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Tendencies in Vocational Education in Germany

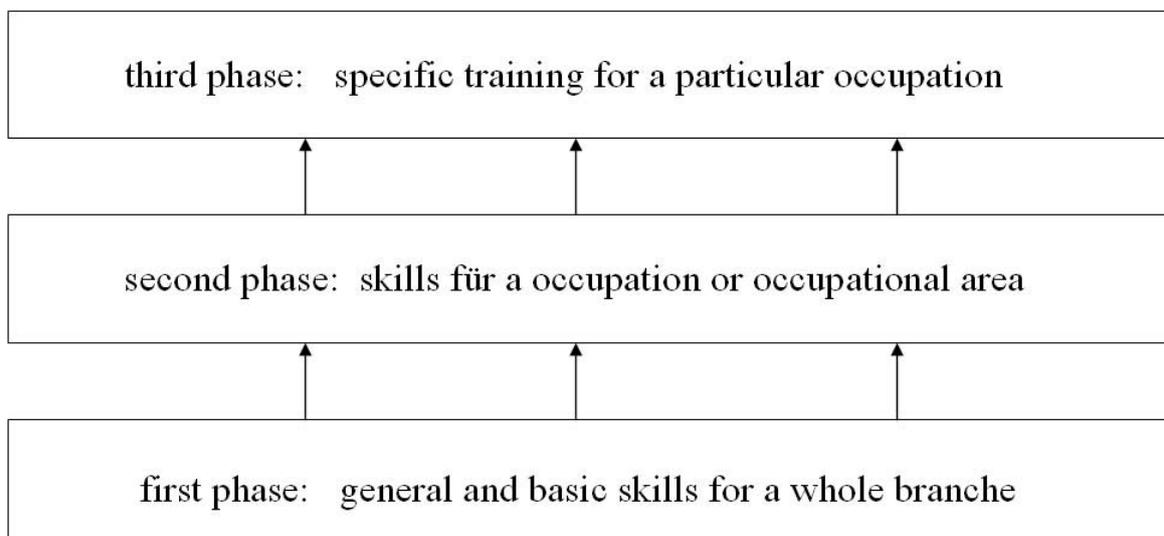
Conference "Vocational Education in Europe".- Hämenelina 1999

The objective of this presentation is to inform you about tendencies and problems in vocational education in Germany. Before we will discuss specific issues, I would like to give a short introduction to German system.

Similarly to the Finish system the Germany vocational education system builds on the concept of a broad occupational training to serve the needs of the economy and the needs of the labour as well. Vocational Training in Germany focuses not only on present requirements of industry but also on qualifications which are required for the coping with work tasks in future. As a consequence of this, training concentrates besides the development of very specific skills also on general skills. These general skills are not bound to a particular occupation, such problem solving and communication skills.

The idea of integrating general skills in vocational training led to a structure of vocational education in Germany that meets this requirement. For instance the training in the dual system is divided into three phases.

phases of the training in the dual system



The first phase concentrates on general and basic skills which are relevant for a whole branch. In the second phase training narrows down to an occupation or occupational area. The third phase provides a very specific training for a particular occupation.

We have just touched on the structure of the training in the “Dual System”. However, I haven’t explained its concept yet. The term “Dual” already implies a divide within the system; the divide is between industry and state. The state is responsible for vocational schools and the curricula of these schools; the industry is charge of training that is carried out in the company. Besides the training in the “Dual System” vocational training is also carried out in full-time schools. In general the training in full-time schools lasts for two year and includes a number of internships in industry, trade etc. Although vocational training is carried out in several ways most youngsters are trained in the “Dual System”.

Developments in industry and sociological problem led to changes in vocational education and training. The technological development in industry caused significant changes production structures which have impacts on qualification requirements.

Hence, vocational education and training needs to adjust instantly to the rapidly changing requirements to meet the need of industry at present and in future.

However, due to the large number institutions involved (unions, industry association, representatives of the state) and their unlike interests, the updating of occupations and qualifications integrated in these occupations is a long lasting and time consuming process. This is a clear contradiction to the needs of industry. As a consequence of this dilemma, industry is becoming less interested in training. In the last 15 years 250.000 apprenticeships ceased to exist due to the lack of interest. At present only 30 per cent of the companies offer apprenticeships. However, it has to be stated that not only the lack of interest led to this situation but also other reasons have to be mentioned such as economic. Due to the demographic development in Germany the number of apprenticeships needed increased dramatically.

Furthermore, the level of qualification required to successful on the labour marked increases significantly at the same time. This statement can be illustrated by the fact that 45 per cent of total number of unemployed is labour without any vocational

qualification. In publications of the unions I came across the following theses to qualification requirements.

1. Thesis

The demand for labour in production will decrease while the total of good produced will remain constant increase.

2. Thesis

The focus of personnel reduction will be on offices and not in workshops. It is more likely that salaried staff in reduced than workers.

3. Thesis

Jobs which require a low level of qualifications are decreasing further. At the same time immense work load at many working places will remain.

4. Thesis

The demand for technical/technological knowledge will grow in many jobs.

5. Thesis

The need for broad competencies beyond subject boundaries is increasing.

6. Thesis

The importance of knowledge gained through experience will clearly rise.

7. Thesis

The mobility of labour will play an significant role in future.

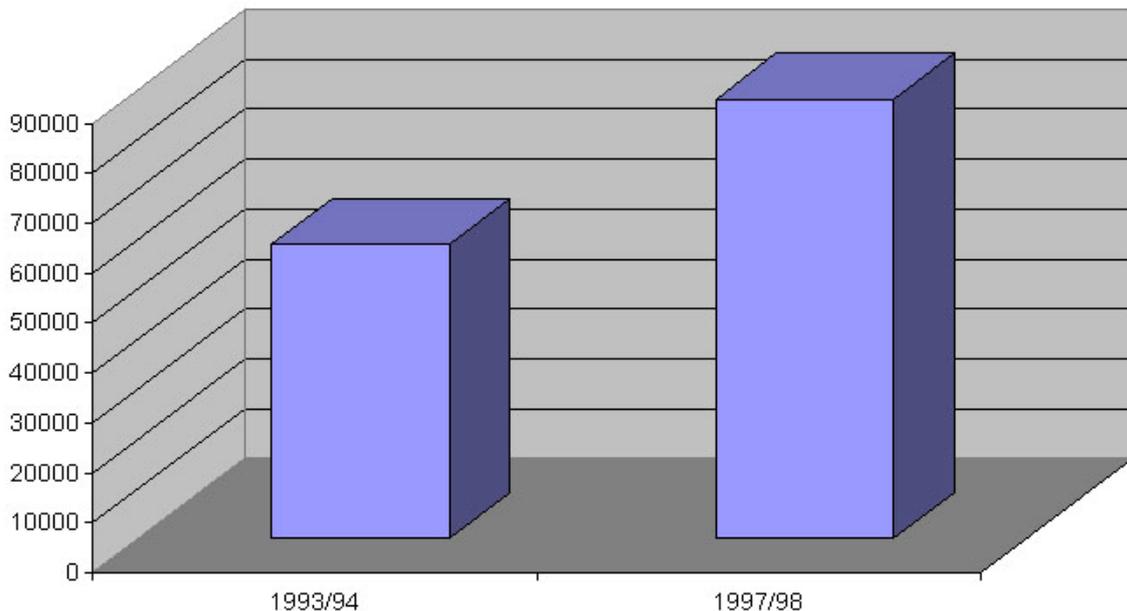
Lutz, Burkart: Wie entwickeln sich Arbeitsplätze und Erwerbstätigkeit in Industrie und Dienstleistung.

In: Zukunft der beruflichen Bildung.- Frankfurt a.M. 1998

As my presentation outline so far, vocational education in Germany faces some serious challenges. The significant deficit of apprenticeships in industry resulted the increased development of practical training facilities within the "Dual System" which are not bound to a company. They form independent training companies. These companies act as substitute for industry. They are financed by supportive measures of the state. In the East German States of the German Federation more than 20 per cent of apprenticeships of the "Dual System" are realised by independent training companies.

Another consequence of the dilemma in the "Dual System" is the rising number participants full-time training. Recently published figures illustrate this development.

**school leavers which began a training measure at
a full-time school in Germany**



1993 59.000 school leavers began a training measure at a full-time vocational school. 4 year later 88.000 school leaver registered for full-time training measures. As a general tendency these full-time training measures are further extended by the state as reaction to the deficit in the “ Dual System”.

The tense situation on the market for apprenticeships was also realised by policy and led to several initiatives which aim to defuse the situation. Negotiations between, politicians, unions and industry representatives led to the assurance that every school leaver in the autumn '99 will have an apprenticeship available. This assurance has to be regarded sceptically since policy has a limited influence on industry.

The tendencies and chances I illustrated so far were of a structural nature. The problems depicted also led to discussions of the content of VET. Since quite a while it is in discussion to modularise the concept of vocational education in Germany. However, a modularisation of VET is discussed quite ambivalent. As a discussion basis serves the British NVQ model.