

Hybrid qualifications

Increasing the value of Vocational Education and Training in the context of Lifelong Learning

Country Report: Germany

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List of abbreviations

BBiG	Berufsbildungsgesetz (Vocational Training Act)
BHS	Berufsbildende Höhere Schule (Higher Secondary Technical and Vocational College)
BIBB	Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training)
BMS	Berufsbildende Mittlere Schule (Intermediate Secondary Technical and Vocational College)
HE	higher education
HQ	Hybrid Qualification
HRK	Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (University Rectors Conference)
HwO	Handwerksordnung (Crafts and Trades Regulation Code)
KMK	Kultusministerkonferenz (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder)
MAXqda	Standardprogramm zur Analyse qualitativer Daten
PEQ	Polytechnic entrance qualification (Fachhochschulreife)
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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1. Aim of study and outline of the context of the country study (findings from first report)

Within this project the institutional and functional relationships between the subsystems higher education (tertiary sector), vocational training and the labour market will be analysed. On this basis, recommendations concerning transitions between vocational training and higher education and emerging future opportunities for this field will be a final aspect of the study. The European Qualifications Framework functions as a standard, since one of its aims is to establish the connection between different sectors of the education system. This means, that one political aim is to increase transparency and permeability. One major challenge in this context is the transition between vocational training and higher education and – as part of this debate – the role of HQs as a “door-opener”. HQs are defined as qualifications that open up both professional entry into an occupation and also access to higher education. The analysis of HQs in different countries appears to be very relevant for this political and pedagogical debate due to the fact that they obviously are handled in different ways within Europe.

General research issues within the project read as follows:

1. What types of HQs do exist and what are the motivations for and against the introduction of HQs?
2. How specific are the national circumstances influencing their (potential) implementation (i.e. actors, integration in the national VET system, target groups, shares of general education and vocational education contents in the curriculum of courses etc.)?
3. What are the perceptions of learners, employers and lecturers with respect to the nature and value of these qualifications?
4. To what extent do individual countries really come up with an approach that could be used as a best-practice strategy for those countries that find it difficult to cope with the above-mentioned transition problem?

The central aim of the project therefore is the development of recommendations for policy and practice based on research outcomes with respect to HQs.

To reach this goal the first step has been to establish a theory-based framework modeling structures and conditions for the transition period between the VET system and higher

education. Therefore, the project has so far also made use of relevant sociological models of transition such as those developed in the context of labour market research.

The results of the first part of the project can be summarised as follows:

Hybridity in the German VET system

In Germany, the concept of "hybrid"- or "double qualifications" (*Hybridqualifikationen*, *Doppelqualifikationen*) is usually associated with the educational reform period of the 1960s and 1970s (*Ganssert 1980, p. 184*). The acquisition of HQs refers to pathways in upper secondary education, including post-compulsory VET, whereby the clientele are students with an intermediate secondary school leaving certificate. Four different types of HQs, either in the apprenticeship system or in full-time VET, may be distinguished (*Heine 2010, p. 12*):

1. The first type is a combination of a vocational qualification according to the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) and a general school qualification leading to university (*Abitur*).
2. The second type stands for the attainment of a vocational qualification according to the BBiG coupled with a polytechnic entrance qualification (PEQ) which gives no access to universities.
3. Type 3 links a vocational qualification according to federal state law (e.g. an assistant qualification) with the acquisition of the *Abitur*.
4. HQs according to type 4 are the formal outcome of courses where a vocational qualification according to federal state law and the PEQ can be acquired at the same time.

Due to the fact that the 16 German federal states are each responsible for their respective school systems, the range of variation among HQs is distinctly heterogeneous in the national context. One also has to observe the dominance of the dual system (apprenticeship system) with its exclusive focus on portable labour-market relevant qualifications (*Deißinger 2010a*).

HQs within the dual system (type 1 and type 2):

A special tension springs to mind if one looks at the apprenticeship system in Germany with its strong and nearly exclusive qualification purpose.

Type 1: HQs according to type 1 are virtually non-existent. According to the database “AusbildungPlus”, there exist only three pilot projects (one in Thuringia, two in Berlin) offering the HQ „dual apprenticeship training + *Abitur*” (BIBB 2009e).

Type 2: However, there are some possibilities where trainees can acquire the PEQ in addition to a vocational certificate. The legal basis for such pathways has now been established in almost all federal states (Henke/Waldhausen/Werner 2004, p. 253). Currently, 12 out of 16 federal states offer these kinds of HQ within the dual system based on an agreement of the Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK 2001). Some 8,000 trainees in 176 vocational part-time schools have embarked on such a hybrid pathway (BIBB 2009a), although this is marginal (approx. 0.5 percent) within the total apprenticeship population (some 1.7 million). The trainees normally attend additional general education lessons besides their regular apprenticeship (Waldhausen/Werner 2005, p. 42).

HQs at vocational full-time schools (type 3 and type 4):

The dual system clearly outshines the system of full-time vocational schools due to its training function. In 2008/2009, out of about 2.8 million students in non-academic VET, some 1.7 million or 61 % of the school-leaving population were undergoing an apprenticeship in the dual system, while 39 % were registered in full-time VET, including vocational preparation but also in courses that lead to a comprehensive vocational qualification (Federal Statistical Office 2010). Within full-time school based VET, some vocational grammar schools (*Berufliche Gymnasien*) offer HQs according to type 3 while some vocational colleges (*Höhere Berufsfachschulen* or *Berufskollegs*) offer HQs according to type 4.

Table 1: German HQs (type 3 and 4) indicating the corresponding number of graduates in selected federal states

	HQ type 3 at vocational grammar schools	HQ type 4 at vocational colleges
Baden-Württemberg	non-existent	duration: 2 – 3 years graduates: 8,293 (2008)
North Rhine-Westphalia	duration: 3 ¼ - 4 years graduates: 819 (2009)	duration: 3 years graduates: 4,665 (2009)
Thuringia	duration: 3 ½ - 4 years graduates: 171 (2009)	duration: 2 ½ years graduates: 325 (2009)

Source: Heine 2010, p. 57

Type 3: The example of the vocational grammar schools in North Rhine-Westphalia

Vocational grammar schools in North Rhine-Westphalia optionally lead to a “vocational qualification according to federal state law + *Abitur*”. Students who would like to acquire the assistant qualification in addition to the *Abitur* can achieve this HQ within 3 ¼ years. In 2009, some 6,200 grammar school graduates were awarded an *Abitur* at a vocational grammar school. 819 or 13 % of these graduates attained an HQ (*IT.NRW 2010c*).

Type 4: The example of the vocational college in Baden-Württemberg

Since the mid-1970s, students in Baden-Württemberg have had the possibility to attend a vocational college (*Berufskolleg*) as an alternative to apprenticeship training (*Franz 2007, p. 6; Deißinger 2007; Deißinger/Ruf 2007*). The vocational college is a secondary, but post-compulsory institution, and as such functions as an alternative to the later years of the grammar school which academic students attend. It is open to students, normally aged between 16 and 18, with an intermediate school leaving qualification. Students emerge from either the two-year vocational full-time school (*Berufsfachschule*), which takes graduates from the lower secondary schools normally aged 15 or 16, the 10th year of lower secondary education (*Werkrealschule*), or from the two higher streams of the general education system (*Gymnasium* or *Realschule*).

This specific type of school now provides a PEQ as the “regular” qualification. Under certain conditions, a vocational qualification according to the Baden-Württemberg school law (assistant qualification) can be obtained. Most students (approx. 33.8 %) attend a commercial vocational college (*Statistical Office of Baden-Württemberg 2009*). In 2008, 8,293 or 23 % out of all graduates attained an HQ according to type 4.¹ Currently, the function of the vocational college seems to be strongly entry into HE rather than delivering labour market qualifications - and research shows that this pathway is often chosen because of the PEQ (*Ruf 2007, p. 120*). *Deißinger/Ruf* (2006) found out that another important motivation of students seems to be the improvement of their position in the training market for a subsequent apprenticeship (e.g. banking or insurance) due to the insight that a college-based course fails to offer portable labour-market relevant occupational qualifications (*Deißinger/Ruf 2006, p. 168 f.*). The dominance of and trust in the German apprenticeship system and its functional importance for the labour market clearly is the corresponding side of this phenomenon (*Deißinger/Heine/Ott 2011; Deißinger 2004; 2010a*).

¹ The figures were received from the Statistical Office of Baden-Württemberg (*e-mail-correspondence with Mrs. Jutta Demel (Jutta.Demel@STALA.BWL.DE), 12/07/2009*).

Since a vocational qualification based on the Vocational Training Act (*Deißinger 1996*) receives nearly unrestricted acceptance from employers, HQs according to type 1 have the highest functional value, as the *Abitur* is valued more than a PEQ. However, HQs of such quality are practically non-existent in Germany. HQ type 4 certainly is the most widespread variant in all federal states. Therefore, it may be asserted that in Germany HQs only exist in a marginal field of the VET system.

2. Methodology and empirical basis of study

The second step in our project aims at complementing the first one by delivering empirical material which should illustrate the status and relevance of HQs in the German context. We have embarked on qualitative empirical study using interviews as sources for empirical hints. One major aspect hereby has been the aspect of successful transitions following the acquisition of an HQ. The empirical study comprises two parts. Firstly, a document-based analysis of the education policy landscape in the partner countries was undertaken, and secondly, different stakeholder were interviewed, with an identical formal structure of the interviews in all partner countries (expert interviews). Against this background, potential experts were chosen in the first place. In a second step, the interview guidelines were developed. Then the chosen interviewees were contacted and appointments for interviews were arranged and fixed.

The interviews place a focus on the following aspects:

- perceptions/attitudes towards the idea and the model of HQs
- experiences with the hybrid approach and specific examples for their implementation and use they are involved in

Our partners in the project have commented that using completely identical interview guidelines for the field study would not necessarily make sense although in an academic perspective this would be desirable. The main reason for this is that the results of WP 2 clearly point out that the structures of the various VET systems and therefore also the realisation of HQs differ significantly from country to country. Therefore, the partners agreed on slightly diverging interview structures while certain aspects of content were considered

that they have to be identical. One reason for this is the aim of a cross-country comparison could be realised at all.

The following questions represent those aspects that are – in a more or less identical way – contained in all four interview structures:

- How can the individual political and institutional context of the VET system be characterized? Where are links to the concept of HQs? What kind of educational policy motivations do exist? Is there demand from employers and/or students?
- Which specific types of HQs exist? What are their ranges and relevance? Who are the target groups? Who are the beneficiaries?
- Are there examples of good practice? If yes, why are they good and relevant? What kind of problems, barriers and/or reservations exist for creating and delivering HQs or even for extending their scope?
- Should HQs be introduced or sustained on a broader scale? (why or why not?)
- What needs to be done to improve or to stabilize the situation? What do stakeholders think about the future?

All these questions were used in a direct or indirect way in each of the four partner contexts. In addition, each partner was free to create further questions or issues which they considered to be relevant for the research topic, depending on the individual country context and, in particular, the stakeholders and institutions functioning as interviewees. Each partner conducted between 12 and 20 personal interviews. In Germany, the interviews were carried out with the following stakeholders:

Table 2: Overview interview partners

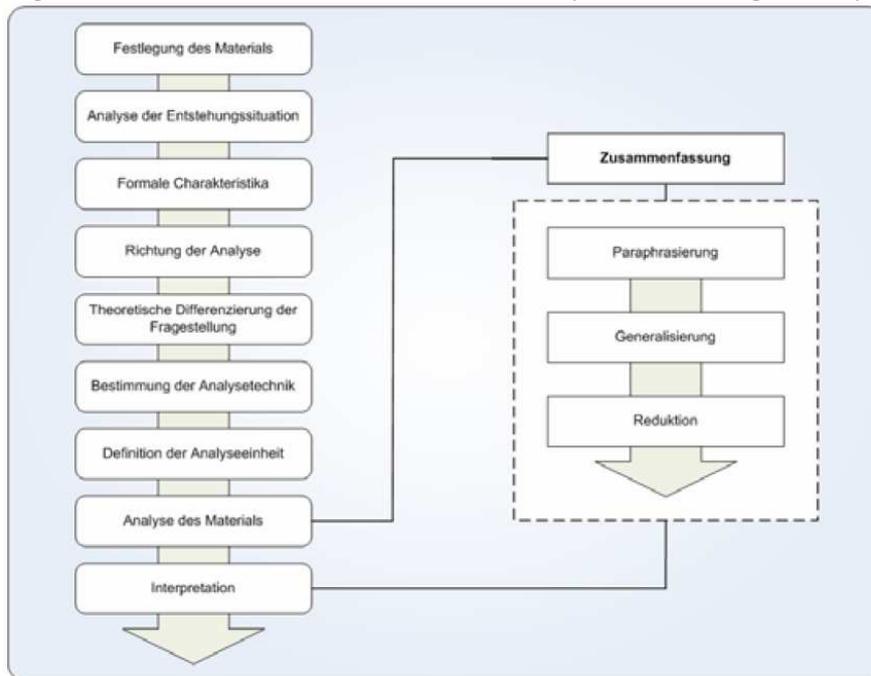
No.	Institution	Date of interview	Stakeholder
1	Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg	19.10.2010	Policy Maker
2	Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung Hamburg	11.11.2010	
3	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF)	02.11.2010	
4	Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB)	02.11.2010	

5	Abgeordneter im Landtag von Baden-Württemberg	20.10.2010	
6	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB)	09.12.2010	Social Partner
7	Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW)	15.11.2010	
8	Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks (ZDH)	09.12.2010	
9	Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände (BDA)	08.12.2010	
10	Industrie- und Handelskammer Hochrhein-Bodensee	15.12.2010	
11	Arbeitgeberverband Südwestmetall	28.01.2011	
12	Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK)	03.11.2010	HE Institutions
13	Hochschulprofessor	10.11.2010	
14	Hochschulprofessor	14.12.2010	
15	Berufsschullehrerverband Baden-Württemberg (BLV)	19.10.2010	VET institutions and VET programme managers
16	Schulrektor einer kaufmännischen Schule in Baden-Württemberg	15.10.2010	
17	Lehrer einer kaufmännischen Schule in Baden-Württemberg	28.10.2010	(Hybrid) Teachers and Trainers
18	Verantwortlicher Ausbilder in einem international agierenden Unternehmen	08.10.2010	

The transcription of the interviews was carried out by using Express Dictate – a voice recording software that works like a dictaphone. It was followed by an analysis of data by means of MAXqda – a widely used qualitative research and data analysis software.

Again the project consortium agreed – similar to the selection of interview questions - on the fact that a common evaluation method for the expert interviews was not necessarily mandatory due to differences in the educational systems and with respect to relevant institutional stakeholders. The German partner used the MAYRING method for the qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2003).

Figure 1: General Model of Content Analysis according to Mayring



Source: Mayring 2003, p. 54

The core of the qualitative content analysis is always the development of a categorial system. For the development of categories the interrelationship between theory (behind each single question) and the concrete material derived from the interviews is crucial. Categories hereby are defined according to construction and assignment rules and revised and edited accordingly during the analysis (Mayring 2003, S. 53). Our basis for the development of categories has been the first country report which, among other things, depicts the transition structures and conditions between the VET system and higher education.

3. Thematic part – problems and opportunities

As a matter of fact, it may be stated that the concept of HQs plays only a minor role in the German educational system. The decision taken by the Conference of the Education Ministers in March 2009 (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2009) –which extended access to higher education to vocationally qualified applicants without a traditional university entrance examination – can be seen as one step forward concerning the crucial reform objective „permeability between vocational education and training and higher education” according to the EU agenda. In accordance with this decision vocationally qualified applicants with a master craftsman’s or master worker’s qualification (*Meister*) are to be granted free access to higher education (allgemeine Hochschulzugangsberechtigung) in Baden-Württemberg following a counselling

interview. Equivalent qualifications are the state-examined technician (*staatlich geprüfter Techniker*) and its commercial variant (*staatlich geprüfter Betriebswirt*). This clientele now has the possibility of free choice of their study programme without a special examination. Vocationally qualified people will hereby receive at least limited access to higher education in their vocational field (*fachgebundene Hochschulzugangsberechtigung*) if they have undergone at least a two-year vocational training programme, prove that they have gained at least three years of professional experience and with the passing of a specific assessment procedure (*Eignungsfeststellungsverfahren*).

Both Social Partners and Policy Makers evaluate the decision of the KMK as a step in the right direction. The decision creates formal opportunities which support permeability between VET and higher education.

“Also, das Bildungssystem ist auf einem guten Weg, durchlässig zu werden. Wir haben ja mit den entsprechenden Beschlüssen der KMK jetzt erreicht, dass in den meisten Bundesländern mit einer bestandenen Meisterprüfung einerseits, aber auch mit [...] Berufserfahrung der Zugang zu einem Studium möglich ist, und damit sind zunächst einmal gesetzliche Voraussetzungen geschaffen Durchlässigkeit zu fördern, d.h. nicht, dass das System bereits so aufgestellt ist, dass man es als Hundert Prozent durchlässig qualifizieren könnte“ (Social Partner 3: 10; see also Social Partner 4: 10; Policy Maker 3: 36).²

From a scientific perspective the decision of the KMK can only be an intermediate step for increasing permeability between VET and higher education. This is justified by the fact that the new legislative regulation has been created for people with a long-time professional experience and not for apprentices in vocational training (dual system). From a legal point of view vocationally qualified people have the chance to walk along “open-end-development-paths” (“Open-end-Entwicklungswege”) (Feller 2006, p. 17). In the context of the entire academic landscape in Germany it is however questionable whether vocationally qualified people in fact will use the possibility for an application for a certain course of studies.

Against the background of the legislation amendment, chapter 3.1 deals with different problematic issues preventing an intensified implementation of HQs. Thereafter, chapter 3.2 investigates the social and pedagogical value of HQs.

² *“The educational system is on the right track to become more permeable. With the decision of the KMK we have reached that in most federal states it is possible to get access to a course of study with the qualification of a Meister, furthermore with [...] professional experience and therefore the necessary legal prerequisites were established by law. But this does not mean that the whole system of permeability has already been installed as such, with respect to one hundred percent permeability.”*

3.1. Problems / limits concerning HQs

- **Lack of interest and weak status within the political debate**

Although different strengths and advantages of HQs have been discussed and although the majority of our interview partners have declared themselves in favour of their introduction, HQs are not on the German political agenda at the moment.

Our interview partners mention the traditional separation of “*school education and vocational education*” (Social Partner 1: 169, 236), which is still widely commonplace, as a potential reason for the lack of political interest in HQs. Quite frankly, Social Partner 3 describes the discussion about HQs currently as an inferior subject.

„[...] *bildungspolitisch haben wir jetzt zur Zeit andere Baustellen. Und Zusatzqualifikation läuft immer so ein bisschen mit. [...]*”³ (Social Partner 3: 37; see also: Policy Maker 1: 70; Policy Maker 3: 116; Social Partner 3: 28).

However, Social Partner 1 is convinced that “*the discussion about the qualifications framework will also bring a new dynamic into the debate*”, so that the question of an “*integration*” of vocational and general education will become topical again (Social Partner 1: 236).

- **Lack of interest among young people**

Many interview partners also think that the “*modest interest*” in double qualifying educational pathways on the part of young people could be a reason for the weakness of the political discussion (Hybrid Teacher: 138; Policy Maker 1: 135; University Rectors Conference: 52, 70; VET Programme Manager 1: 35; VET Programme Manager 2: 66).

Those apprentices who prepare for higher education while following a VET programme face an “*additional workload*” (Social Partner 4: 76; see also: Policy Maker 5: 26; Social Partner 4: 180; University Professor 2: 91; VET Programme Manager 1: 84), which can become too high a burden for apprentices going for an HQ (Hybrid Trainer: 71; Social Partner 6: 50; University Professor 2: 91; VET Programme Manager 2: 51).

„[...] *wenn [...] ein guter Hauptschüler in die Ausbildung geht [...] und dann noch parallel dazu... Ich meine, das ist ja eine Doppelbelastung, dann noch*

³ “[...] our education policy has different focuses at the moment. And additional qualifications always run a bit besides the main line.”

diesen schulischen Abschluss zu machen. Das werden nicht alle Jugendlichen hinkriegen“⁴ (Social Partner 4: 180).

It is, however, not only the fear of overstress which comes up as an argument against double qualifying educational pathways on the part of young people – it seems that many of them are *“simply quite happy with their vocational qualification [...] and for them, it is okay. Maybe they open up their own business without passing through an academic pathway”* (University Rectors Conference: 70). Those young people prefer to *“live in freedom”* instead of continuing with *“intensive training and learning”* (VET Programme Manager 1: 35; see also: Hybrid Teacher: 70, 138; Policy Maker 1: 58; University Rectors Conference: 52).

- **Lack of information about HQs**

According to many stakeholders, missing information seems to be the fundamental problem. There is a low level of awareness concerning HQs and the different options that exist are perceived as rather confusing (Hybrid Trainer: 182; Policy Maker 5: 27; Social Partner 3: 28; Social Partner 4: 12; Social Partner 5: 138; VET Programme Manager 1: 63).

„Wenn da mehr Informationen vorhanden wären und wenn Leute tatsächlich wüssten, was eigentlich ihre Möglichkeiten sind, dann wäre das sicherlich auch ein großer Schritt“⁵ (Social Partner 4: 12).

Our interview partners argue that this lack of information is a result of missing promotional activities (Social Partner 3: 28) and of missing nationwide and standardized pathways that are considered to be *“reliable”* (Social Partner 3: 28). The confusing oversupply of *“transition pathways between school, job and higher education”* is compared by an interviewee to a *“jungle of educational provisions”* (Social Partner 5: 138).

„Das ist auch ein Defizit der Organisation, dass wir es nicht schaffen, diese Möglichkeiten, die da sind, auch stärker zu bewerben [...]. Dies hängt natürlich auch wieder damit zusammen, dass es eben nicht flächendeckend ist. Die einen machen es, die anderen machen es nicht. Das ist so ein Zufallsangebot, wenn man das ganze Bundesgebiet betrachtet, und das macht es uns auch schwer, das von der bundespolitischen Seite aus, die das Ganze im Auge hat, als ein verbindliches Angebot zu bewerben“⁶ (Social Partner 3: 28).

⁴ “[...] when a good lower secondary school leaver [...] does an apprenticeship [...] and parallel to that... I mean this is a double burden preparing also for a degree of general education. Not all young people will be able to succeed.”

⁵ “If there were more information and if people knew actually which options exist, then we would take a big step forward.”

⁶ “It is also an organizational deficit that we do not manage to better promote these options [...]. For sure, this is also a consequence of the fact that these educational provisions do not exist nationwide. Some offer them, others do not. It is a bit at random if you look at the nationwide educational provisions. And that is why it is so difficult from the federal part – which should have an overview – to promote these pathways as reliable options.”

- **Lack of uniform solutions and reliability**

The introduction of nationwide standardized hybrid pathways is made difficult by the German federalism which “*contributes to the fact some things cannot be realized as fast as it would be desirable*” (University Rectors Conference: 74; see also: Policy Maker 3: 93, 98; Policy Maker 4: 95; Social Partner 1: 163; Social Partner 2: 63; Social Partner 4: 93).

Social Partner 3 says in this context that this is an “*on-site subject*” where the federal actors have only few instruments with which they can become influential (Social Partner 3: 37). The missing “*federal responsibility*” in educational policy and the corresponding partialised “*responsibility of the Länder*” suppress the creation of a “*unified framework*” and slow down its potential introduction, “*because the interests of the different Länder are divergent, so that they will not agree. They have the right to disagree, that’s how the system works*” (Social Partner 1: 163; Social Partner 4: 93; University Rectors Conference: 74).

- **Economic arguments**

Another obstacle consists of rising public costs that stakeholders associate with the introduction of HQs. As companies co-finance the dual system on a large scale, a partial transfer of VET from the dual system to vocational full-time schools as delivering institutions for HQs would lead to higher public expenses and especially affect the “*resources of the Länder*” (Policy Maker 1: 58, 127; University Professor 2: 85).

Furthermore, some of our interview partners expect a rising wage level in the long run, “*if the qualification level and also the demands rise*” (University Rectors Conference: 68) and they expect that the introduction of a hybrid system would necessitate an extension of vocational full-time schools and universities.

From a human capital perspective, a cost problem is envisaged in that, on the part of the participants, longer years spent in the education system would reduce the number of “*years when they earn money*” (Policy Maker 1: 127).

- **Reservations of training companies and employers' associations**

Mainly companies and employers' associations are critical of HQs. They consider the holistic learning in companies, which is part of the dual system, as the ideal way in vocational training and fear that VET could lose its practical relevance due to the enhanced stress on theoretical learning at school (Social Partner 2: 127; Policy Maker 2: 114; Policy Maker 1: 131; Policy Maker 3: 102; Social Partner 1: 246; Social Partner 2: 27; VET Programme Manager 2: 143).

Hereby, the argument distinguishes between different roles of schools and companies during an apprenticeship:

„[...] Auszubildendenleben ist etwas anders als Schülerleben. Das eine ist in einem Sozialisationsfeld in einer Unternehmensgemeinschaft und das andere ist in einer Lerngemeinschaft in der Schule, wobei bildungsbiographisch andere Effekte erfahren werden“⁷ (Policy Maker 2: 114).

Many interviewees therefore demand to maintain the “*integration of theory and practice*” and the “*scope of learning, which is integrated into the work process during apprenticeship training*” (Social Partner 1: 246; VET Programme Manager 2: 143).

Similar to losing the “control of the learning process”, many firms obviously are afraid of losing well-trained young people immediately after the end of the apprenticeship, because they might decide to pursue further studies at university (Hybrid Trainer: 71, 99; Policy Maker 3: 106; Social Partner 4: 70; University Rectors Conference: 65; VET Programme Manager 2: 181).

„Ich kann mir vorstellen, dass viele Betriebe Angst davor haben, die Auszubildenden nach der Ausbildung an Hochschulen zu verlieren. Ausbildung ist für viele Unternehmen Nachwuchsrekrutierung, weshalb sie ja in die Ausbildung investieren. Diese Ausbildungsinvestitionen könnten nun aber verpuffen“⁸ (Social Partner 4: 70).

Also, if companies should manage to get the trainees back after their studies at university, they also have to expect higher personnel cost.

„Sobald ich einem Auszubildenden oder einem Mitarbeiter die Möglichkeit zur Weiterbildung gebe, muss ich damit rechnen, dass ich ihn danach mehr bezahlen muss“⁹ (University Rectors Conference: 65).

In addition, companies and especially handicraft enterprises refuse training young people for an unspecified time in the future, while at the same time they need the productive contribution of apprentices during the training process (Policy Maker 5: 48). Companies apparently fear the absence of their trainees during regular working hours due to additional lessons at school (Hybrid Teacher: 65, 190; Policy Maker 3: 92; Policy Maker 5: 48; Policy Maker 6: 58; Social Partner 3: 72; Social Partner 4: 76, 95, 177; VET Programme Manager 2: 74, 181). “*This is*

⁷ “[...] life as a trainee differs from life as a student. One takes place in the socialization field of a company and the other in a learning community at school, whereby diverging effects can be experienced.”

⁸ “I can imagine that many firms are afraid that their trainees go to university after finishing the apprenticeship. Many companies invest in apprenticeship training to recruit new talents. Now these investments might deflagrate.”

⁹ “If I give trainees or employees the possibility for further development, I have to expect higher wages for them.”

because the educational content of the higher education entrance qualification has to be acquired somewhere (Social Partner 4: 177)."

On the other hand, this attitude receives criticism by some interview partners as being too *"short-term, too strongly targeted towards current economic needs and too dependent on economic constraints (Hybrid Teacher: 73; Policy Maker 2: 130; VET Programme Manager 1: 37)."* Also one of the Hybrid Teachers believes that *"the interest still will come."*

„Momentan verschläft die Wirtschaft in Deutschland noch das Potential, das die Jugend hat. [...] Die Unternehmen müssen sich aber um ihren Nachwuchs kümmern, damit das Wissen der aktuellen Mitarbeiter nicht mit deren Pensionierung verloren geht“¹⁰ (Hybrid Teacher: 73).

Another reason why companies and employers' associations are critical of HQs is the fear that *"the public authority will handle apprenticeship training alone or will keep gifted and highly motivated young people in school-based courses"* (Policy Maker 2: 66, see also: Social Partner 2: 107, 121; University Professor 2: 71, 77). Thereby some of them assume that *"the public authority can't assure qualified apprenticeship training, because it's too far away from business reality. Profession and apprenticeship training can't take place in laboratories"* (Policy Maker 5: 71).

- **Resistance of universities**

The attitude of universities is seen as a main barrier or even as the *"main break"* for the implementation of HQs according to many interviewees (Policy Maker 2: 86; Policy Maker 4: 56; VET Programme Manager 2: 155).

„[...] denn die Hochschulen sind ein relativ starres System. Sie reagieren nur wenig auf Bildungsnotwendigkeiten und sind zu wenig innovativ, um Erfordernissen in ihren Lernorganisationen Rechnung zu tragen“¹¹ (Policy Maker 2: 86).

There also seems to be a capacity or quantitative dimension to the problem: Another reason for the disinterest of universities towards HQs is the fact that currently rather *"too many students want to go to university. So their efforts to attract more young people are not very ambitious"* (University Rectors Conference: 19, see also University Professor 2: 28).

¹⁰ *"Currently the economy in Germany doesn't recognize the potential of young people. But companies have to look after their next generation, otherwise the knowledge of current employees will be lost with their retirement."*

¹¹ *"[...] this is because universities are relatively rigid systems. They react only little to educational needs and their innovations to accommodate the requirements of their learning organizations are low."*

- **Lack of awareness for the parity of esteem of vocational and general learning and devaluation of VET**

The traditional separation of general and vocational education – as in many other countries and despite the importance of the dual system - seems to characterise the common understanding in Germany of education until today, whereby “*VET is somehow considered second-class*” (Hybrid Teacher: 23) and “*the high-school graduate is apparently the one with the better education*” (Hybrid Teacher: 122).

Hence, a first and important purpose within the global reform process is to promote the idea of parity of esteem of general and vocational education which some of the interviewees state when they mention the competence problem in this respect (Policy Maker 2: 58, 120; Policy Maker 3: 94; VET Programme Manager 1: 20).

*“Aber es setzt voraus, dass sich eben die Gleichwertigkeit weiterentwickelt. Denn man müsste dann curricular definieren, welche Kompetenzen es denn sind, die Berufsreife im Sinne von Studierfähigkeit ausmachen. Im Grunde genommen ist das ja auch nur eine Ausbildungsfähigkeit auf einem anderen Gebiet. Aber davon sind wir noch weit entfernt”*¹² (Policy Maker 2: 58).

- **The problem of full-time VET**

Because of its training function, the dual system clearly outshines the system of full-time vocational schools in terms of intakes and graduate numbers. The basic arguments concerning the problems of vocational full-time pathways in Germany – mostly now considered as part of the so-called “measure” or “transition system” – are also reflected in the interviews and can be summarised in the following quotation.

*“Berufsbildende Schulen und duale Ausbildung standen nebeneinander. Und diese Abschottung wurde von beiden Seiten auch lange Zeit so gefördert. Das Duale System und die dahinter stehenden Stakeholder: Wirtschaftsverbände, Kammern usw. Die waren ja bemüht, vollzeitschulische Berufsbildungsangebote immer als Second-best Option darzulegen. Das hat die öffentliche Wahrnehmung sicherlich lange Zeit beeinflusst. Berufsbildende Schulen haben sich demgegenüber auch lange vor einer zu starken betrieblichen Vereinnahmung abgeschottet“*¹³ (University Professor 2: 45).

¹² “However that requires that parity of esteem is further developed, because we would have to define the relevant competences for vocational maturity in the sense of ability to study. Basically, this is nothing else than the apprenticeship entry maturity, only in a different field. We are however still very far from this.”

¹³ “The vocational full-time schools and the dual system have always stood apart. And this boundary was promoted by both sides. The dual system and the stakeholders behind it: trade unions, the chambers etc. They endeavoured to present vocational full-time schools as second-best option. This had certainly an impact on public opinion. The vocational full-time schools on the other hand sealed themselves off from company interests.”

The fact that full-time schools can open up access to higher education dominates their “*vocational qualifying function*” which “*is even largely disputed*” (Hybrid Trainer: 164; see also: Social Partner 4: 99; University Professor 1: 69). On the other hand, full-time schools in Germany do not have a clear labour-market function so that they can be seen as “sitting between the chairs” (Deißinger 2010b).

- **Open issues and organisational problems**

Looking at what the interviewees stated, there seem to be several open issues concerning the (potential) introduction or strengthening of HQ in Germany. Some are listed below:

„[...] *wer kann es leisten? Wo wären die Lernorte? Wie kann ich eine Zertifizierung durchführen? Wie kann ich valide Aussagen darüber treffen, wer wirklich geeignet ist, ein Hochschulstudium durchzuführen*“¹⁴ (Hybrid Teacher: 75).

„[...] *wer trägt die Kosten* (Hybrid Teacher: 95)?“¹⁵

„*Was heißt das für die berufsbildenden Schulen? Was muss man mit den Schülern trainieren, damit sie besser studieren können*“¹⁶ (Social Partner 2: 142).

Answers to these basic organisation matters are too “*abstract*” so far according to many stakeholders. Therefore the implementation of HQs still is seen to be captured in what could be called an “*embryo status*” (Social Partner 2: 142).

Furthermore, HQs seem to pose big challenges for the existing vocational part-time schools as part of the dual system. Most of them do not avail of “*modern facilities like workshops, practice firms, laboratories or kitchen to support the practice-oriented, full-time school-based teaching method*” (VET Programme Manager 1: 129). Besides the technical equipment and furnishing, other “*capacities – teachers – are necessary*” (Social Partner 3: 33).

3.2 Social and pedagogical value of HQs

Stakeholders allude to very different aspects concerning the social and pedagogical value of HQs. In the following the arguments that have been mentioned most frequently are depicted. It becomes clear that enhanced mobility and flexibility of adolescents in the labour market are seen as beneficial by most interview partners. (Policy Maker 1: 127; Policy Maker 2: 82; Policy Maker 4: 141, 144; Policy Maker 5: 79; Social Partner 1: 245; University Professor 1:

¹⁴ “[...] *who is capable of doing this? Where are the learning places supposed to be? How can certificates be awarded? How can valid statements be made about which students are able to study at a university.*”

¹⁵ “*Who bears the costs?*”

¹⁶ “*What implications does this have for vocational schools? What needs to be done so that students could study more successfully?*”

110; University Professor 2: 81; VET Programme Manager 1: 139; VET Programme Manager 2: 186). The quotations below illustrate this position:

„Der Jugendliche erfährt wahrscheinlich eine relativ hohe Akzeptanz am Arbeitsmarkt. Außerdem haben die Jugendlichen dadurch mehr Flexibilität und Mobilität, sich beruflich umzuorientieren“¹⁷ (Policy Maker 4: 141).

„Die Doppelqualifikation hat einen positiven Effekt auf die Mobilität der Jugendlichen. Zusätzlich fördert sie die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung der Jugendlichen“¹⁸ (University Professor 2: 81).

The only counter-argument is brought forward by the Hybrid Trainer. He does not see any positive effects concerning mobility due to HQs. As a reason he points out that the existing opportunities cannot even be extended with the help of exchange programmes abroad (Hybrid Trainer: 194).

In connection with the flexibility of adolescents, the supply of vocational training opportunities is mentioned. Social Partner 5 and Policy Maker 2 refer to reforming the education system by widening educational participation and by creating new opportunities and course options (Social Partner 5: 122), (Policy Maker 2: 62). University Professor 2 welcomes such a change because it leads to more equal and better opportunities for young people (University Professor 2: 34; see also University Professor 1: 86; VET Programme Manager 1: 145). As a result the interview partner hopes that HQs lead to an increase or at least a stable number of students. (Hybrid Teacher: 136; Policy Maker 5: 46; Social Partner 2: 50; Social Partner 5: 122; University Rectors Conference: 14).

“Mit Hybridqualifikationen kann ich mehreren Leuten eine Zugangsberechtigung ermöglichen und es kann eine Lösung für den demografischen Wandel sein. Mehr Jugendliche können an den tertiären Ausbildungsbereich herangeführt werden“¹⁹ (Hybrid Teacher: 136).

Some stakeholders say that HQs lead to a raising status of vocational education:

¹⁷ “Adolescents probably achieve a higher degree of acceptance on the job market. Furthermore they have the possibility to change their career in the future due to better flexibility.”

¹⁸ “Hybrid qualifications have a positive effect on the increase of adolescent mobility. In addition it is a supportive process in an adolescent's personal development.”

¹⁹ “With hybrid qualifications the number of people getting an access authorization for university is higher. This seems to be one solution option for demographic change. More and more young people are introduced to the tertiary education sector.”

„Es ist eine Attraktivitätssteigerung im beruflichen Bildungsbereich. Und die berufliche Bildung muss sich weiterentwickeln“²⁰ (Social Partner 6: 104; see also University Professor 1: 110).

In addition, HQs support the development of competences, which is seen as pedagogically valuable. Because skill demands at work continue to rise, cognitive abilities are seen as essential. (Social Partner 2: 148). According to Social Partner 2 the acquisition of these competences should take place in vocational schools. Furthermore, HQs obviously are supposed to promote lateral thinking. (VET Programme Manager 1: 137). One Hybrid Trainer says that it is important that both occupational and general knowledge be imparted. The combination of both categories of learning is expected to lead to a positive cumulative effect. (Hybrid Trainer: 186).

Policy Maker 2 and 5 and the Hybrid Trainer fully agree that HQs in an integrated programme are likely to lead to shorter training periods. Educational loops could therefore be spared especially by talented young people:

„[...] also für Leistungsstarke ist es natürlich auch eine erhebliche Zeitersparnis, denn wenn sie die allgemeine Hochschulreife erwerben wollen, ist eine Schulzeit von 12-13 Schuljahren vorgesehen. Plus Berufsabschluss, da haben sie dann noch einmal 2-2,5 Jahre. Da kommen sie natürlich auf eine längere Zeitspanne als in einem integrierten Modell“²¹ (Social Partner 4: 170).

Within the effects HQs have on universities, as mentioned before, there is one more benefit to add from the point of view of some of our interviewees, which is the higher practical relevance of learning at the universities.

“Ich denke für jeden Studiengang ist es gut, wenn Studenten mit Praxiserfahrung rein kommen“²² (VET Programme Manager 2: 61; see also Hybrid Teacher: 19).

However, Policy Maker 3 criticizes that the positive effect emerging from a student population with practical experiences has never had the significance it should deserve. (Policy Maker 3: 36).

Two interview partners argue that HQs will lead to cost savings. Public spending for universities could by this way be lowered (University Professor 2: 41). VET Programme

²⁰ “It means that there is an improvement of attractiveness of vocational education. There is a need that vocational education develops in this way.”

²¹ “Talented young people could save time because when they want to qualify for university entrance they usually need to go to school for 12-13 years. Vocational training takes another 2 – 2,5 years time. Altogether this takes longer than the hybrid qualification version.”

²² “I think it is a benefit for all courses of studies if some students have practical experience from the very beginning.”

Manager 2 expects that the number of potential training failures might also be reduced. Thereby HQs could indirectly lead to cost savings because mainly apprentices who are really interested in the occupation would apply. (VET Programme Manager 2: 182).

From the point of view of teachers, HQs also seem to have the potential of entailing a positive impact on the appeal and social acceptance of the teaching profession.

„Wenn wir dieses System an den beruflichen Schulen in BaWü einführen würden, und dieses zusätzliche Angebot nicht zu Überstunden bei den Kollegen führt, dann kann ich mir gut vorstellen, dass viele Kollegen sehr gerne in den Klassen mit Zusatzqualifikation Fachhochschulreife unterrichten wollen [...]“²³ (VET Programme Manager 1: 74; see also Social Partner 2: 143).

The last argument finally is that adolescents will become much more motivated if they can acquire HQs. Learning in a practical way could be an attractive option for people who have difficulties to go to school regularly and to attend classes actively. (University Rectors Conference: 78; see also VET Programme Manager 1: 137).

From a company's point of view the additional value of HQs lies in different characteristics. Many stakeholders have the opinion that:

„[...] den Vorteil für die Unternehmen sehe ich darin, dass sie breiter qualifizierte Jugendliche einstellen können“²⁴ (Social Partner 1: 245).

Policy Maker 1 argues similar but adds an economical aspect:

„[...] die Unternehmen würden diese Jugendlichen gerne einstellen, weil je besser die Personen ausgebildet sind und umso preiswerter man sie kriegt, umso günstiger ist das für die Unternehmen“²⁵ (Policy Maker 1: 68).

Furthermore it is important to mention the demographic change and the thereby linked lack of professionals. Thanks to the creation of HQs – which could be an attractive optional extra offer from companies – companies could demonstrate that they are willing to support and promote the development potential of trainees. As a consequence, the attractiveness of the company as an employer increases. A positive side effect, as some stakeholders mentioned, seems to be the positive impact on employee motivation, responsibility, and long-term loyalty and commitment to the company. (Social Partner 4: 172; University Professor 2: 34;

²³ “If we introduced this system at vocational schools and if this additional offer did not force my colleagues to work overtime I think many of my colleagues would prefer teaching in classes with pupils who want to achieve as an additional certificate a polytechnic entrance qualification.”

²⁴ “One advantage for companies is that they can hire young people who are more broadly qualified.”

²⁵ “The companies are more willing to hire these young people because the better they are qualified and the cheaper they can get employees the more beneficial it is for the companies.”

University Rectors Conference: 68). University Professor 2 summarizes the positive impacts of HQ above all in terms of the aspect of economical usability and the recruitment of skilled professionals. (University Professor 2: 82). Therefore it may be said that there seems to be a strong economic view concerning these qualifications from different stakeholders.

4. Stakeholders' views and sectoral differences

4.1 Motives of decision-makers in educational policy indicating a stronger implementation of HQs

Contrary to the following pedagogical motivation structures, many interview partners comment on political motivations.

Political motivational structures

Political motives for an enforced implementation of HQs are very diverse. First of all, the increase in permeability as well as the entailing extension of access to higher education for more adolescents are considered as the main motives by the Hybrid Trainer and Policy Maker 2 (Hybrid Trainer: 38; Policy Maker 2: 56).

Social Partner 6 intimates in this context that demographic change and at the same time increasing student numbers are decisive aspects when it comes to put the policy of an intensified implementation of HQs onto the agenda. He thinks that the dual system – facing a dwindling demand situation – could hereby also face new pedagogical challenges:

„Im Zuge der demographischen Entwicklung werden die [...] Bewerberzahlen zurückgehen. Gleichzeitig werden mehr junge Leute die Hochschulen besuchen, was politisch auch so gewollt ist [...]. Beides bedeutet für die duale Ausbildung eine zunehmende Heterogenität ihrer immer kleiner werdenden Zielgruppe. Die Zuwendung zu Leistungsschwächeren erfordert Instrumente und Angebote“²⁶ (Social Partner 6: 38).

Policy Maker 5 regards, among other things, the European Qualifications Framework as a decisive aspect as this seems to challenge the VET system as a whole:

„[...] im Rahmen der Diskussion um den Europäischen Qualifikationsrahmen, wird unser berufliches Bildungssystem nicht bestehen können. Ein Grund mehr

²⁶ “As part of demographic development, numbers of applicants will decrease. At the same time more young people will attend university, a trend which is politically desirable. Thus the target group of dual vocational training will become smaller and more heterogeneous. The care for more underachieving youths requires instruments and offers.”

warum Hybridqualifikationen dringend erforderlich sind“²⁷ (Policy Maker 5: 28).

According to Policy Maker 5 economic aspects are also considerable as motives. Government expenditures could be reduced and vocational schools as well as vocational colleges released from deficits in their teaching capacity, since time spent in school-based courses is likely to go down.

„Dieses System müssen wir systematisieren, auf die Berufe anpassen und eine neue Finanzierungsregelung finden. Der monetäre Aufwand, den das Land für die Berufsschulen und Berufskollegs hat, sollte effizienter eingesetzt werden, um kürzere Ausbildungszeiten, eine bessere Qualifizierung und einen höheren Anteil von jungen Leuten, die gleich in die Ausbildung münden, zu erzielen“²⁸ (Policy Maker 5: 52; see also VET Programme Manager 2: 46).

Hence, it becomes obvious that there is a variety of political motives supported by economic and financial considerations.

On the other side, there are also seem to be genuinely pedagogical motivations when it comes to the concept of HQs.

Pedagogical motivational structures

Concerning pedagogical motivations for a strengthened implementation of HQs, stakeholders point to three different aspects.

Firstly, when thinking of HQs Policy Maker 1 mentions new ways to discover and promote new talents among young people (Policy Maker 1: 50). Secondly, VET Programme Manager 1 emphasizes the psychology of learning for pupils. In his view, pupils are far better motivated if they do not have to learn professional contents several times in different school types they attend in order to raise their qualification status, instead of only once in one vocational course with an incorporated HQ. (VET Programme Manager 1: 98). Thirdly, due to demographic change adolescents should be better educated in principal as companies in their applicant selection will have more difficulties in comparison to former times (Hybrid Teacher: 134). Hybrid Teacher cites this argument in favour of a strengthened implementation of HQs. It illustrates that pedagogical and economic motives can go hand in hand.

²⁷ “Within the discussion about the European Qualifications Framework, our vocational training system will not be able to persist. One more reason why hybrid qualifications are urgently needed.”

²⁸ “This system has to be systemized and adjusted to the occupations. Besides new financial arrangements have to be found. The government expenditures for vocational schools and colleges also ought to be spent more efficiently for shorter training periods, better skills and a higher percentage of adolescents who directly start their training course.”

4.2 Demand situation regarding HQs in Germany

All in all it can be ascertained that stakeholders evaluate the demand on the side of adolescents with HQs much higher than the demand coming from companies.

Demand from companies

It seems clear that the number of applicants is likely to decrease due to demographic changes. This development will increase the challenges for companies to provide more attractive learning opportunities for adolescents. It is for this reason that companies are, in contrast to the past, no longer sceptical about HQs (Policy Maker 3: 82; Social Partner 6: 55). Therefore, from the point of view of Policy Maker 3, HQs should be an integral part of human resources development in companies (Policy Maker 3: 82).

However, Policy Maker 1 and 2 are of the opinion that there is no clear demand from companies, since they prefer dual vocational training for demographic and economic reasons. However, they seem to be conscious of the competence advantages among young people with HQs:

„[...] abnehmendes Bevölkerungswachstum, eine demographische Lücke, in manchen Branchen bereits Fachkräftemangel [...]. Neben diesen Rahmenbedingungen spielen auch ökonomische Gründe eine Rolle, warum Unternehmen sehr gut vorqualifizierte Jugendliche in Ausbildungskontexten ans Unternehmen binden und sie nicht als fertig ausgebildete Mitarbeiter einstellen wollen. Die Unternehmen stehen Doppelqualifikationen deshalb meiner Meinung nach eher ablehnend gegenüber, wenngleich sie sich des höheren Kompetenzniveaus dieser Bildungsgänge im Vergleich zum klassischen Abitur bewusst sind“²⁹ (Policy Maker 2: 84; see also Policy Maker 1: 62).

Demand from adolescents

Many interview partners speak out that they think there is a strong and visible demand on the side of adolescents for HQs.

„Wenn es integrativ angeboten wird, wird die Nachfrage, glaube ich, sehr groß sein“³⁰ (Policy Maker 5: 40; see also Hybrid Trainer: 92; Policy Maker 1: 73; Policy Maker 3: 87; Social Partner 6: 55; VET Programme Manager 2: 74).

VET Programme Manager 2 speaks of an articulation of interest among nearly 50% of respondents in a recently conducted survey. Accordingly, the main problem seems to be the companies since they are not willing to offer HQs (VET Programme Manager 2: 74).

²⁹ “[...]decreasing population growth, a demographic gap, in some sectors already lack of professionals [...]. Besides these factors, economic aspects are a reason why companies prefer binding well-qualified adolescents in courses of dual training to them instead of hiring trained graduates. In my opinion, the companies are rather opposed to hybrid qualifications, although they are aware of the higher competence level in these courses in comparison to the traditional Abitur (A-levels).”

³⁰ “In my view, the demand will be high, if it is offered in an integrative form.”

„Die Berufswahlentscheidung ist aufgrund vieler Wahlmöglichkeiten komplizierter geworden. Hybridmodelle erleichtern diesbezüglich die Entscheidung, da sie flexiblere Lebens-, Berufs- und Karriereplanungen erlauben“³¹ (Social Partner 6: 55).

Social Partner 2 foresees increasing demand especially for type 2. However, HQs need to be marketed and supported by an adequate information policy (Social Partner 2: 56). University Professor 2 points out the correlation between demand for HQs and the economic environment in which companies, young people and the VET system operate.

„Während einer Rezession wäre das aus Sicht der Jugendlichen wahrscheinlich eine tragfähige Option, um ihre Employability zu vergrößern. In wirtschaftlichen Boomphasen ist dagegen, bei einer relativ großen Auswahl an attraktiven Alternativangeboten ohne Fachhochschulabschluss, die Bereitschaft vermutlich etwas gedämpfter“³² (University Professor 2: 38).

The positions of Policy Maker 1 and Social Partner 4 on this are different. Both estimate the demand for HQs from adolescents to be very small. Policy Maker 1 justifies it by saying that *„the existing opportunities are efficient as well as expedient“* (Policy Maker 1: 131). For Social Partner 4 it is clear that because of *„demographic change and the stronger urge to attend university without deviation, there is no excess supply of apprentices that has to be compensated by a significantly increased full-time in-school training“* (Social Partner 4: 131). Also, Social Partner 3 and University Professor 1 argue that there are no empirical studies with regard to the demand for HQs. Therefore there seems to be need for research (Social Partner 3: 46; University Professor: 59).

Closely related to the questions concerning the demand for HQs one has to consider also the level of awareness of HQs in Germany.

4.3 Level of awareness of HQs in Germany

Concerning the level of awareness of HQs stakeholders knew various definitions regarding the different types although all of them received a detailed overview prior to the interview. Only three interview partners knew all four types (Hybrid Teacher: 26; Policy Maker 2: 34; Social Partner 1: 45).

³¹ *“Because of a variety of options, job decision-making has become more complicated. Regarding this, hybrid models make the decision easier since flexible life, job as well as career planning are possible.”*

³² *“During a recession it would probably be a viable option to increase their employability. However, in economic boom periods, when the choice between attractive alternative offers without polytechnic entrance qualification is large, the willingness is probably less intense.”*

It is obvious that type 1 “Vocational qualification according to the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO)³³ + acquisition of the general qualification for university entrance (Abitur)” was often unknown among stakeholders (Hybrid Trainer: 26; Policy Maker 1: 30; Policy Maker 5: 22; Social Partner 5: 35; University Professor 2: 20; VET Programme Manager 1: 26). In contrast, type 2 “Vocational qualification according to the BBiG or the HwO + acquisition of the polytechnic entrance qualification” is widely known and according to the stakeholders “most intensively in the discussion” in Germany (Social Partner 6: 18; see also Policy Maker 5: 22; Social Partner 5: 34; VET Programme Manager 1: 26; VET Programme Manager 2: 33).

Similarly, type 4 “Vocational qualification according to federal state law + acquisition of the polytechnic entrance qualification” is more strongly apprehended than type 3 “Vocational qualification according to federal state law + acquisition of the general qualification for university entrance (Abitur)”. Some interview partners even have never come across type 3 of HQs (Hybrid Trainer: 28; Social Partner 5: 37; Social Partner 6: 26; University Professor 1: 34). In contrast, quite a number of stakeholders know type 4 and believe that this type is wide-spread in Germany.

„Typ 4 – davon gibt es sehr viel mehr Beispiele, also ich denke mal in jedem Bundesland“³⁴ (University Professor 1: 34; see also Policy Maker 1: 30; Social Partner 5: 34; Social Partner 6: 29; VET Programme Manager 1: 26; VET Programme Manager 2: 33).

In addition to the aspect of awareness of HQs the following part will come up with further statements by stakeholders concerning the question why specific types of HQs have become well-established compared to others.

According to Social Partner 4 one explanation could be traditional and structural peculiarities of each federal state. In this context type 4 is regarded as the type of an HQ with the most long-standing tradition, and also with both political and pedagogical relevance.

„[...] die Fachhochschulen rekrutieren im Vergleich zu den Universitäten relativ wenige Abiturienten und der Anteil derjenigen, die schon eine berufliche Qualifikation erworben haben, ist hoch“³⁵ (Social Partner 4: 103).

³³ Vocational qualifications recognised under the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO) (according to federal law) are typically awarded within the dual system.

³⁴ “Type 4 – there are many more examples of these in Germany, I guess in each federal state.”

³⁵ “Compared to universities polytechnics recruit relatively few numbers of school graduates with university-entrance qualification and the percentage of those having already work experience is extraordinarily high.”

4.4 Target groups/users of HQs

The major target group for HQs are students with an intermediate school leaving certificate, i.e. either from an intermediate secondary school or a full-time vocational school not delivering a full vocational qualification (Policy Maker 3: 88; Social Partner 1: 262; Social Partner 4: 198; Social Partner 5: 117; Social Partner 6: 38; VET Programme Manager 2: 70). Obviously, in the perception of stakeholders, some of these HQs focus on high-performance students with an intermediate school leaving certificate:

*„Leistungsstarke Realschüler sind sicherlich die Attraktivsten. Leistungsstarke Realschüler, die schon am Beginn ihrer Ausbildung bzw. vor Aufnahme ihrer Ausbildung die Hochschule in Erwägung ziehen [...]“*³⁶ (Social Partner 4: 198; see also Policy Maker 3: 88; Social Partner 6: 38).

Social Partner 2 draws a distinction between short-term and long-term target groups:

*„Kurzfristig sind es die, die vielleicht später als die anderen merken, ich möchte auch mal studieren, jetzt bin ich in der Berufsausbildung und dann auch sagen können, jetzt habe ich eine Chance, das noch zu machen“*³⁷ (Social Partner 2: 163).

The long-term target group in his eyes would comprise students who have so far aspired to attain a university entrance qualification (*Abitur*) in general education. However, reaching this clientele would certainly require that students get enough information and counselling so that they adequately know about this HQ option in the VET sector before entering the “academic track”(Social Partner 2: 163).

At this point further characteristics of the target groups of HQs will be given attention. The interview partners have different perceptions and opinions concerning these characteristics. On the one hand, some consider HQs to be suitable for students who have failed in a general higher secondary school (Policy Maker 2: 138; VET Programme Manager 2: 188). Others focus on the importance of commitment and mental maturity which students have to bring along when participating in a HQ programme (Social Partner 6: 57; VET Programme Manager 2: 188).

Policy Maker 4 thinks that the target group of HQs “*is located in such occupational areas, in which such ideas are not common yet*” (Policy Maker 4: 154). Social Partner 5 adds to this

³⁶ “High-performance pupils with intermediate school leaving certificate are the most attractive ones. Those who already consider a course of studies at a university or polytechnic before they finish their apprenticeship.”

³⁷ “Short-term meaning those students who haven’t thought about studying earlier and therefore now undergo an apprenticeship and meanwhile notice that they would rather like to study as well at a university or polytechnic. They often think that this now would be a chance for them.”

aspect by stating that he thinks of the more demanding and challenging occupations as a field of implementation (Social Partner 5: 116) while Hybrid Teachers regard the following target groups as mostly relevant, i.e. those with management ambitions in companies:

„Für alle, die sich weiterbilden wollen und die sich weiterbringen lassen wollen und die auch Führungsverantwortung übernehmen wollen in Unternehmen, egal wo sie stehen“³⁸ (Hybrid Teacher: 147).

University Professor 2 has a more differentiated view of the requirements which potential HQ students must fulfill:

„Es sind sicherlich nicht die, die sich im Moment im Übergangssystem befinden. Also denen man vermeintlich fehlende Ausbildungsreife zuschreibt. Es sind wahrscheinlich eher Jugendliche, die über eine berufsnahe Ausbildung ihre Kompetenzpotentiale besser entfalten können als über eine vielleicht übermäßig akademisch orientierte Allgemeinbildung“³⁹ (University Professor 2: 97).

To sum up this chapter, it may be said that the interviews have not only revealed the different values granted to or associated with HQs but also quite interesting examples of disagreement on the fact for whom these qualifications are suitable.

³⁸ “Everyone who wants to further educate himself/herself or who wants to increase his/her managerial responsibility regardless of his/her actual position.”

³⁹ “Students in the transition system often regarded as those with a lack of apprenticeship entry maturity are unlikely to be part of the target group. Rather those who can develop their competences better in a job-related apprenticeship than in an academic environment.”

Chapters 5 and 6

Our project was set out with the intention, besides delivering a European survey of current practice in the field of hybrid qualifications, to investigate and clarify, through an empirical approach, perceptions of learners, employers and lecturers concerning the nature and value of these qualifications. The final aim has been to develop recommendations for policy and practice based on our research outcomes. One “guideline” for the pragmatic dimension of the project lies in the identification of “best practice” in one or more of the participating countries. Based on the results of the first country reports, but above all of the second ones, of which one is presented here, we now try to point to implications and messages for the responsible actors in the field of educational policy. Any “innovation transfer” using experiences with hybrid qualifications, has inevitably to refer to “best-practice-approaches“. Two reservations, however, remain: First, the adaptation of the premises of the European Qualifications Framework, from which our project topic has emerged, can be largely different between countries, even between those with similar VET traditions; second, the fact that hybridity works (well) and fits into the “landscape” of a national education and training system is always dependent on the “environment” of the respective country, both socially, politically and economically, even if pedagogical arguments (progression, individual development, career formation) are considered in favour of hybrid qualifications or related concepts in a more or less common understanding.

5. Policy Implications / Policy Recommendations

Policy implications / policy recommendations deriving from our research findings point, for the German case, to the following aspects, which can also be seen as virulent “building sites” for the VET system in this country:

- Equivalence of vocational and general education as a basic prerequisite for hybridity
- Integration of hybridity without widening the length of study or courses
- Preserving the qualification function of apprenticeship training when combining qualifications for the labour market and entitlements for higher education
- Strengthening the qualification character of full-time training courses as a prerequisite for the implementation of hybridity
- Early start of hybridity through a general reform approach and systemic coordination and integration
- Improving transition between apprenticeship and higher education
- Convincing companies and adolescents of the high potential of hybrid qualifications
- Differentiation of hybrid qualifications instead of arbitrary generalisation

Equivalence of vocational and general education as a basic prerequisite for hybridity

In Germany, even if one considers the lively educational reform debate on this topic in the 1960s and 1970s, the traditional institutional separation of general and vocational education has always, mostly subjectively, been accompanied by a higher evaluation of general in relation to vocational education. *“The vocational training system is somehow regarded as second class”* and *“the person trained in a German high school apparently is seen as more ‘valuable’”* (Hybrid Teacher: 23; 122). This widespread assumption of disparity between the two sub-systems and the respective degrees has to be overcome and needs to be replaced by a consciousness of real equality. The majority of the interviewees regard this as a first and fundamental reform step for the vocational training system if hybrid qualifications were to be introduced (Policy Maker 2: 58, 120; see also Policy Maker 3: 94; Social Partner 2: 59; VET Programme Manager 1: 20). However, looking back into the history of education, this kind of equivalence appears as a major obstacle as it cannot be realised by simply introducing new courses, new qualifications and new curricula.

Against this background, the demand for a social consciousness of equivalence of vocational and general education has to be reflected in a didactical and curricular perspective and requires suitable standards for the competences that are needed for both spheres. Hence *“the*

competences which build up the maturity for a job in terms of an ability to study” (Policy Maker 2: 58) have to be discussed and defined on a curricular level. In this context uniformity is not supposed to be of higher value than similarity in terms of the highest possible convergence of the vocational curriculum and the curriculum of general education. It may be seen as an unchallenged fact that the competences acquired in vocational and general education courses respectively and the aims and contents for their didactical realisation can be thoroughly different. It is obvious that this is a problem which contains a kind of paradox since vocational competences are not automatically apt for being used in a higher education context normally served by the general education system.

Integration of hybridity without widening the length of study or courses

It is the demand for an integration of hybrid qualifications into apprenticeship programmes without increasing the underlying training periods which appears closely connected with the above-mentioned specification of “equivalence without uniformity” on the curricular level. To achieve this, two basic scenarios of realisation were mentioned by our stakeholder interviewees. One argument points out that this could become possible, *“if a university entrance certificate can be identified within the dual system without the requirement of additional general studies”* (Policy Maker 2: 122). This claim, however, implies complete equivalence of vocational and general contents. Other stakeholders consider this kind of identity between general and vocational education indeed as a fundamental basis for necessary reform steps, but on the curricular level they think more pragmatically: additional general contents need to be incorporated into the existing training schemes although this inevitably implies using additional *“time for study in the evening or at the weekends”* (Social Partner 1: 115; see also VET Programme Manager 2: 78; Hybrid Trainer: 74). According to this proposal, integration hereby means that general education has to be realised on top of vocational training and, despite the additional workload, approximation between the curricula of general and vocational education is seen as a prerequisite for hybridity.

Preserving the qualification function of apprenticeship training when combining qualifications for the labour market and entitlements

Apprenticeship in the dual system is virtually exclusively functional in relation to portable labour-market relevant qualifications that are both socially and economically accepted. If any option of additional general contents in vocational training courses were to be realised, it would be important that these contents *“do not compromise the value of the qualifying vocational degrees”*, since there is also a risk of a *“dilution of qualifying functions”* - for

instance due to a potentially decreasing “*share of in-company learning*” (*University Professor 1: 120*). In this context, scepticism among companies is being put forward as a major argument against hybrid qualifications – a facet which becomes understandable when looking to the German apprenticeship tradition, which has always kept the state’s responsibility and the didactical part of the vocational school in an inferior (though not unnecessary) function and position in relation to the workplace as a learning site.

Strengthening the qualification character of full-time training courses as a basic prerequisite for the implementation of hybridity

Against the background of the company-related and overtly functional character of the dual system it seems important - especially in the German context - to position hybrid qualifications not only in relation to apprenticeship with the aim to realise an additional function in terms of entitlements towards higher education. Besides an attainment of a university entrance certificate in the dual system, the idea of hybrid qualifications should also consider full-time, i.e. school-based training courses. In contrast to dual training courses, in full-time VET in Germany “*the training function is denied to a large extent*” (*Hybrid Trainer: 164; see also Social Partner 4: 99; University Professor 1: 69*). Instead, the “*function to create an educational entitlement (Berechtigungsfunktion) is in the foreground*” (*Hybrid Trainer: 164*). Besides the interests of employers to prevent the development of a “*competitive system of qualifications*” (*Social Partner 4: 99*), this result of our research is also due to “*the resistance of vocational schools against being under the thumb of too strong influence from enterprises*” (*University Professor 2: 45*).

In order to increase the value of qualifications in full-time vocational schools, it might be considered important to enhance “*the practical relevance*” (*VET Programme Manager 2: 111*) of these courses (e.g. the vocational colleges). This would certainly lead to some kind of convergence towards what practical, workplace training in the dual system distinguishes from school-based vocational learning. To create an environment for combined learning in theory and practice, it seems necessary to equip full-time schools with “*modern technology and good workshops*” (*Social Partner 2: 128*) and/or to offer systematic internships in terms of alternating course structures (*Social Partner 2: 128; see also VET Programme Manager 2: 111*). While so far dual vocational training and studying towards a university (or polytechnic) entrance certificate through a vocational full-time course have been detached from each other, an integration of skill formation on the one hand, and the aspiration towards an entitlement for higher education on the other, in both vocational sub-systems (apprenticeship training and vocational full-time schools) would be a step to bring about equality of esteem between the

two markedly segregated areas of learning. As shown, this would require serious and far-reaching reform measures with respect to both sub-systems which currently seems rather unlikely.

Early start of hybridity through a general reform approach and systemic coordination and integration

As both in the VET system and between vocational education and higher education clear borders exist, there is also a strong conviction that (pre-vocational) school education has to support the competence basis for subsequent courses. One effect is that teachers in vocational full-time schools often “*conceive themselves as a kind of repair system for the failures of schools for general education*” (Social Partner 2: 17). Consequently it appears necessary that “*the development of students’ skills should start in time*” (Social Partner 2: 155). Thus hybrid qualifications require an implementation which is not isolated. A systemic reform is required, also setting in on previous and parallel sub-systems such as the lower and intermediate secondary school system (10-16) and the so-called “transition system”. It could help to increase the competences of young people before they pass over to the dual system or full-time, i.e. school-based training courses. Therefore, one recommendation for action in this context is the implementation of hybrid qualifications within an “*extensive educational reform*” (Social Partner 2: 155).

Improving transition between apprenticeship and higher education

For the purpose of making transition between vocational education and scientific work at university smoother and, at the same time, maintaining quality standards of and in universities in the long run, “*courses with a bridging/transition function (‘Brückenkurse’)*” are regarded as one crucial step (Policy Maker 3: 45; see also Policy Maker 5: 34; Social Partner 4: 10; University Rectors Conference: 27, 31). With these courses “*a compensation of missed contents in apprenticeships is intended by the help of universities or in cooperation between universities and vocational educational institutions*” (University Rectors Conference: 27). However, it also seems conceivable to implement these courses into an existing curriculum and thus “*to extend the curriculum for hybrid qualifications by the development of the ability to study (‘Hochschulreife’)*” (Social Partner 3: 74).

Furthermore, overcoming what may be called the “jungle” of various measures for individual progression, assisted studies could contribute to a successful transition from apprenticeship into polytechnic or university education with a hybrid qualification. The question is “*which support exactly young people need who find their way to university via apprenticeship*”

training and the field of vocational practice” (VET Programme Manager 1: 42). Such a support could be provided by individual assistants. In Germany their work is already part of the public debate as there is a major need to help and monitor young people in the “transition system” who are not completely mature to start an apprenticeship but who strive for apprenticeship training (VET Programme Manager 1: 42).

Convincing companies and adolescents of the high potential of hybrid qualifications

Because policy-makers in Germany are not getting tired of claiming that the apprenticeship system has to be strengthened, while at the same time insisting that progression into higher education ought to be pushed, the "multi-functionality" of vocational schools in general has to be seen in a new light. As their function at the moment seems to be strongly linked to entry into further or higher education through specific entitlements rather than to the purpose of delivering labour market qualifications, hybridity here could open up new ways of thinking and also potential reform steps. However, with respect to full-time vocational education, research has shown that with regard to these schools, which already offer hybrid qualifications (especially towards polytechnic studies), companies have steadily denied the value of these qualifications being at par with the dual system.

First, the target group of potential graduates of double qualifying degrees “*should be convinced of the [double qualification] [...] as a highly potential and sustainable option*” (University Professor 2: 48). Second, it seems even more important (as the first aspect conditions the second one substantially) to convince companies by helping them to reduce their reservations. Due to the increasing “need for skilled personnel” it seems obvious though not completely clear that hybridity lies in their interest to advance strong learners to proceed to university after their apprenticeship. Hereby, it is held important “*to convince the companies of the fact that the advantages will prevail their efforts*” (VET Manager 2: 78). However, it is not only necessary to convince companies of the long-term potential and the positive effects of higher qualifications, but “*to develop framework conditions to keep trainees in their companies [after their studies at university]*” (Social Partner 5: 80; University Professor 2: 48).

Differentiation of hybrid qualifications instead of arbitrary generalisation

Due to the existing “wide spectrum” of occupations in the German apprenticeship system, spreading from high-level and well-reputed “skilled occupations” such as the “banking clerk” to more practical trades such as the “building cleaner”, hybrid qualifications should only be introduced in a differentiated way (University Professor 2: 25). One criterion for the decision

whether a hybrid qualification could be implemented into an existing training scheme could be “a high affinity to corresponding courses of studies”. For example, as one stakeholder maintains, *“in commercial occupations hybrid qualifications are more likely to be implemented because of the huge field of bachelor courses (business and economics) in higher education which came into consideration recently”* (University Professor 2: 25). Furthermore the criterion of complexity should be taken into account which *“would make a hybrid qualification conceivable in demanding technical (dual system) occupations such as the electrician”* (University Professor 2: 25).

6. Best Practices – opportunities for learning from other countries?

As to the identification of best-practice approaches using hybrid qualifications, there are clear indicators that the Austrian system of VET typifies this approach. The full-time VET system in Austria is commonly described as quite successful and functional compared to the German one (*Deißinger 2010b*). It is as strong as his “competitor”, the dual apprenticeship system (*Aff 2006, p.19*). Generally, there are three different ways to graduate in the VET system in Austria. Firstly, through the dual system, secondly, by attending a vocational middle school (BMS), and last but not least, through a vocational high school (BHS), which is normally either a Technical High School or a Commercial High School. The general higher education entrance qualification can be gained either in an upper secondary school (AHS) or in a vocational high school (see also First Country Report Austria).

Therefore, Austria is one of the countries in Europe that already offer educational pathways which produce double qualifications within a still strongly differentiated educational system. They teach full applicable professional qualifications. This is the reason why the VET system, being a so called “two-pillar-model”, comes into focus as a “best-practice” example. In contrast, full-time vocational schools in Germany are held in low esteem (*Deißinger 2010b; Deißinger/Ruf 2006; 2007*), and they normally only qualify for entrance into a polytechnic (see also First Country Report Germany). Two traits, however, are common in the two German-speaking countries: the apprenticeship system (dual system) is more or less apart when it comes to progression to higher education, although in Austria the system is more open than in Germany.

In the following, we will pick up the statements of those German stakeholders who have referred to the Austrian VET system in the interviews. Hereby, it needs to be said that most of the stakeholders who were interviewed only possess knowledge of a general outline of the Austrian system.

6.1 Positive facets of the Austrian VET system from the perspective of German stakeholders

Availability of hybrid qualifications in full-time vocational schools which are portable on the labour market.

From a German perspective, the analysis of the Austrian VET system and its educational pathways is valuable for many reasons. In contrast to the German education system, the attractiveness and success of Austrian vocational full-time schools clearly stand out. Austria

demonstrates that offering a fully applicable hybrid qualification, even within a strongly differentiated education system, gives benefit to all educational pathways. It seems to be overtly relevant to point out that Austrian vocational qualifications outside the dual system are portable on the labour market, i.e. widely acknowledged and valued by companies, which renders (even) the lower vocational full-time pathway the quality of a real and viable (and mostly even better) alternative to the apprenticeship system, even if the occupational areas in full-time VET are generally less specific than, e.g., those in the craft sector where apprenticeships, even in Austria, are still quite widely used as pathways of initial skill formation and companies have a major interest and say.

Therefore, it may be generally claimed that vocational full-time schools which provide vocational qualifications – and not primarily entitlements - are held in high esteem in Austria. In Germany, vocational pathways in the full-time school system usually lead to an entitlement for studying at university or polytechnic while vocational qualifications, such as the “assistant” (Assistant), (if at all) are not sought after on the labour market. The advantage of the Austrian system seems to be that the middle and higher strands of VET in schools are in a parallel and complementary relationship to the dual system. Their qualifications and titles of qualifications are held in high esteem both socially as well as economically (*Rechberger 2010; Heffeter et al. 2009; Aff/Dorninger 2008, S.15; Aff 2006b, p. 19*).

The German stakeholders who were interviewed are of the opinion that the aspect of appreciation and estimation is a beneficial and highly relevant issue which means that they think that aspects of the Austrian system could be copied, or at least seriously looked at, in the case of Germany. Within the discussion circling around a new understanding of VET in a modern world, the first important step appears to raise the value of full-time vocational training:

*“Die Österreicher machen das auch sehr gut, finde ich. Es braucht eine gesellschaftliche Verständigung darüber, dass diese Gleichwertigkeiten und diese Anerkennung funktioniert. Das haben wir in Deutschland leider nicht geschafft. Da stehen wir noch vor einer großen Aufgabe“ (Policy Maker 5: 63).*⁴⁰

Stakeholders who pick up this aspect, however, are aware that the „reputation” of any vocational qualification, including apprenticeship occupations, depends on the „acceptance of the economy”, “where each assistant qualification has to receive response from the economy, the employment system, in order to be estimated” (*University Professor 2: 60*). It appears that the challenge for Germany, by learning from the Austrian system, reads as follows: “We have

⁴⁰ „I think the Austrians are doing a good job. It is necessary to have a social agreement to achieve equivalence and appreciation. We have so far failed in Germany. We still face a huge challenge.”

to develop full-time qualifications, which are also demanded on the labour market.” With regard to the issue “*what practice demands and what the requirements are*” (Social Partner 5: 96) stakeholders state that a close discourse within educational policy, including academics, representatives from companies and chambers, as well as trade unions, seems inevitable. Otherwise, the “dominance” of the dual system in Germany (Deißinger/Heine/Ott 2011) will continue undermining the educational as well as the labour market function of full-time VET.

Promotion of lifelong learning

Furthermore, according to the concept of “lifelong learning” there are advantages on the basis of the Austrian system and its hybrid options and opportunities with respect to “*the transition of adolescents at the first barrier from school education into VET. There are alternative but equivalent pathways, each of them utterly attractive and leading to interesting career options and development potentialities*“ (University Professor 1: 90). In coherence with this aspect, there seems to exist another advantage for adolescents who are still undecided concerning their vocational choice. Uncertain adolescents who do not yet know whether they prefer to study get a chance, via additional qualifications such as the polytechnic entrance qualification, the subject-linked university entrance qualification or by mastering the (full) higher education qualification certificate, to postpone their decision into the future. The idea of hybrid qualifications in Austria obviously stands in an apodictic harmony with the concept of “lifelong learning”. However, it needs to be said that these opportunities also exist in the German system although, as mentioned above, the narrow link with a labour market related qualification normally does not exist.

Stronger differentiation of training schemes

Furthermore, an orientation towards the Austrian two-pillar model could lead to a stronger differentiation within VET with respect to curricula, i.e. to a clearer and more visible distinction between more theoretical courses on the one hand – requiring school-based learning and knowledge-based instruction to a large extent – and practically orientated apprenticeship programmes – using the workplace as the major learning site – on the other:

[...] weil die innere Differenziertheit der 350 Ausbildungsberufe zu sehen ist. Da gibt es solche, die werden in schulischen Kontexten wahrscheinlich sehr viel besser ausgebildet als in betrieblichen Kontexten. Umgekehrt gibt es vielleicht auch solche Berufe, da braucht es vielleicht noch nicht mal 1,5 Berufsschultage,

*meines Erachtens auch nicht immer 3 Ausbildungsjahre, das könnte man viel besser straffen“ (University Professor 2: 68).*⁴¹

However, this differentiation involves the danger of „parcelling” the apprenticeship training, as one of the facets of the German system is the unquestioned formal equivalence of occupations trained on the basis of the Vocational Training Act (*Deißinger 1996*). Furthermore, the rejection of most social partners concerning the modularisation of vocational training in general, and apprenticeship schemes in particular, is closely connected with this issue. The “vocational principle”, determining Germany’s “apprenticeship culture” (*Deißinger 2004*) hereby still may be seen as the most relevant stabilising parameter within the VET system.

6.2 Critical point of views with respect to the Austrian VET system from the perspective of German stakeholders

Trust in a well-established vocational training tradition-based on the apprenticeship principle

Some of the German stakeholders do not agree with the opinion that the Austrian model is “best practice” in the first place and therefore could be used as a blueprint for reforming Germany’s VET system. Some respondents mention the loss of practical relevance within a school-based vocational training environment. This means insufficient employability orientation and lack of employability skills which are seen as disadvantages. Full-time courses are associated with the flaw that they bear the danger of reducing the applicability of competences on the labour market (Policy Maker 1: 106, 108; Social Partner 1: 216; Social Partner 4: 110; University Professor 2: 62). The interviewees who hold this view are convinced that *“adolescents, who get their training in a school need a longer period of vocational adjustment to reach the level of competences and employability skills than other adolescents who have undertaken training in the dual system” (Social Partner 1: 216).*

In this context, a counter argument points to the pedagogical insight that vocational employability orientation and employability skills undoubtedly can be delivered and gained beyond a “realistic” vocational context, however with the help of curricular adjustments. *“The Austrian system shows that it is not necessary to be educated either within the dual system or*

⁴¹ “[...] the interior differentiation of the 350 VET occupations is evident. On the one hand, there are some which are better learnt in a school than within an apprenticeship context. On the other hand, we also have VET occupations where even 1.5 days of vocational part-time schooling are not necessary, in my opinion not even three years of apprenticeship training. It could be more tightened. “

in full-time VET. There are different ways to reach the goal. This is inconsistent with the often found ideological discussion in Germany” (University Professor 2: 62).

In contrast to this kind of thinking, which is pedagogically and didactically motivated, employers’ associations, chambers and training companies fear an increasing influence of the state within the system of VET, and they also maintain that there is a real danger that training courses might be artificially prolonged (Policy Maker 1: 108). The political aim to preserve the traditional regulation power within the traditional system of “self-administration” and the belief that workplaces are the “right” places for learning, hereby merge into one argument, which still may be seen as one of the most stable paradigms within Germany’s VET debate.

6.3 Conclusion

Our suggestion for the German case is that a strong apprenticeship system makes it more difficult to adopt an European approach envisaging a more “open” VET system, with links to other educational sub-systems including higher education. As we have picked up the issues of “hybridity” (in particular with respect to the Austrian VET system) and also “diversification”, we have tried to show that both issues, in political and practical terms, are obviously rather underrepresented in the German VET context. It is interesting that Austria, as one of the traditional “apprenticeship countries” in Europe, but also France, as a typical “school model”, have implemented “European tools” in their respective VET systems (*Deißinger/Heine/Ott 2011*). Although the issue remains open whether this is really due to the European VET agenda, other countries appear to be more “prepared” than Germany. German VET policy might be well advised to look to its neighbouring countries not just for “European” reasons, but also because the “construction sites” in both the education and VET systems certainly would justify a more flexible and positive approach towards the European philosophy as VET in schools undoubtedly needs to become a central issue of the national VET policy debate. Hybridity can be seen as one tool to make VET systems more flexible, open borders between institutions and responsibilities and help young people to define their individual pathways into and beyond a vocational career. At the same time, it could also help to cope with the increasing challenges of demographic change and could also serve official government policy by “bringing” more young people into higher education. It becomes clear that our topic therefore has not just a pedagogical relevance, but also a social and economic one in the context of the current modernisation debate.

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