ways and combined with company-based vocational education and training (e.g. in the form of shared training, integrative training or cooperative training).<sup>2</sup> *Training support measures* should be available to all young people who need them. Assisted training offers a supplementary form of provision. Its particular characteristic is that both young people and companies providing training can be offered individual support in line with their requirements in equal measure. The concept of *career entry support* has also proved its worth. *Individual educational and training support* should be offered to all young people in need of specific help or assistance.

The fact that each support measure is based on individual case examination and measures-related financing is demonstrated to be an insoluble paradox of *inclusive education within the VET system*. By way of contrast, educational and training provision that is “independent” of such constraints and is aligned towards individual (learning) requirements would avoid labelling and stigmatisation.

### Structuring at different system levels

Routes to inclusive vocational education and training require structuring at various levels of the VET system (cf. Table). In order to support young people in entering an occupation and the world of work, biography-oriented educational management in conjunction with cooperation between regional stakeholders and their activities is of significance in terms of establishing connectivity between various “phases of education”. The efficient bundling of resources requires control mechanisms (local government coordination), networking structures (regional transition management) and the bringing together of various judicial areas. The Hamburg model of Youth Employment Agencies (cf. Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg et al. 2013) is a good example of how an overall system of training, education and support can emerge.

With regard to the development of *differentiated training concepts*, both the BBiG and the HwO currently already

provide opportunities via such vehicles as time flexibilisation, as implemented in the “Third Way” in North-Rhine Westphalia. Integrative vocational education and training at extra-company institutions enables trainees to obtain a qualification in a recognised training occupation by acquiring employability skills in the form of training modules and within the scope of an extended period of training (of up to five years). *Part-time vocational education and training* (§ 8 BBiG/§ 27 HwO) could also be combined with language modules or therapy provision.

With regard to issues of the development of inclusive organisational forms, the Inclusion Index (BOBAN/HINZ 2003) becomes significant by dint of the fact that an inclusive culture within the institution is deemed to be a bed-rock for inclusion.

At the level of *inclusive learning arrangements*, PRENGEL (2014, pp. 34 f.) sees the didactics of inner differentiation as the central part of inclusive practice and develops the relationship level. REICH (2014) differentiates on the basis of a constructivist didactic system and adopts a holistic view, which provides for comprehensive support and support diagnostics, new forms of assessment and advice and a changed learning environment (cf. *ibid.* p. 51).

### Firm establishment of professionalisation concepts

The professionalism of staff in companies, at vocational schools and at training services providers has a key role in the structuring of inclusive vocational education and training at all levels (cf. BUCHMANN/BYLINSKI 2013). The basis here is an *inclusive stance* that recognises individual differences and views as a benefit. Empirical studies show that an addition of knowledge and the handling of instruments are not sufficient for professional action. The *personal, social and emotional competences* and the *approach and attitude* of the pedagogical specialists are crucial (cf. BYLINSKI 2014). Dealing with one’s own person needs to be an integral component of initial, advanced and continuing training (*ibid.*). Alongside this, there needs to be a focus on working to bring about a changed understanding on the part of the professionals which is based on networking, exchange and the integration of external competences (cf. Dt. UNESCO-Kommission 2014, p. 2). For trainers in particular, new forms of continuing training should be developed which are more closely linked in with the company context and which include (possible) cooperation partners.

### Steps along the route to inclusive vocational education and training

Inclusive vocational education and training requires the further development of educational and training structures and appropriate structuring of training practice, i. e.

<sup>2</sup> Federal states (such as Hamburg) which have begun to reform the transitional system in recent years have made a training guarantee for young people unable to progress to company-based training an important component of a new framework concept.

changes across all areas of activity (vocational training preparation and VET) and across all system levels (region, institution, training concept, learning arrangements). Educational policy guidelines for inclusion form a necessary framework. The development of inclusion strategies in conjunction with specific stages of implementation and the provision of resources form part of this. This will enable the emergence of a (vocational) education system in which diversity is used as an opportunity. Recognition and appreciation of individual differences requires a shift in perspective in society, in the institutions and on behalf of education and training professionals to view inequality and heterogeneity as a benefit and as a basis for further development. ◀

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# Inclusive vocational training – wishful thinking or a realistic prospect?

Chances of realisation from the viewpoint of vocational education and training experts



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**From the point of view of UNESCO inclusion in the sense of the leitmotif "Education for All" means that all people – without regard to special learning needs, gender, social and economic conditions – have the opportunity to share in high-quality education. For the dual system of vocational education and training this would mean granting immediate access to all young people interested in training after they leave school without producing their »training maturity« beforehand in the transition area. A corresponding reform of the training system would, however, be loaded with preconditions. The article describes how vocational education and training experts react to such a move and how they assess the chances of its implementation.**

## Inclusive initial vocational education and training – a solution to access problems in VET?

Despite the decreasing demand for training places as a result of demographic change, there are still access problems in the dual system of vocational education and training. In 2013, there were still 83,600 applicants officially looking for training places on 30 September, the cut-off date. At the same time there were 33,500 unfilled apprenticeships (cf. MATTHES/ULRICH 2014, p. 6). In the face of the dearth of apprenticeships and problems finding a fit, for many applicants it takes one to several years before they begin training, and some fail to access training entirely. Especially young people with low-level school-leaving certificates and migration backgrounds have access problems.

Ever since Germany signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009, questions of participation in education have increasingly been discussed under the heading of »inclusion«. German policy-makers, however, usually situate this topic under the heading of *people with disabilities* (cf. BMAS 2011). In UNESCO's way of thinking, by contrast, inclusion is all about removing *all possible obstacles to participation in education* (cf. German Commission for UNESCO 2009). In a debate that is quite heated in Germany as well, the term inclusion certainly does not always mean the same thing (see DÖBERT/WEISHAUPT 2013; TENORTH 2013).

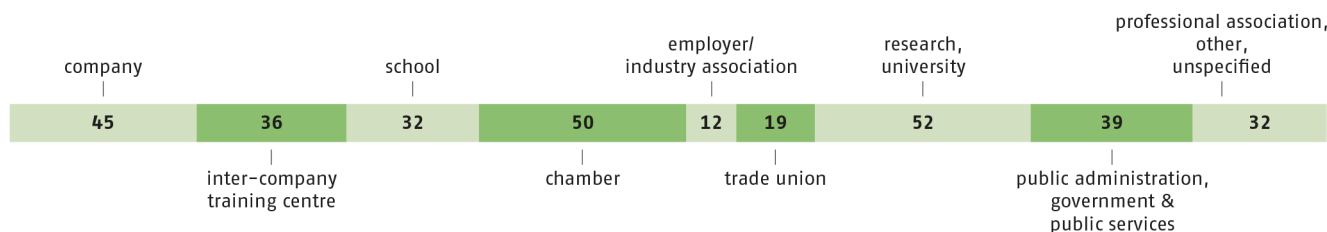
In a *broad* interpretation of inclusion such as underlies this article and is also found in the English-language version of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (cf. SEITZ 2012, pp. 11 f.) the causes of obstacles to participation in education are no longer to be found in the learners and their individual requirements, but are *institutional*. Associated with this is the demand to revise all education sectors so that they are appropriate for all people with their specific needs and requirements. Inclusion is achieved when every person – regardless of gender, origin, and individual impairments – has access to all facilities of the education system and if necessary receives individualized support.

Applied to the dual system of vocational education and training this would mean that all school leavers who are interested in receiving training could immediately start a fully qualifying course of training without having to gain or improve their »training maturity« beforehand in the transition area. According to ENGGRUBER (2013), at least the following reforms would have to be considered to implement such a broad interpretation of inclusion:

- more efficient organization of transition management in order to ensure that young people receive optimal support in finding an apprenticeship
- continuous monitoring of whether all school leavers are able to get the fully qualifying course of training they want

Figure 1

Provenance of the 317 participants in the 2013 Expert Monitor



- relieving the transition area of its function as a catch-all for unsuccessful applicants and focusing in future on measures that lead to higher-level school-leaving certificates
- providing guaranteed extra-company and school-based training places for young people without in-company apprenticeships
- expansion of individual support for trainees in companies and vocational schools
- flexible duration of training and introduction of the obligation to accept credit for skills already acquired
- intensification of further education opportunities for teaching, training and facilitating professionals to meet the increased demands of the job, including the improvement of employment conditions in education providers.

### Results of the BIBB Expert Monitor

In the context of the BIBB Expert Monitor, 13 concrete reform proposals were formulated from these key points and submitted to vocational education and training experts for evaluation. The Expert Monitor is an online tool for polling vocational education and training specialists by means of which educational policy issues are examined in greater detail (cf. [www.expertenmonitor.de](http://www.expertenmonitor.de)). All those who are professionally involved in vocational education and training – whether they participate in managing the system, provide initial and continuing training or do teaching and research on these aspects – are regarded as specialists. The Monitor held at the end of 2013 was attended by 317 experts (see Fig. 1).

In addition to the question of whether the experts were in favour of the reform proposals, it was particularly interesting to know how likely they thought it was that they would be implemented by the year 2020 and what factors they thought would have an inhibitory or supporting impact on implementation. The factors examined included the current political majorities, the attitude of the representatives of management and labour, the cost of implementation and the pressure to act generated by demographic changes.

### Chances of implementing inclusive vocational education and training

The table (p. 42) lists the 13 proposals for reform and reflects the average responses of the specialists.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that at least a tendency towards approval of most of the proposals exists. There is strong support in particular for intensified promotion and monitoring of young people in the transition phase and during training, as well as for improvements in continuing education and training and in the conditions of employment for the professionals. Also a training guarantee tends to be supported, although there was a cautious reaction to the emancipation of school and extra-company institutions as equal providers of training places. Only the restriction of the transition area to training programmes leading to higher-level school-leaving certificates tended to be turned down.

While most of the reform proposals thus tend to be welcomed rather than rejected, scepticism prevails regarding their implementation. Although the respondents expect that the pressure to act generated by *demographic changes* will probably foster implementation, they suspect that the *implementation cost* will almost always hinder implementation. Also, they see a reform-oriented attitude only on the *employees' side*, while they impute a more conservative attitude to the *employers' side*. The experts are also sceptical about the enthusiasm for reform, on the part of the *current political majorities*.

From the perspective of the experts the current political majorities, the attitudes of the social partners, demographic change, and the cost of implementation thus have quite different effects on the probability of implementation of the various reforms, and the question arises with what variables they most closely correspond. To answer that question, relevant indicators were calculated based on Osgood/Suci's distance function (cf. FISSENI 2004, p. 191)

<sup>1</sup> We refrain from reporting the findings for subgroups at this point because there is considerably more uniformity of views among the professionals about the probability of implementation of reforms and their influence factors than about their desirability (for the reasons cf. FRIELING/ULRICH 2013). The findings regarding desirability, differentiated according to organisational provenance, can be found in ENGGRUBER et al. (2014).

Table

Reform wishes and prospects from the perspective of vocational education and training specialists

	Degree of approval <sup>1</sup> and probability of implementation <sup>2</sup>		Suspected influences on implementation (restricting, promoting) <sup>3</sup>				
	Degree of rejection or approval	Probability of implementation by 2020	Political conditions	Employer attitudes	Employee attitudes	Implementation cost	Demographic change
<b>More efficient institutionalisation of transition management</b>							
• In all municipalities, »youth and career working alliances« are emerging between employment agencies, providers of basic security benefits and youth and social welfare agencies. There, young people and parents find all the support services provided under the Social Code »under one roof«.	+60	+2	+16	+18	+49	-40	+25
• In all municipalities there are organizational units for educational management/educational monitoring. They ensure continuous monitoring of whether all young people were provided with fully qualifying apprenticeships.	+18	-26	-5	-13	+33	-51	+13
<b>Streamlining of the transition area</b>							
• All measures in the transition area that do not lead to the next higher school-leaving certificate are being abolished.	-25	-37	-13	+1	-8	+1	+11
<b>Training guarantee through provision of additional training places</b>							
• Those who cannot find an in-company training place receive a school-based training course or extra-company training in all cases.	+38	-13	-3	-30	+32	-45	+18
• School-based and extra-company training providers are also given the possibility to offer apprenticeships and training contracts. Public funds are made available for that purpose.	+1	-22	-13	-36	+14	-49	-11
<b>Intensified promotion of trainees in need of support</b>							
• Individual support for young people taking vocational school courses is guaranteed. Teachers are trained for that purpose and the instruction (curricula, schedules, learning environments, tests) is made flexible.	+79	-18	-1	+24	+46	-54	+23
• Social and special education professionals are present in all vocational schools to give individual support to trainees as required.	+78	-23	-4	+20	+48	-62	+19
• The assisted training model is being introduced all over the country: Trainees, companies and vocational schools are given targeted support by training service providers until initial vocational education and training is completed.	+36	-20	-1	+1	+36	-55	+25
<b>Promotion of the qualification/working conditions of professionals involved in training</b>							
• In order to ensure high-quality training, regular training courses are held for all professionals involved in training activities (instructors, vocational school teachers and social education and special needs teachers) which also promote cooperation in interdisciplinary teams.	+73	-22	+1	-1	+47	-54	+18
• The working conditions for educational institutions are improved: longer terms for contracts awarded by public administrations as well as permanent employment at trade union wages. The goal is to promote continuous cooperation between education providers, young people and businesses and to ensure quality education.	+57	-32	-18	-14	+43	-59	+12
<b>Flexible training duration and crediting obligations</b>							
• In order to provide young people with an education tailored to their requirements, flexible concepts are implemented that allow an interruption or an extension of training to up to five years.	+24	-26	-4	-28	+16	-28	+20
• Legal requirements require companies to give young people credit for qualifications acquired in previous courses of training in the form of reductions in the period of training, provided these qualifications are in the same trade.	+21	-15	-2	-45	+41	-1	+25
<b>Extensive participation by representatives of trainees</b>							
• Trainees are involved in the planning and coordination processes at all levels relevant to their vocational education and training so that they can share their perspectives and their expertise for their own benefit. The appropriate structures have to be established at the relevant administrative levels for that purpose.	+19	-42	-18	-48	+38	-27	+7

<sup>1</sup> Mean values on scales between -100 (= not desirable) through 0 (= neither nor) to + 100 (= very desirable)<sup>2</sup> Mean values on scales between -100 (= not likely) through 0 (= neither nor) to + 100 (= very likely)<sup>3</sup> Mean values on scales between -100 (= very inhibitory) through 0 (= neither nor) to + 100 (=very supportive)

Total sample: n = 317 specialists. Calculations always without subjects who responded »don't know«.

Source: BiBB Expert Monitor

varying between 0 (»no correspondence«) and 1 (»maximum correspondence«).<sup>2</sup>

Figure 2 illustrates that the likelihood of implementation of the reform proposals is most closely associated with the current political majorities. There are also strong dependencies on the suspected viewpoint of the employer representatives and the implementation cost. The chances of implementation are less closely connected with the suspected viewpoints of the employee representatives. The link to the approval level of the experts themselves is especially weak, confirming the results illustrated in the table: The reform wishes of the specialists display little correspondence with what they consider to be likely.

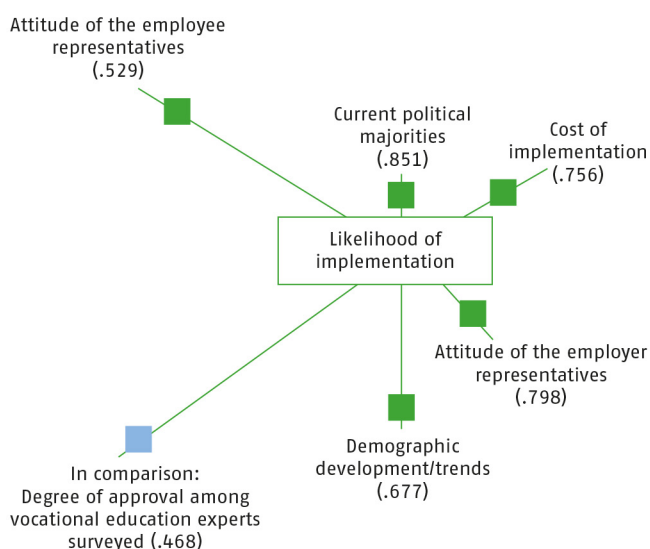
### Conclusion: Scepticism preponderates

Even though the experts are on average quite sympathetic towards reforms in favour of broad inclusion, they still expect the existing institutions to display significant inertia. The cost plays a role, but so do the current political condi-

tions, assessed to be not very reform-oriented, and the attitude of the employers' side, assessed to be rather conservative. Actually such reforms would involve a cost not only to the public sector but also to the companies providing training: Providing extra-company training places harbours the risk that young people will be more likely to pursue their careers than adapt to the requirements of the companies. Control systems, crediting obligations, a stronger voice for third parties and cooperation requirements place limits on the autonomy of the companies. It is perhaps not by chance that the experts definitely see parallels between the effects which result from the attitudes of employers and the current political majorities (cf. FRIELING/ULRICH 2013, pp. 86 f.). The policy-makers know about the cost savings and other benefits that accrue to the public sector owing to the participation of the enterprises in training and do not wish to generate any disincentives. In this context, inclusive education may certainly be easier to implement wherever government organizes and funds education largely on its own. ◀

Figure 2

Presumed probability of implementation of reform proposals and their correspondence to the influencing factors investigated



Elucidation: The closer the marker of a factor (e.g. political majorities) comes to the probability of implementation of reform proposals, the greater is the correspondence.

Source: BIBB Expert Monitor

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<sup>2</sup> First, for each of the influencing factors, a calculation is made of the amount of deviation of each of the values in the table from the presumed probabilities of implementation of the reform proposals. The squares of the deviations are summed up across all 13 proposals and relativized to the theoretically maximum possible deviation amount. The result is a standardized measure of distance varying between 0 and 1 that is transformed into the measure of correspondence reported here by subtracting 1.



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