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What Makes the Dual System to a Dual System? A New Attempt to Define VET through a Governance Approach

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In the field of international comparative education, there is a broadly shared view that Germany and German-speaking countries differ much from other national systems for Vocational Education and Training (VET). The core of this difference is seen in the organisation in teaching and learning in at least two sites of learning: school and workplace. In the last decade this so-called “German model“ gained some recognition among policy-makers in relation to key figures in education and economy: low unemployment rates for youngsters in addition to an educated and broadly qualified workforce guarantee access to the labour market and offer good career prospects. This article argues, however, referring to the Swiss case of VET, that the specific form of organisation of the workplace element itself is not crucial for a successful system but the political mechanisms within a nation, which include different agents’ perspectives.

Was macht das duale System zum dualen System? Ein erneuter Versuch, Berufsbildung über einen „Governance“-Ansatz zu bestimmen.

In der vergleichenden Bildungsforschung besteht die überwiegende Ansicht, dass Deutschland und deutschsprachige Länder und Regionen sich stark von anderen nationalen Berufsbildungssystemen unterscheiden. Als zentrales Unterscheidungsmerkmal wird hierbei auf die Organisation des Lernens, bzw. die zwei Lernorte Schule und Betrieb verwiesen. Seit einigen Jahren genießt das deutsche Modell beruflicher Bildung unter Bildungspolitikern internationale Anerkennung und dies im Besonderen mit Bezug auf einige Schlüsseldaten wie vergleichsweise geringe Jugendarbeitslosigkeit und reibungslosere Übergänge in die Arbeitswelt, dank breiter Qualifizierung, die zudem auch gute Karriere- und Weiterbildungsmöglichkeiten eröffne.

Dieser Beitrag argumentiert mit Bezug auf verschiedene Governance-Ansätze und einer besonderen Hervorhebung der dualen Berufsbildung in der Schweiz als Fall, dass weniger die spezifische Organisation der Lernorte, als vielmehr die jeweiligen nationalen bildungspolitischen Mechanismen, welche die unterschiedlichen Akteure und ihre Gestaltungsinteressen einbeziehen, entscheidend dafür sind, dass ein duales Berufsbildungssystem erfolgreich sich behauptet und sich weiterentwickelt.

What Makes the Dual System to a Dual System? A New Attempt to Define VET through a Governance Approach

1 VET Systems as National Systems in the Context of Modernization

VET is organized nationally. A national regime, as for other fields of education like general and higher education, more or less provides a framework for VET provision. The argument that a work-based or work-related education is nearly uncontested, as it is organized in the German model, is in a much better position than a centralized and rationally planned education system, which only includes vocational education as a part of school-based learning. The overall critical statement is that such a school-dominated model is far away from the needs of business, industry and also from a not-to-be-neglected portion of youth, who are “tired” of classroom-based schooling.

That is why the German-based “Dual system“ is also called “apprenticeship system“ due to the fact that youngsters spend most of their education in the workplace and are treated in companies as young workers, not students, who have to be trained for practical work and need to acquire skills. The term apprenticeship alludes to the tradition of learning a vocation.

However, VET in the German-speaking countries is quite different from the rest of the education system; nevertheless, it is linked to a national educational framework. Due to the public regulation of schooling and work-based learning as well as bridges between the different paths of education, the dual system plays an important role. This kind of integrative socialisation into the world of work, as it is established with an apprenticeship approach, was, for a long period, the only way to learn a profession. It was the rise of a school system itself which changed this kind of vocational education in 19th century. Most nations knew this system previously but have lost this basis.

This gives rise to the pivotal question of how countries like Austria, Germany and Switzerland could keep this tradition and achieve such an outstanding status, which is now seen as an ideal model of VET. In mentioning these countries, it is underscored that nations are decisive for a VET system; and, this is indeed crucial.

The mark of VET systems is, so to say, not so much linked to the specific superficial structure of a more work-based VET but much more to the concept of stirring and governing education and VET. The VET systems differ not just by fostering different workplace settings but much more in the governance of VET.

The focus of this article is – as it is quite common in this field – a national perspective. That is why the nation state and national policy-makers are in the foreground. However, a multi-level analysis clarifies that local, federal, transnational and also global issues and players are quite crucial.

2 The Governance Perspective: Actors' Interests and VET

Tradition, market and hierarchy are the three modes Max Weber already identified in his “Herrschaftssoziologie“ (sociology of power) as crucial for governing society and economy. In so far as governance, also in VET, can be discerned as a tradition-based corporatist, a market-driven or a hierarchical-statist model. Former governance approaches focused – nearly exclusively on the state and the decision-making process, which normally included a top down and sometimes a bottom up direction. However, there is a way to more specifically identify how governance is working. Newer approaches look at the interdependency of various agents and how they coordinate in order to characterize a system and to find out how a system is functioning. So, it is not just the state, but a lot of further agents who shape a national system. It is through their object of regulation that they constitute themselves as a governing part in this interplay of different agents.

The overall aim and task for VET governance is to provide enough possibilities and places for education and training and to shape the profile of this supply for an adequate allocation (see Lassnigg 2000, 18).

Every national system has its own players who developed in their specific context. The core actors in the field of VET are the state, the interest groups and the students or apprentices, their teachers and masters. They are connected to each other. You can discern the state as one decisive agent who was responsible in establishing a modern VET system. Modernity comes into VET through laws, legislation and schools. In addition to the state (on a national and federal basis) there are interest groups, which try to guarantee the influence of its members in defining the goals and standards of VET and in supporting firms by providing VET offers. Business associations, interest groups of arts and crafts, employers and also employee groups, like unions, belong to these agents. A third part are the involved agents in the field itself: the enterprises and the apprentices or students.

We could insofar discern three levels: a macro-level, a micro-level and a meso-level. A VET regime is based on the interplay of all these elements: legislation organized by parties and run by state or local administrations, intermediate groups, which include mainly professional organisations and apprentices or parents as well as the firms. How these agents interact is very specific for every country and depends very much on the national policy culture.

3 Review of Existing Models of Discerning VET Systems

In the light of these general remarks on governance and VET, I will try to identify and explain now such a perspective related to VET. All concepts above are based on a comparative perspective. What I would like to explore in the following considerations is a review of models, which explain national differences in VET and VET policy. In these models, the element of governance is decisive. But governance itself is a multifaceted concept.

Wolf Dietrich Greinert has developed an appealing model which is still often referred to today, not only in the German debate but also in the international field of VET and the compar-

ative research sector (see e.g. Billett 2011). He strongly fosters the presence or absence of the state as a decisive part of discernment of VET systems. We have a French case, in which the state is not just defining the standards of VET but also organizing the system and, moreover, providing VET itself. This is, at minimum, the tradition or the concept underlying this position. England would be its counterpart because it is characterized by a low intervention in this field, again as it was minimally developed traditionally. A third model is the German model, which is between an interventionist and an absent state. In correspondence to these nation-based principles there are basic types of VET: a school model (France), a market model (England) and a German dual system (see Greinert 1988). Greinert has explored and specified his approach in later contributions. Most specified is his concept for the German case (Greinert 1993).

Thomas Deissinger shifts the focus of discerning types of VET more to the role of the interplay between statist organisation and professional associations, which results in an occupationally-based principle of qualification. “Beruflichkeit” (the concept of occupation or “Beruf”) defines a specific “qualification style” (Deissinger 1998). This intermediate exchange, represented and located quite often in chambers and specific sites of communication is lacking in France, which is why an occupationally-based style of qualification is much less developed. The antipode, however, is the modularized qualification approach, which was introduced in England first. It is much more oriented towards specific qualification needs of the firms and organized by the state or a central body mandated by the state. This leads to “functional” qualifications, which are not included in the broader concept of education. The concept of “Beruflichkeit” is decisive on a systemic level, as well as for schools and firms, and it also structures the didactics and methods of VET teaching and learning.

Philipp Gonons’ approach is more focused on the role of schooling related to the workplace and the state in different countries. The decision on how to relate the role of schools to the world of work has shaped national systems. Historically, France tried to eliminate the influence of trades in the field of Vocational Education. Schools were required to replace and organize VET on a higher level, which was called technical education. The scientific approach and the public had to play a decisive role and had to provide a rationally planned education for the needs of industry and economy, including civic education. The contrast of this concept is the American high school, which more or less excluded any vocational aspirations and was focused on civic education. Between these two models, the German way was a compromise, integrating occupational, scientific and civic needs. These models can be associated with prominent pedagogues: Diderot and Condorcet for France, Dewey for the US and Kerschensteiner for Germany (see Gonon 2009).

Felix Rauner and Wolfgang Wittig (2009) both stress a two-dimensional approach in their comparative study about VET governance in European and non-European countries. On the one hand the degree of fragmentation and coordination is decisive for flexibility and innovation of a national system, which depends on the possibility and grade of participation of different agents. On the other hand the systems are different, related towards a more input- or

output-oriented design. The authors assess – based on an expert-rating – the Danish system (besides the Swiss) as more innovative than others.

Hilary Steedmans’ view on different systems (2012) is focused on apprenticeship models and reform options and their position in different countries. She discerns more demand-oriented and more supply-oriented models. In her view, the German system is much more based on demand due to its tradition and weight in the field of education. Meanwhile, in England and other countries trying to reintroduce apprenticeships, the basis and the legitimation is weak and that is why the range of supporters is restricted, often based on the decisive role of statist agents.

One of the latest and most broadly developed approaches in the field of comparative research in VET are the studies of Trampusch 2014 and of Busemeyer and Trampusch and fellows (2012). A collectivist model of VET based on involvement of different agents, like the employers, the workers’ associations and interest groups from the field of education are embedded in a setting of rules, which also include social partnership and welfare. Not just an economic policy but also specific industry sectors like the metal industry and, moreover, the politics of wages in the labour market are important for VET systems (Trampusch 2014). Busemeyer and Trampusch discern two dimensions in their approach: nations with a high public investment and also a high firm involvement from others who are characterized by low investment and involvement in VET. Close to the variety of capitalism perspective, they distinguish liberal skill formations systems like those in the US from collective skill formation systems like those in Germany. In France and Sweden, on the other hand, there is obviously a high state commitment but a low firm involvement; meanwhile, other systems yield a high firm involvement and a low public commitment (Busemeyer/Trampusch 2012). In the following matrix these approaches are shown in an overview:

Table 1: Matrix of Criterion-based Perspectives on VET Systems

Author(s)	Perspective	Strong Shape (Example)	Middle Shape (Example)	Weak Shape (Example)
Deissinger	Occupation-Reference	Germany	France	England
Gonon	Work-State-School-Reference	France	Germany	USA
Greinert	State Intervention	France	Germany	England
Rauner & Wittig	Coordinated Output	Denmark	Germany	England
Steedman	Demand-Orientation	Germany	Austria	England
Trampusch, Busemeyer & Trampusch	Collective Skill Formation and Reference to the Welfare Regime	Germany	Switzerland	England

The matrix shows different attempts to identify core elements of different systems in order to gain a typology. They all stress a specific aspect and should not be seen as an exclusive alternative to all other approaches. By adding these different aspects, we get a picture about different types of VET. Moreover, the difference between strong and weak gives us hints as to how successfully a VET system is established in a country.

The different attempts include more than just a definition of the role of workplace learning. What is striking is that different perspectives yield similar categories and results. A strong occupationally-based orientation, strong links between school, work and civic education, a more interventionist as well as more coordinated approach, which is, moreover, based on demand-orientation and embedded in a welfare regime is a sign for a better-established VET system.

If we look at the unfolded examples, it is striking that strong countries related to several criteria for VET are most located in continental (or Northern) Europe, while a weak reference for occupations and work, as well as an insufficient collective and coordinated approach is typical of Anglo-Saxon countries.

A table combining (OECD-based) educational investment data with firm involvement in VET reveals similar connexions (Busemeyer/Iversen 2012, 219).

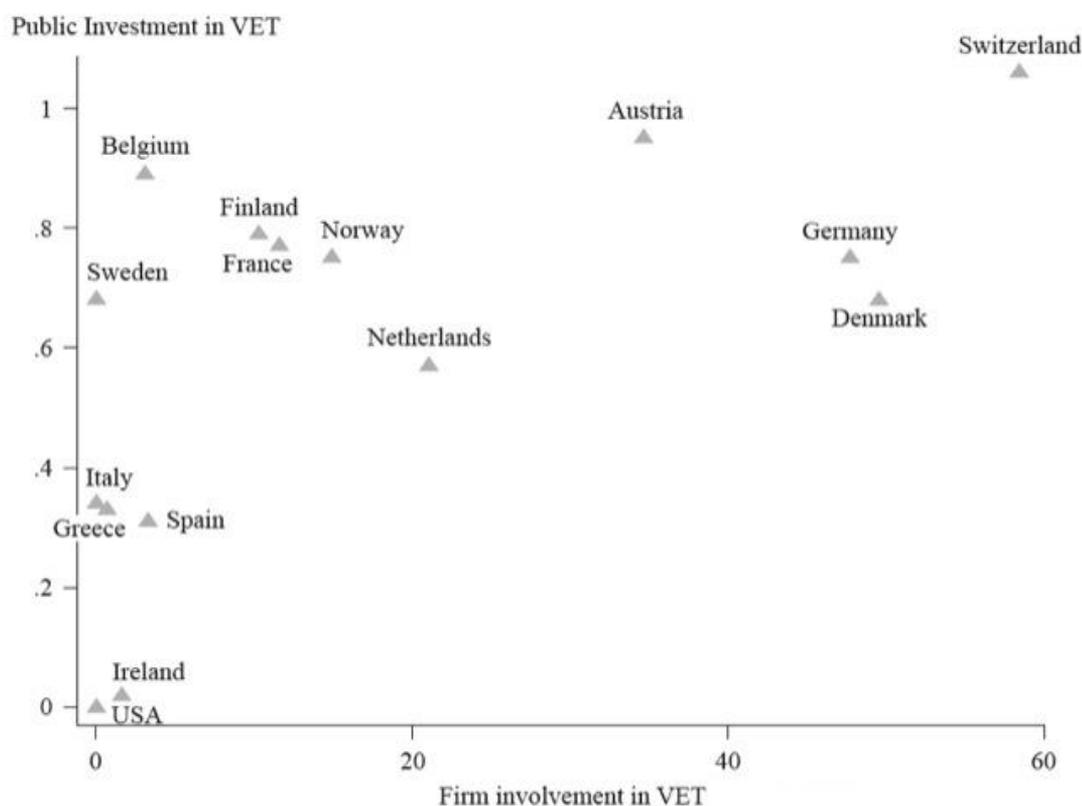


Figure 1: Public Investment and Firm Involvement in VET

Countries with a strong firm involvement and a high public investment are the “apprenticeship-countries” (the ones with a dual system) like Germany, Austria, Denmark and Switzerland. On the other side you find US and Ireland¹. Other mid- and northern European countries show a high public but much lower firm commitment. Meanwhile the southern European countries show a weak public and private engagement.

What has to be remarked as well is that the typologies provided by several authors are and have been challenged by other authors. Greinerts’ view on the dual system of vocational education and training and its typological profile in relation to other systems was debated in several contributions (see as one example Bank/Jongebloed 2007). The concept itself was a point of critique, insofar that it was not far reaching enough or its specific characterization of national systems was questioned (e. g. we can observe today that the English VET system has changed quite dramatically and is not at all anymore symptomatic for a liberal model, without state intervention (see Dolphin/Lanning 2011)). Likewise within the camp of authors referring to the Welfare State Studies with a specific focus on Varieties of Capitalism open questions, which are under review by different authors, remain. The privileged focus on firms is questioned as well as the underestimation of the role of other agents for VET, such as political parties. Moreover, the attribution of liberal or collectivist cases does not seem to be evident in any case and does not fit for some nations (see e.g. Busemeyer 2014).

It has to be stated that the above matrix of perspectives on VET systems does not include all topical approaches in the comparative field. Mainly the question if systems tend to merge or hybridize remains open. The view of policy borrowing, which is important in order to understand how systems emerged (see e.g. Phillips/Ochs 2003 and Gonon 2012) and the drift or trend towards convergence of systems in the light of globalisation (see Steiner-Khamsi 2012), is not explored in detail.

4 The Emergence of Switzerland’s VET: a case study

In the following part I will refer to the perspectives, derived from the different approaches shown in the matrix above, in order to define a typological profile. The case study is Switzerland and it will be shown that the rise of a VET system was driven by a diversity of actors who finally established a comprehensive model². This model is based on a national legislation (on a macro-level) and an occupational regime (meso-level), which provides apprenticeships. In addition, schools refer to these apprenticeships as well as other tasks. Finally, the system corresponds with a demand orientation from the youngsters and the firms (micro-level).

The systems of vocational education in continental Europe, England, the US and Russia were established in the course of the 20th century. The origin dates back to the time around 1870 and the First World War. Hereby, one important legitimation pushed by industrial associations and the state was a proper education system, which had to provide for the industrial

¹ England is not included in this picture, perhaps due to lacking data.

² For a detailed reconstruction of the development in the formative phase: see Berner et al. 2011

progress. The vocational education and training was a part of the “organised modernity”, as Peter Wagner named it, to meet the needs of mass education.

In Switzerland from the 1880s, schools and institutions, which could prove a vocational reference, were supported by the first amendments. Other important elements were the introduction of final examinations for vocational education and written apprenticeship contracts that were no longer simply between a certain association of the working sector, or the employing firm itself, and the apprentice, but under government supervision with legal requirements and with the participation of representatives of schools in final examinations.

Exactly this regulation shows how different actors, like the state, the associations, which were dominated by the small and medium business and arts and crafts groups, coordinated their attempts to establish a system which included occupational needs and the claim to educate people for a civic society.

Most of the apprenticeships arose in the textile industry, the building sector and in metal-working.

After the turn of the century, the accompanying statutory regulation and the effects of legislation were visible: cantons and industry sectors with laws of VET that included the protection of the apprentice in case of exploitation and regular learning and working times. Within these regulations, vocational education and training was able to develop at a very high speed.

For the development of VET in Switzerland, reform debates about the way to provide VET were important. Part of this reform discussion was not only the renewal of the primary school but also the form of vocational education. Should it take place only in schools or in specific institutions? Several agents promoted different views.

For primary schools, France served as a role model by introducing manual work and handicraft in the school lessons in 1880. The aim of manual work was to improve the manual dexterity of the children for work in industry and trade. Generally, France became a role model for its variety and advanced initiatives for vocational education. According to Armand Freiherr von Dumreicher, who was an Austrian ministry official and a reformer of Austrian VET, the systematic promotion of technical skills for the industry had to be supported by a multitude of institutions. Here, in his view, the apprenticeship in its traditional form would not be satisfactory (see Gonon 2012). This view was shared by industry representatives and also by some school reformers in Switzerland. As an alternative for VET, which was mainly based on workplace learning, the French “Ecole des Arts et Metiers” was debated. In this institution, professional knowledge and skills were organised systematically in relation to the individual needs of each learner. In Switzerland, these institutions were promoted by a number of trade associations. After many teachers and educational reformers advocated this kind of institution, some were founded according to this prototype in Berne, Winterthur and Zurich. Similarly, the already existing and very special school for the Swiss watch-and-clock-industry were supported further.

Besides this (technically focused) “French” approach, a more trade-based option of VET gained importance. On the other hand the arts and crafts and trade associations referred more to the trade policy and VET reform in the kingdom of Württemberg. The responsible ministerial officer, Ferdinand von Steinbeis, campaigned for support of trades by vocationalizing the further-education institutions and bringing them closer to the educational needs of several occupations. Such continuation schools became more and more occupationally based. Their primary task was to complete the apprenticeship. Compared to the more expensive and exclusive technical educational institutions, this solution was easier and less costly to adopt. Gradually the trade associations preferred this way (Gonon/Maurer 2012).

If we take a look at the publications and discussions in the time between 1875 and the turn of the century, we find statements that propagate the support and the enhancement of VET in general. Those pleas included not only public and statist representatives, employers and workers associations, but also teachers and welfare organisations. Beyond this broad consensus, two options emerged and found different supporters: some preferred the French Ecoles exclusively and others the Southern-German, Württemberg-like vocational-oriented continuation schools with work and the learning of the apprentices in the firms (Gonon 2012).

Most agents recommended a broad set of reforms, including different measures. That means to do the one thing, but not neglect the other one. It was around 1895 that the trade organisation, which was the most important agent at that time, promoted a reform and a prioritisation of VET, which was based on firm training with additional mandatory but limited school attendance. Thus, this organisation did not want to establish full-time schools according to the French role model because they would have been too expensive for the masses; instead it supported an apprenticeship with the master craftsman which should be completed with school-based learning.

In the 20th century, that model gradually gained approval by the other agents in the field. It consisted of a four to five day presence in the firm and up to eight or nine hours of a daily-based education in continuation schools during three or four years of apprenticeship. General education was taught in vocational schools as well, in continuation of the primary school education, because vocational schools had to include the labour force into society as well. This idea was very much in line with the concept of Georg Kerschensteiner, which he developed in Munich and which found wide observance in the German-speaking language area. This model of combining the general-education objective addressed in vocational schools in combination with work-oriented learning was adapted as a role model internationally because the result was not only “capable workmen” but also “good citizens” (see Gonon 2009).

In 1930, after a long-lasting debate and several conflicts between different stakeholders such as the trade in general, labour unions, the large-scale industry, different educational and social reformers, the cantonal and regional representatives with various concerns about the type of regulation of VET, the first official Act of Vocational Education and Training was legislated. It determined a legal framework that enables much room for interpretation and many latitudes

and thus allows both apprenticeships and vocational full-time schools. After a few modifications in 1963, 1978 and most recently in 2002, it endures until today.

The legislation, as well as the permanent deliberation on the huge amount of questions around VET, helped to strengthen the role of VET. The broad legitimization was given by the fact that the trade associations brought in the occupational references; meanwhile teachers were in charge of the work-school reference, which included civic education. Workers' associations stressed the protection of the apprentices and were critical of exploitation by shop owners. The state was responsible for standards and bringing together the different stakeholders, insofar a coordinated output was and is possible till today.

A prominent rise in apprenticeships between 1938 and 1960 can be denoted. It ran parallel with the ascent of employees until the 1980s. Since then, vocational education has stagnated on a high level, although the new entries into VET have been increasing again since 2005.

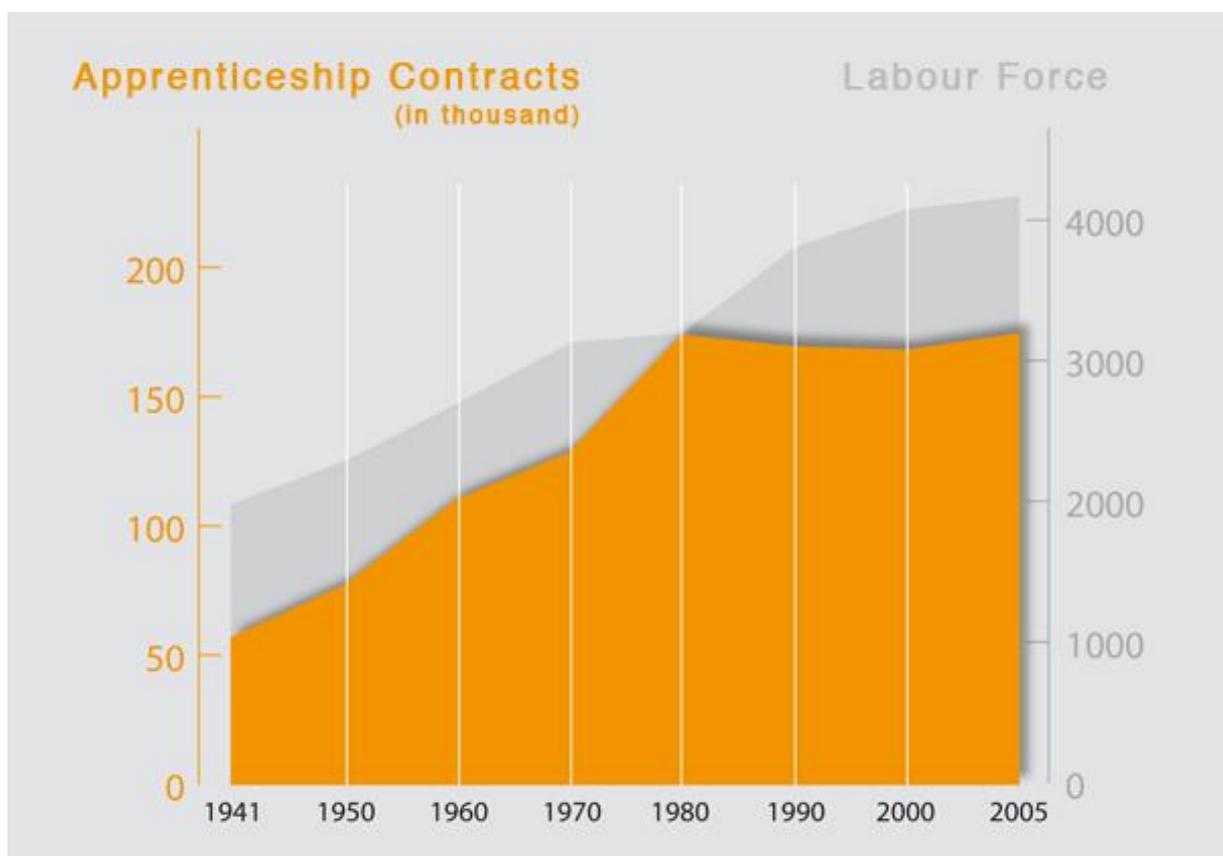


Figure 2: Rise of Apprenticeship Contracts in Switzerland (1941-2005)
(see Wettstein et al. 2014, forthcoming)

The reconstruction of the rise of the Swiss VET system shows that it was the result of a coordination of several agents, who had to build up a new kind of education. This strategic alliance, based on compromises, is important in order to establish VET. It was not a well-aimed, developed project, which originated from a “Mastermind” to a well-ordered system: VET

developed much more evolutionary and path-dependent. Nevertheless, the legal framework, which integrates the whole range of vocational education from agriculture to the service sector, allows a lot of specific solutions. The common ground, however, is a shared interest and will by all agents to keep this system running.

The introduction of a strong school-based teaching and formalisation were crucial elements of the establishment of a modern vocational education system. Over the creation of nationally accepted and from the organisations of work and trade-defined occupations that functioned as standards of work-based education, the cooperation of firms and organisations within VET succeeded.

Switzerland is, even now, a sort of rag rug when it comes to VET. Besides dominant dual domains, considerable gaps or other forms of VET exist in the industry and service sector. Out of a total of 192`000 firms in Switzerland, 58`000 firms offer apprenticeships and around 154`000 do not train apprentices this year. In 2011, 81`000 apprenticeships are or were offered to possible apprentices (see Wettstein et al. 2014).

The production-oriented occupations dominate when it comes to the training of apprentices. That means that VET is respectively less represented in the service sector and in occupations that are linked to the knowledge society. In these sectors, academic qualifications play a more important role, which is why vocational education has been stagnating on a high level since the 1980s.

The VET system today, however, is challenged by several different developments: the demographic change leads to a shortage of youngsters who are willing and able to start an apprenticeship. It is one challenge to also integrate “weak” learners into VET programs. The new legislation has introduced a short-term apprenticeship with reduced academic requirements. Beside this, meritocratic logic is becoming more important in order to open pathways for higher education. Hybrid qualifications today offer further possibilities for apprentices to continue their studies after completing an apprenticeship. Furthermore, the global and European perspectives affect the VET system. The actors try to cope with these challenges and to find a common reform policy (Maurer/Gonon 2013).

5 Conclusion or how to define VET systems

In the last few years, the view of dual VET systems has drastically changed and the advantages of such a model have been illuminated. Other European countries like France and England try to reinforce their VET systems by expanding apprenticeship schemes. The other side of the coin, i.e. the shortage of a technical and highly qualified workforce and lower completion rates in academic degrees in German-speaking countries, were not so much part of this deliberation (see Meyer 2009). However, it is not enough to establish more training opportunities in firms and offer parallel school-based courses (see e.g. Fuller/Unwin 2011). This article argues for an approach which includes more than a learning-site arrangement. In addition to a strong state engagement and firm involvement, a culture of established delibera-

tion of the relevant agents seeking common ground and the possibility of implementing innovations is important. What is most striking is that there is no country in which only a single model exists. Most countries host different systems. This coexistence is possible in a lot of variations. Where national borders are not so strict there seems to be a correlation to the organisation of a system. Therefore, all countries have to integrate different systems: the school system, the economic system (and their representing groups) as well as the field of politics each bring in their own views. It is the task of stakeholders to balance out these various perspectives, to coordinate themselves and to find a solution which is supported by the involved agents. Consequently, VET and education systems have to cope with plural forms and modes of governance. Corporatist tradition, statist support and an occupationally-regulated market are the ingredients which keep the dual VET systems alive. Of great importance, however, is a strong cultural legitimization for politicians, firms and parents that it is worthwhile to hold onto this system and the belief that it will have a future.

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