Vocational Teacher Training in Germany from the Governance Perspective

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Abstract
In comparison to other countries, vocational teacher education (VTE) and professional requirements for prospective teachers in Germany are more institutionalised and more complex than in many other systems. They encompass a master's degree, a minimum of one year of relevant practical experience in the subject specialisation, and at least 18 months of practical training, leading to around a minimum of 7.5 years until admission to the teaching profession in one of the German federal states as a vocational teacher. Such training requires effective coordination and clear functional division between different stakeholders, a necessity partially stemming from the complexity of the German vocational education and training system (VET), which consists of both part-time and full-time vocational pathways.

The aim of this chapter is to outline VTE in Germany and to analyse challenges and problems from a governance perspective.

The analysis provides clear evidence that the governance of VTE in Germany is pursued primarily by institutions providing vocational teacher training and professional units and agencies. Institutions bear a common responsibility for enhancing the occupational status of teachers and aligning VTE with the needs of vocational institutions, teachers and learners. Challenges exist concerning the heterogeneity of higher education institutions engaging in VTE, a growingly heterogeneous school population and problems with permeability between federal states.

Keywords: vocational teacher education, vocational schools, governance

1 Introduction
Cooperation and partnership in vocational education and training (VET) have been enjoying support and encouragement from economic and government sectors of countries with market economies for a long time. Increasing the employability of VET graduates, enhancing the relevance of skills and knowledge to the real work setting, and matching the needs of labour markets are the main drivers (Arribas, 2018; International Labour Organisation, 2020). The dual apprenticeship systems in the German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany and Switzerland) or Denmark show that coope-
ration between sectors and stakeholders can be successful models in the field of VET (Deissinger, 2010; Greinert, 1994). Moreover, the term “employability” has recently become a keyword of policymaking in higher education and the dual form of skill formation is now increasingly adapted even in the tertiary sector (Deissinger, 2005; Deissinger & Ott, 2016; Ulicna et al., 2016). However, these trends hardly touch teacher training as a whole or vocational teacher training (VTE) in particular. This is astonishing since the vocational teacher profession is at the nexus of the skill formation system where vocational teachers’ expertise and competences play a decisive role in the quality of provided training and the formation of the professional identity of VET graduates. In this context, it is obvious that higher education institutions (HEIs) providing vocational teacher training, vocational schools and industry should cooperate closely when it comes to governing VTE.

In standardised VTE systems, where pre-service training for this profession is widely realised at universities via bachelor and/or master programmes (e.g. Austria, Germany, Estonia, Spain) cooperation between vocational schools and HEIs usually includes internships in schools and/or industry (CEDEFOP, 2016). However, this is mostly the only aspect that takes into account the complexity of teaching in vocational school settings within the organisation of VTE. Therefore, the question arises of how the governance of VTE may be changed or at least newly designed in order to extend formal cooperation and partnerships between different stakeholders in VTE, namely VET institutions and HEIs. The cooperation of these stakeholders can contribute to bridging the theory-practice gap as the “users” of VTE qualifications, schools as well as employers of future teachers, are normally not involved in setting up or at least influencing how teachers are trained at universities. The existing one-sided institutional reality explains why many future teachers hardly feel well-prepared for their future occupational destination. The overarching quality criterion of initial VTE should be to ensure that the expectations of vocational schools and the motivations and competences of future teachers can be aligned.

Looking at the German system of VET and VTE is interesting since governance structures in VTE here are quite elaborate and the role of scientific teachers is clearly the ideal type of a vocational teacher. However, when we want to derive impulses from the German system, or other European systems, the specific context and the respective standing of VET in a given society needs to be taken into account (Billett, Choy & Hodge, 2020, Deissinger, 2022). Therefore, we do not want to over-stress the German system as a “blueprint” for other countries (Melnyk, 2021; Braun & Melnyk, 2023).

2 The German VET System as the Background Context of VTE

What is called the “dual system” has its roots in the corporatist framework established by changes in the trade law in the late 19th century (Greinert, 1994; Deissinger, 1994, 2010, 2021, 2022), as its company part is up to now mainly regulated by the Vocational
Training Act (*Berufsbildungsgesetz*) passed in 1969 and revised twice since then (2005 and 2020). Apprenticeships as the major sub-system for which VET teachers are trained, are characterised by the partnership of companies and schools. There is a number of historical and cultural reasons for calling the dual system the “*centrepiece of vocational education and training in the Federal Republic*” (Raggatt, 1988, p. 166), which can still be seen when looking at the statistics of VET: At the end of 2022, some 1.22 million young people were receiving initial training in the dual system while some 1.1 million were attending a vocational school outside the apprenticeship system (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2022a, 2022b). The focus on the apprenticeship model in the dual system implies a huge dependence of this sub-system of VET on the labour market situation. If employers choose not to, or cannot, employ young people, then it is difficult for school-leavers to access non-academic vocational qualifications in many relevant employment sectors such as crafts, industrial-technical occupations and commercial and service fields. Hereby, the complexity of the VET system has to be looked at in more depth: Besides the dual system, half of the student population in vocational schools in Germany enter the VET sector on different pathways, either in terms of qualifications lying outside the regulatory framework set up by the Vocational Training Act (e.g. in the health sector, social work or child nursing) or they want to obtain a higher school certificate, which can be a full university-entrance qualification (*Abitur/Allgemeine Hochschulreife*). Besides these “regular” pathways emerging from the post-war years, the so-called “transition system” developed as the “third sector” of VET, also in vocational schools which offer vocational preparation classes or special classes for refugees (Dionisius & Illiger, 2019; Euler & Nickolaus, 2018).

Against this background, the German VET system mirrors the conviction that VET has to react to the growing pressure that VET should not only produce portable skills for the labour market but also enable individuals to master the transition from school to VET, as well as to progress even to higher education. This means that different pathways (e.g. workplace learning in the dual system or full-time vocational education in schools or colleges) but also the notion of “hybrid qualifications” (Deissinger et al., 2013) and with it a “functional diversification” of VET is now a typical feature of the German system (Zabeck, 1985; Deissinger, Smith & Pickersgill, 2006; Dobischat, 2010; Seeber & Michaelis, 2015; Deissinger, 2019). The context and with it the challenges for VTE have, therefore, become utterly complex as teachers normally work in a number of school types or classes, teaching students with different educational and social backgrounds as well as heterogeneous age groups.

When looking at VET in the German federal states we may distinguish at least six subtypes of vocational schools/courses:

- Part-time vocational schools which provide theoretical occupation-related knowledge and general education for apprentices in the dual system (*Berufsschulen*);
- Full-time schools that qualify young people in so-called “school occupations”, mainly “assistant occupations”, based on federal state law (*Berufsfachschulen, Berufskollegs*);
• Full-time schools that provide skill formation for young people via so-called “school occupations” based on the Vocational Training Act (Berufsfachschulen);
• School-based formalised training leading to a nationally recognized qualification in the health and human services sector (hospital nurses, nurses for the elderly, physiotherapists) (Schulen des Gesundheitswesens). This is the largest category of school-based training besides the dual system (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, 2023, p. 7);
• Full-time courses within the “transition system” (mostly aiming at vocational preparation and/or bridging general education and apprenticeships) (Berufsvorbereitungsjahr and similar courses);
• Full-time vocational schools that lead to educational qualifications (lower secondary school standard, intermediate secondary school standard, university of applied sciences entry qualification, general university entry qualification, e.g. in Wirtschaftsgymnasien). These schools/courses partly comply with the academic aspirations of young people though they may lead to an apprenticeship.

The following chart shows the shares of teachers employed in different types of German VET schools, which are normally the workplace of young teachers after completing their teacher training.

Figure 1: Areas of employment of teachers at vocational schools according to type of school (Source: Frommberger & Lange, 2018, p. 9)

These categories show that “full-time” in Germany is a term, which only partly describes the character of these educational institutions correctly. In fact, it is necessary to distinguish two major types overarching the above-mentioned categories: Only a proportion of courses work as full-time VET in the sense that the objective of attendance is actually training and with it achieving a labour-market relevant qualification. Apart from school-based courses, the transition system, by offering “young people an opportunity to improve their individual chances of gaining training” (Federal Ministry of Education
and Research, 2017, p. 60), is a heterogeneous catch-basin for those striving to become apprentices, but also for disoriented school-leavers and drop-outs from schools. Another feature of the transition system is that there exist not only school-based measures but also company-based internships (called “entry qualifications”) and vocational preparation and orientation courses offered by private training providers (Euler & Nickolaus, 2018). Therefore, teachers at vocational schools work in various school types, although the vocational part-time school has the largest share within the school system (Frommberger & Lange, 2018, p. 9). Vocational orientation and preparation in the transition system (e.g. vocational preparation year) also require new competences from professionally trained staff in the school-based vocational system. Another relevant sub-system is vocational further training (e.g. leading to a technician qualification). In addition, there are classes in vocational courses that lead to a subject-related or general higher education entrance qualifications, including the Abitur (the German “A level”), which is obtainable after attending years 10–13 in technical high schools or commercial high schools (Deissinger, 2019).

3 VTE – the System Perspective

One of the features of German VET teacher training is that it evolved with the formation of the dual system of vocational training, which is basically an apprenticeship system (Deissinger, 2010; Frommberger & Lange, 2018). The fields of conflict mentioned above are reflected in these historical processes, which have to be understood if we wish to comprehend the essential characteristics of both the VET system and the VET teacher education system in Germany. In the following we will depict these structures in a more general way but also by looking more precisely at the training of VET teachers for commercial schools in Business and Economics Education. The University of Konstanz in the State of Baden-Württemberg introduced a typical course structure of this kind in 1998, although some changes have occurred in recent years, both in the organisational structure of the VET teacher training course and in its clientele, which is now much more diverse due to the Bologna reform in the higher education system (Deissinger & Seifried, 2010; Deissinger, Braun & Melnyk, 2018). The German example shows that, despite the difference in the ways general and higher education on the one hand and vocational education on the other are perceived and regarded, there is not a lot of substantial difference in the ways general and vocational teachers (as academic teachers) are trained in Germany since both enjoy civil servant status and equal pay in the German school system once fully qualified (normally after 7.5 years). The latter aspect implies that, like in France, but unlike in the UK, Germany’s VET teachers and their training are associated with “a relatively high degree of professionalization in accordance with their colleagues in general education” (Grollmann, 2008, p. 540).

Against the background that the VET system creates, the range of professional requirements in VTE is very broad and significantly more extensive than in all other teaching professions (Frommberger & Lange, 2018, p. 9). In the vocational school
classes of the dual system, the subject areas corresponding with the academic disciplines, such as business administration or mechanical engineering, can be very diverse due to the varying contents of, e.g., the well-established commercial training occupations in the apprenticeship system (e.g. banking clerk, insurance clerk, IT clerk or shop assistant). Therefore, the KMK (the Conference of German Education Ministers) refers to the necessity to integrate the respective technical and didactical contents related to occupational domains in the study programmes, by emphasising both the corresponding scientific disciplines but also the professional practice typical for the target groups of VET in the various occupations (KMK, 2017; Loughran, 2010). This means that the professional competence of teachers at vocational schools is not only about mastering one or two academic subjects (e.g. business and administration or construction engineering, electrical engineering, metal technology, etc.) as VTE should clearly reach beyond the academic topics of a bachelor or master course: Teachers at vocational schools are expected to know the operational and professional areas of application in the various occupational fields and need to include them fundamentally within their lessons. Unlike a teacher at a grammar school (Gymnasium) with its general education focus, the commercial, industrial-technical and service-based occupations are subject to rapid change with which teachers in VET have to cope, let alone the fact that many of them normally study and later teach a general subject as well (Frommberger & Lange, 2018).

In the first decade of our century, many federal states (e.g. Baden-Württemberg, Berlin and North Rhine-Westphalia), introduced the so-called school “practice semester” (Weyland, 2014). Normally, the workload corresponding with these practical components of VTE is not reflected in the university curriculum and reaches beyond the 300 credits of a combined bachelor/master programme, which is the formal prerequisite for becoming an “academic teacher”. The second phase of teacher training after graduation from university adds to this although it is more substantial and systematic in terms of didactical competences since the so-called “Referendariat” or “Vorbereitungsdienst” (“preparatory service” – a term used in the German public law) can be understood as workplace-related VTE since it takes place in vocational schools and seminars building up the scientific foundations of university-based education (KMK, 2016). Hereby, the focus of VTE switches from academic learning to the classroom and the school as an institution. The “learning teachers” now are meant to observe and evaluate lessons, prepare and carry out their own teaching, as well as perform tasks within the social environment of the school. The focus of this phase of training is markedly didactical and pedagogical in the first place building up on the pedagogy taught at the university (Frommberger & Lange, 2018, p. 14).

All in all, in Germany, 53 HEIs offer VTE (in the first phase) in a formal, science-based way (universities, pedagogical universities, universities of applied sciences or forms of cooperation between higher education institutions) (Frommberger & Lange 2018). The University of Konstanz is one of these in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg and represents a VTE course that is located in the field of Economics and Business, which means that the typical graduate of this course would teach at a commercial school centre in this federal state unless he or she does not opt to enter the second
phase of VTE (“Referendariat”). The course structure of what in Konstanz is called “Master of Business and Economics Education” consists of three major components: One or two major subjects (Business and Economics or an additional general subject from a range of 13 subjects); Pedagogy and Didactics (of Vocational Education); company- and school-based internships (42 weeks/10 weeks respectively). The structure of VTE is based on the concept of the acquisition of fundamental knowledge in the chosen disciplines and vocational pedagogy, but also in interlinking theoretical and practical learning concerning the future teaching profession. The latter aspect is particularly visible in the second phase of VTE, which is under the auspices of the federal state ministry of education and the subordinated seminars of initial and further teacher training (Seminare für die Aus- und Fortbildung der Lehrkräfte, see e.g. https://bs-gym-wgt.seminare-bw.de/Startseite). In the university part, i.e. the bachelor and master parts of VTE, the students learn full-time at the university although they are required to spend 10 weeks of teaching internships in vocational schools under the guidance of a mentor of the respective school. This practical component of VTE is partly accompanied by the university and needs to be proved for admission to the second phase (18 months) after graduation from the university. The same applies to practical experience (training or internships) in enterprises, which can be a preceding apprenticeship or studies at a dual university (Deissinger, 2005; Deissinger & Ott, 2016).

The German system tries to take into account both the content-related and the pedagogical dimensions, i.e. the “dual agendas for learning”, in the VTE system. It is obvious that teaching and learning to teach hereby is not just defined as “delivery of information” but stretches to the notion of “knowledge of practice” (Loughran, 2010; Russell, 1997). The complexity of VTE based on such an understanding can be illustrated in the following table. It depicts the basic structure and the cooperation structure in the master course “Business and Economics Education” at the University of Konstanz:
Table 1: Master’s Programme “Business and Economics Education” at the University of Konstanz and cooperations (Status: 02.05.2023, University of Konstanz)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st semester</th>
<th>2nd semester</th>
<th>3rd semester</th>
<th>4th semester</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Education (33 ECTS)</td>
<td>Educational Psychology</td>
<td>Didactics II</td>
<td>Educational Science advanced seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory seminar in Vocational and Business Education</td>
<td>Didactics Economics II</td>
<td>Educational Science research methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Science advanced seminar</td>
<td>Thesis (4 months, 20 ECTS)</td>
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**Compulsory area of economics:** a total of 5 ECTS through the course “Accounting and accounting policy”

**Field of Study I**

**Elective area of Economics:** a total of at least 52 ECTS through courses from the bachelor’s degree in Business Administration or Economics, the master’s degree in Economics and the master’s degree in Politics and Administration (in the field of Management and Administration)

**Compulsory elective area of economics:** a total of at least 5 ECTS through course(s) from Business Administration or Economics

**Elective subject from other departments (one of 13 subjects in total to choose from, such as a foreign language, sport or mathematics):** a total of at least 47 ECTS

**Practical school studies (10 ECTS in total).** The internships are to be completed at a business and economics school in Baden-Württemberg. The school internships include accompanying courses in educational science as well as subject didactics (business economics and second subject) of the State Seminars for Teacher Training and Further Education Freiburg and Weingarten (vocational schools).

**Business internships.** The internships have to be completed in various commercial fields/departments in companies according to governmental regulations by the respective federal state if students want to enter the school service after graduation

4 Governance of Vocational Teacher Education and Relevant Stakeholders

4.1 Theoretical Perspective on Governance in Teacher Training

The governance perspective provides a valuable analytical framework for investigating how vocational teacher training functions as a social system and how it interacts with other social systems and institutions. It also facilitates the understanding of mechanisms underlying “action coordination and communication between different actors and on different levels of a multi-layered system” (Merki & Altrichter, 2015, p. 396).

The governance perspective encompasses several key elements. Altrichter (2015) identifies fundamental aspects of the governance concept including the multitude of actors, which implies that not a single actor forms a system but that there is a constellation of actors who all contribute to its formation. Another key aspect is the coordination
of action, which focuses on how the interests are communicated, agreed upon and translated into actions in such a way that common goals are achieved, as well as the logic, which defines these processes. The governance concept, moreover, addresses rights of disposal and regulation instruments that create a framework for the actions taken by stakeholders. Furthermore, it acknowledges the multilevel character of a social system by explaining that actors interact differently on different levels and each level has its own constellation of actors and their own logic of actions. Additionally, the concept takes into account intentional actions and results that are also shaped by other stakeholders, highlighting that confrontation of the actors’ intentions in attempts to steer the system often leads to unpredictable dynamics and transitional results.

Brüsemeister (2020) states that the governance perspective is a perfect instrument for the study of teacher education and training because teacher training is intertwined with the complex of the state, the economy and the society. Firstly, as a responsibility of the state, teacher training inherently encompasses the “state” aspect. Secondly, teachers are agents in the labour market for teachers, which means that market mechanisms are applicable to teacher training and education. In the context of VTE, an additional nexus arises due to the twofold professionalisation of vocational teachers as pedagogues and experts in their respective professional fields. Thirdly, Brüsemeister (2020) points out that, although VTE consists of social structures and processes, the approach addresses individual needs as well as modernisation challenges (such as inclusion, digitalisation, civil education etc.)

Within the governance framework, a number of analytic instruments have been developed, with two instruments being particularly applicable in the studies of teacher training. One of these is the “governance equalizer” (Schimank, 2007), which comprises five dimensions: (1) state regulation, (2) external guidance by the state or other stakeholders, (3) academic self-governance, (4) managerial self-governance and (5) competition for scarce resources. This instrument assesses the degree within each dimension. It was originally applied to measure the interdependence of actors in higher education and politics in the context of New Public Management (Niedlich et al., 2017). However, it has also found its application in the analysis of teacher education in Switzerland (Bucher et al., 2011).

The other tool for explaining the governance of vocational teacher training is the modes of governance approach developed by Gideonse (1993). This theory classifies governance modes based on the pivotal role played by various stakeholders (such as the state, universities and schools, or professional unions) involved in (vocational) teacher training. The theory of modes of governing teacher training suggests that, depending on that criterion, certain mechanisms of interaction, decision-making and management are established, which collectively form a mode of governing. Although three modes can be identified (political, institutional and professional), they are rarely manifest in a pure form. Gideonse (1993) highlights that usually these modes are determined by contextual factors and time spans, and may change or complement each other.
The first mode of governance is the political mode. Within this mode of governance, public officials and state legislatures fully exercise their authority with minimal delegation. While this mode acknowledges the significance of schools and teachers on the political agenda, it has the disadvantage of preventing “professionals [from] defining and maintaining preparation and performance standards” (Gideonse, 1993, p. 402). Furthermore, it fosters a public perception wherein changes are dictated by regulatory processes and implemented only top-down as stipulated by the government. Consequently, the teaching profession receives an image of a “servant of the state,” who implements the state policy within their professional activity (Young & Boyd, 2010).

Within the institutional mode of governing, governance is exercised predominantly by providers of pre-service teacher education (HEIs, schools, colleges and school districts responsible for internships). Gideonse states that “the strength of governing through the institutional mode is that it is the closest to where the teacher education action is” (1993, p. 403). However, the challenge within this mode arises from the diversity of institutions in terms of type, capacity and status. Consequently, the governance mechanisms can lead to local solutions.

In the professional mode of governing, the state assigns professional units and agencies the function of governance and policy setting. These bodies define standards and have authority over preparation processes. As they comprise professionals from the teaching profession empowered with policy-making capabilities, such bodies elevate the occupational status of the teaching profession. However, this mode is not devoid of shortcomings. Internal institutional processes and structures within these bodies could potentially give rise to problems and conflicts. Additionally, there is a risk of public perception pointing to the protectionism of vested interests (Gideonse, 1993; Young, 2004; Young & Boyd, 2010).

The complexity of the actor constellation in vocational teacher training is further expanded by the inclusion of the employment sector, which necessitates consideration when modelling governance processes and mechanisms. The architecture of VTE bears similarities to that of secondary school teacher training. However, secondary schools prepare their students for subsequent educational paths, whereas vocational schools normally impart diverse levels of professional qualifications tailored for immediate integration into the labour market. Consequently, vocational teacher training, unlike its counterpart for secondary schools, necessitates a more stringent alignment with economic trends and the corresponding professional domains. However, in the case of Germany, the heterogeneity and diversity of vocational schools stretch beyond the labour market function of VET.

4.2 Coordination and Partnerships in the Vocational Teacher Education System

Multitude of Actors
Teacher education in Germany, including VTE, has historically been and continues to be overseen by the Ministry of Education in each individual federal state. This decentralised approach results from the federal structure of the country, which is a crucial
“eternal” provision within the German Constitution of 1949. All matters pertaining to general education, vocational education, higher education, and teacher education policy are independently governed by each federal state though there is a certain degree of coordination and harmonisation secured by the Standing Conference of Education Ministers (van Ackeren, Klemm & Kühn, 2015). However, a uniform central regulation across federal states is lacking, leading to variations in policy, actor constellation and status of teacher education (Lim, 2013). At the university level, this heterogeneity is evident not only between different federal states but also within the same federal state, where study concepts of initial teacher training may significantly differ between various types of universities (Frommberger & Lange, 2018). This diversity in teacher training in general and VTE in particular was underscored when the KMK’s “Resolutions on the Training of Vocational School Teachers” dated October 19, 1949 acknowledged the challenge of achieving comprehensive standardisation in the field of training of vocational school teachers due to the distinctive characteristics of each federal state (Gao, 2014). As a result, the number of actors varies among different federal states. They can be categorised into the following two groups: state actors such as ministries, HEIs, vocational institutions/schools, seminars for in-service teacher training, and federal and interstate actors such as research institutions, the German Accreditation Council and the KMK.

Coordination of Action and Regulation Structures
The two-phase training, which has been mentioned above, involves various responsible entities and contributes to complicating the coordination of actions between stakeholders. As previously mentioned, the first phase of VTE is realised at universities with internship elements at vocational schools, which can mean the involvement of the seminars for in-service teacher training at a very early stage of VTE. The second phase takes place only at vocational schools under the supervision of the seminars. Universities and other HEIs, depending on the federal state, may fall under the jurisdiction of the respective Ministry of Science, while other institutions (schools, seminars, accreditation councils) belong to the purview of the respective Ministry of Education. Thus, at the level of the federal state, there are different administration bodies more or less directly involved in dealing with VTE. At the federal level, the Federal Ministry of Education and Science (BMBF) formulates strategic directions for the development of education and science, fosters international cooperation and often supports education and research with substantial funding, e.g. in the field of digitalisation in schools, through extensive programs and projects. Thus, it also indirectly influences the development of VTE.

In terms of ensuring coherence within the two-phase training process, it is evident that there is a need for enhanced coordination of actions. However, the specific nature of such collaboration and the necessary regulatory framework remain unclear. Despite the clarity in institutional responsibilities, the coordination mechanisms are currently inadequately defined, although they are essential. No resources for the enhancement of coordination mechanisms between different actors and their collaborative work are
made explicitly available (Doff, 2022). The existing legal ordinances and frameworks lack definite provisions for binding cooperation measures (Schubarth, 2010). In the context of projects, new opportunities emerge for conceptualising cross-phase cooperation.

The task of accreditation of the study programmes is delegated to the Accreditation Council, a collective body of public law set up in 2005, which is responsible for all federal states. The German accreditation system provides for three different types of procedures:

1. programme accreditation
2. system accreditation and
3. alternative procedures.

Both programme and system accreditation procedures are characterised by a two-stage process. The assessment and preparation of an accreditation report with decision and assessment recommendations according to the standards specified in the Model Law Ordinance is organised by an agency commissioned by the university. The responsibility for the accreditation decision, on the other hand, lies with the Accreditation Council (Stiftung Akkreditierungsrat, n.d.). Upon application by the HEI, the Accreditation Council decides on the accreditation of a study programme or an internal quality management system of the HEI. The decision is made based on the accreditation report, whereby a justified deviation from the expert recommendation is possible. The representatives of the HEIs in the Accreditation Council have the majority of votes in voting on compliance with technical and content-related criteria (Stiftung Akkreditierungsrat, n.d.).

While the responsibility for accreditation decisions has now been transferred to the Accreditation Council, the implementation of the assessment procedures in program and system accreditation remains in the hands of the accreditation agencies approved for this purpose. The accreditation of an agency is subject to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) registration by the Accreditation Council (Stiftung Akkreditierungsrat, n.d.).

The conformity with common structural guidelines and subject-specific minimum standards holds significant importance for teacher training programmes and their recognition. Examples of such guidelines and standards include the Common Structural Guidelines for the Accreditation of Bachelor and Master Degree Programs (2010), the Standards for Teacher Education: Educational Sciences (2014), the Cornerstones for the Mutual Recognition of Bachelor and Master Degrees in Courses of Study Providing the Educational Requirements for a Teaching Profession (KMK 2005), the Framework Agreement on the Training and Examination for a Teaching Profession at Secondary Level II (Vocational Subjects) or for Vocational Schools (Teaching Profession Type 5) (2018), and the Interstate content requirements for the subject-specific knowledge and subject-specific didactics in vocational teacher training (2017) (Frommberger & Lange, 2018). The regulatory framework has been developed by the KMK and intends to unify diverse approaches in vocational teacher education in Germany.
Intentions of Actors in the Multilevel System
The intentions and logic of actors within the German multilevel system often generate areas of conflict. In the initial phase, university study programmes encounter a dichotomy between two core concepts – firstly, the idea of polyvalence, which underscores enhanced training in the relevant professional domain, and, secondly, the focus on professionalisation of teachers as educators, demanding more profound pedagogical preparation (Tramm, 2001). This tension originates from the historical evolution of vocational and business education as an academic discipline starting around 1900 (Zabeck, 1999; Pleiß, 1986), leading to increased academic specialisation of potential future teachers in the university system. Simultaneously, seminars for in-service teacher training and vocational schools have always been always considered in their function to impart practical competences during the subsequent second phase in a school setting. This division of responsibilities has resulted in a scenario where first-phase representatives stress the distinction between the two phases, while second-phase advocates, particularly trainee teachers, plead for greater coordination and collaboration, aiming at training more closely aligned with the professional reality in the classroom (Schubarth, 2010).

The federal states these days regularly report a serious shortage of teachers in vocational institutions and it can be assumed that this shortage will even become more dramatic in the future (Frommberger & Lange, 2018). However, the attempts to unify VTE between the federal states and, thus, to increase the permeability of education degrees and improve teaching staff mobility within Germany so far have not brought visible results, notwithstanding the changes enforced on the German degree system with the Bologna process (Deissinger & Seifried, 2010). Due to the different preferences of the federal states regarding the study structure, the states were allowed to decide for themselves whether to keep the previous study structure with the state examination as the entrance qualification for the second phase of VTE or to shift to the two-tiered study structure consisting of the bachelor’s degree and the subsequent master’s degree. Therefore, the new study structures in teacher education were implemented differently in the individual federal states and even between universities (with universities of applied sciences now also engaging in VTE in the technical field or in the health sector). In essence, the effort to harmonise perpetuates complexities due to the distinct choices made by different federal states and educational institutions within an extremely decentralised educational landscape in Germany.

Mode of Governing
The prevalence of the institutional mode of governing in German VTE is primarily attributable to its autonomy and flexibility in decision-making regarding organisation, structure, philosophy, and content. This mode of governing finds its roots in historical factors that have shaped the German education system. The historical evolution of the German education system deeply established the influence of educational institutions in shaping teacher education policies, also because VET did not remain restricted to the companies (Deissinger, 1994). The strong tradition of academic autonomy and the rep-
utation of universities as knowledge centres contribute to their significant role in influencing curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and professional standards within VTE in particular. The decentralised nature of Germany's education system, with its federal structure, enhances the significance of other institutions involved in the governance of pedagogical processes. This decentralised approach empowers HEIs and vocational schools to assume responsibilities for teacher training in a specific way, looking at stakeholders in a given region and their will to cooperate. This enables localised decision-making and creates opportunities for quality emerging from the experiences of the different partners. On the other hand, it is clear that it also creates fragmentation of policies and discrepancies in the quality of provided training across the states that can affect students' experiences and their future professional opportunities as teachers.

5 Conclusions

In Germany, VTE underlies a shared responsibility and supervision between the universities and the state. Teachers at all types of schools go through a two-phase process of training, consisting of university studies and the preparatory service (Referendariat), which precede career entry for “scientific teachers”. The notion of a twofold agenda in the course of training, i.e. content/discipline-based studies and profound didactical and pedagogical training has led to shared responsibilities and complex institutional structures of cooperation between universities, schools and seminars. All phases of VTE underlie federal state regulations since future teachers can become civil servants of the respective federal state. In some states, two ministries, those for science and research and those for education and schools, represent the steering umbrella of VTE. A special focus lies on practice in both phases of training, including school internships and the proof or internships of even vocational training in companies.

Tensions between the university part and the school-based part of VTE originate from the academic specialisation of potential future teachers in the university system, whereas seminars and vocational schools are seen as the ideal learning sites for the development of practical teaching competences needed in the classroom during the second phase. Compared to former times, the reform of VTE in Germany is now much more determined by the idea of “knowledge of practice”. With the Bologna reform, the focus on pedagogy has become stronger. In the case of the University of Konstanz, the master course is clearly more committed to didactics and pedagogy now, and school internships have to be carried out in a much more systematic way, including the basic commitment of seminars and schools before entry into the preparatory service.

However, there is no uniform German model of VTE in all branches or states due to the federal political system of the country. Other challenges continue to exist, especially with the growing heterogeneity of students between and within the various school types of the German VET system, of which the dual system part (i.e. the vocational part-time school) still comprises about half of the VET student population. Even
more pressing seems to be that Germany now faces a serious shortage of teachers in all types of schools (general and vocational) for which promising solutions are not yet visible.

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