

**The Governance of Short-track Dual Training in Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland:
Between Economic Cooperation and Social Policy**

Contribution to Topic B: “Governance in Dual Vocational Training”

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Comparative-historical analysis that systematically combines an inclusiveness with a governance perspective in dual vocational training systems is still rare (but see, e.g., Martin and Knudsen, 2010; Imdorf and Leeman, 2012; Martin and Swank, 2012; Thelen 2014; Busemeyer 2015; Powell et al. 2012). This means that we still know relatively little about how actors shape institutions that may serve inclusiveness in decentralized systems of collective skill formation. Therefore, we situate our paper at the nexus between collective governance and inclusiveness research. In this context, we understand *collective governance* as the close cooperation between public and private actors and *inclusiveness* in terms of the policy tools, rules, and interventions that aim at providing access to the system to individuals who find it difficult to obtain an apprenticeship position if left on their own.

Against this backdrop, we conduct a historical-institutionalist comparison of Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland and the reforms (1990s) and further evolution (2000s to mid-2010s) of short-track dual training programs, which are often described as inclusiveness-enhancing. Unlike the traditional three- to four-year dual training programs, these theory-reduced tracks only take two years to complete in most cases. Further, they are often targeted at more practically oriented students. They ideally increase educational opportunities for students with lower-level school grades or other disadvantages that lower their chances of gaining access to a “regular” apprenticeship program. Short-track dual programs belong to the regular VET systems as they lead to recognized vocational certificates (in contrast to transition measures) and, in most cases, allow graduates to enter the three- to four-year programs.

Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland represent key cases of such short-track educational provision within the group of collective skill formation systems. At the same time, the three countries exhibit significant variation in the governance and institutionalization of these programs. Here, we understand institutionalization as an outcome in terms of how short-track dual training is carried and stabilized by regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive institutional dimensions (see Scott, 2008[1995]), which also conditions the inclusiveness character of these programs. This institutionalized outcome, in turn, results from the “political efforts of actors to accomplish their ends” and “the relative power of the actors that support, oppose, or otherwise strive to influence it” (DiMaggio, 1988: 13). The observed variation in the institutionalization of short-track programs in the three decentralized systems concerns, in particular, the competences and activities at the key subnational governance levels (i.e., sectoral, occupational, or

regional). Furthermore, the reform processes that have led to the current institutionalization of short-track programs differ, and are linked to either gradual or more radical policy change. This leads us to our central research question: *Why do these three relatively similar dual training countries display different types of governance and forms of institutionalization of short-track dual training programs?* In this context, we seek to provide new insights on the positioning, influence, and degrees of support of the different key VET actors in relation to such short-track programs.

Traditionally, the governance of “regular-length” dual VET programs has been well-researched and compared, notably within the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) tradition with its focus on employers and economic cooperation. However, we argue that short-track programs are located at the nexus of (a) economic cooperation and (b) social policy – requiring actors to balance economic and social goals. Therefore, on the one hand, we relate to the VoC-related literature on the political economy of collective skill formation to capture economic cooperation and the collective nature of skill formation. On the other hand, we refer to the Worlds of Welfare Capitalism (WWC) and the closely related Worlds of Human Capital Formation (WHCF) approach to capture the social policy aspect in the governance of the short-term dual tracks. More generally, we expect that these two theoretical perspective can help us understand how stakeholders in short-track programs position themselves between the two institutional logics of economic cooperation and social policy.

From a broader WWC and WHCF perspective, the three countries can be argued to represent different types of welfare states (Denmark: social-democratic; Germany: conservative; Switzerland: conservative-liberal). We argue that this affects the governance and institutionalization of “inclusiveness-promoting” short-track programs. From this perspective, the key rationale for looking at Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland is that of typical cases, representing different ideal types, which in turn engender different expectations concerning the role of actors and institutions. Second, from the VoC perspective, the three countries represent key cases of collectively governed skill formation systems predicated on decentralized cooperation between various private and public actors. However, the related literature on varieties of collective skill formation has uncovered significant cross-national differences in the institutional configuration of these system (Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2012; Thelen, 2014), which we will take into account. Furthermore, we expect that differences in decentralized governance at the subnational level (regional, sectoral, and occupational) affect how economic cooperation plays out (Emmenegger et al., 2016). Thus, we will draw on both the VoC and the WWC frameworks to structure the comparative-historical analysis of the development of short-track programs.

In the 1990s, the VET systems in Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland experienced major problems when a lack of training places and high dropout rates on the apprenticeship market weakened the VET systems. This motivated reforms of VET in these countries. Within these reforms, the topic of short-term programs (existent in some form in all three countries already prior to the 1990s) and their role as a less demanding (for both students and employers) vocational training option was discussed intensively. We map the actors involved, their positions, and the social and economic contexts in which these programs were reformed. More specifically, we focus on three central historical phases: (I) historical origins (genesis); (II) crisis and reform in the 1990s; and (III) further evolution (2000s to mid-2010s). Short-track dual training

has a long history in all three countries. However, given the general crisis on the respective apprenticeship markets in the 1990s, Phase II presented an important window of opportunity for institutional change in all three countries.

To analyze these historical phases, we use process tracing or the analysis of sequences of events to explore the relevant linking mechanisms and intervening processes in specific cases (Mahoney, 2004: 88–89). The goal is to offer a narrative account of crucial sequential events (or processes) that facilitate an understanding of a particular outcome. Each significant historical step contributing to the outcome will be explained with reference to theory (George and Bennett, 2005: 30), in this case the theories varieties of collective skill formation and worlds of welfare capitalism. In terms of data, we analyze official documents and the available secondary literature. Furthermore, we conduct several dozen semi-structured interviews with experts in each country.

We are currently in the middle of the data collection including the field research, so we do not yet have results to present at this moment. However, in November in Basel we will be able to present a first draft version of the full paper including our findings.

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