



Deutsches Forschungsinstitut  
für öffentliche Verwaltung

# The German Vocational Education for Public Administration

Elements of Success and Idea Transfer for Development Cooperation



## Purpose of the Study

German system of vocational education for public administration as model for partner countries?

- » Scientific assessment of prior experiences
  - › What are successful elements of the vocational education for public administration in Germany?
  - › Which of those successful elements are relevant for an idea transfer?

## Agenda

- » Success in the administration education
- » Research design
- » Education for public administration in Germany
- » Successful elements of the German system
- » Potential elements for an idea transfer

## Success in the Administration Education

- » Fitness for purpose
  - › Objectives and demands of the public administration
  - › Expectations of society: *good governance*
  - › Expectations of the state
- » Fitness for transformation
  - › Adapting to an ever-changing environment and to changes in objectives (e.g. digitization)

## Quality/Success in the Administration Education

» A successful system of vocational education has to foster certain values, impart a specific kind of knowledge and capacitate trainees to acquire certain skills:



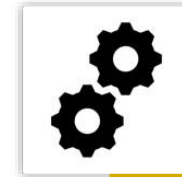
### Values

- Public interest orientation
- Loyalty
- Legal and ethical fundamental principles
- Accessibility
- Reliability
- Innovative spirit



### Knowledge

- Law
- Business & Management
- IT
- Social science
- Methods rather than factual knowledge



### Skills

- Problem-solving
- Ability to learn & deal with new tasks
- Handling the policy process
- Management & communication
- Negotiation & regulation

## Research Design

- » Literature review: education for public administration
- » Assessment of study curricula, regulations and laws
- » 30 guided expert interviews (federal level, state and municipal level in four federal states, experts from development cooperation):



Universities of  
applied sciences

- Goals of dual study program
- Teaching methods
- Recruitment
- Training of teachers
- Link between theory & practice



Vocational schools  
for PA

- Goals of VET program
- Recruitment
- Teachers
- Teaching methods
- Link between theory & practice

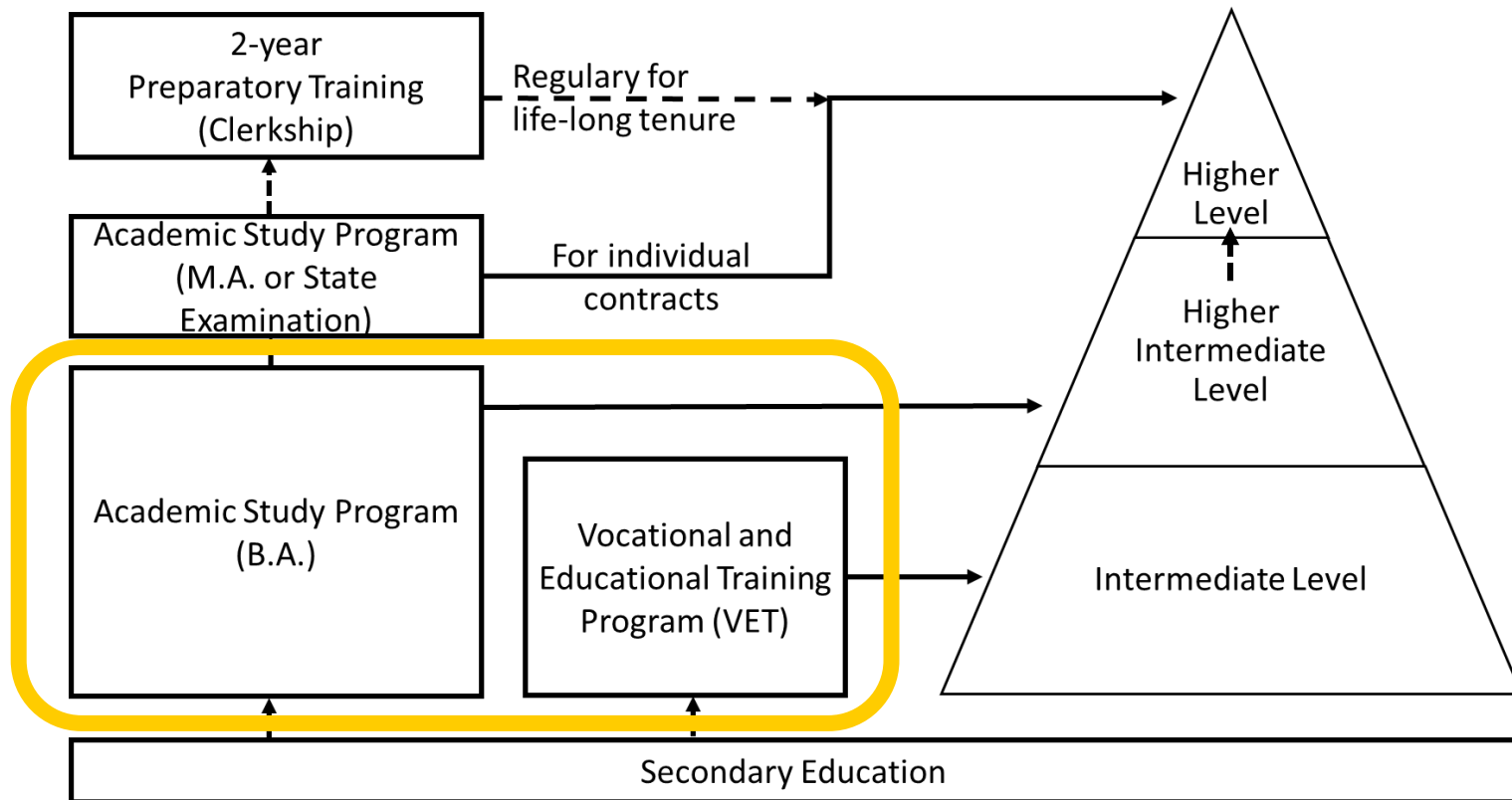


HR departments  
gov. institutions

- Teachers in practical training of VET program
- Employers: do graduates fit their needs?

# Education for Public Administration in Germany

## Structure



Based on Reichard/Röber 2012: 14

## Education for Public Administration in Germany

Intermediate level – vocational education and training (VET) program

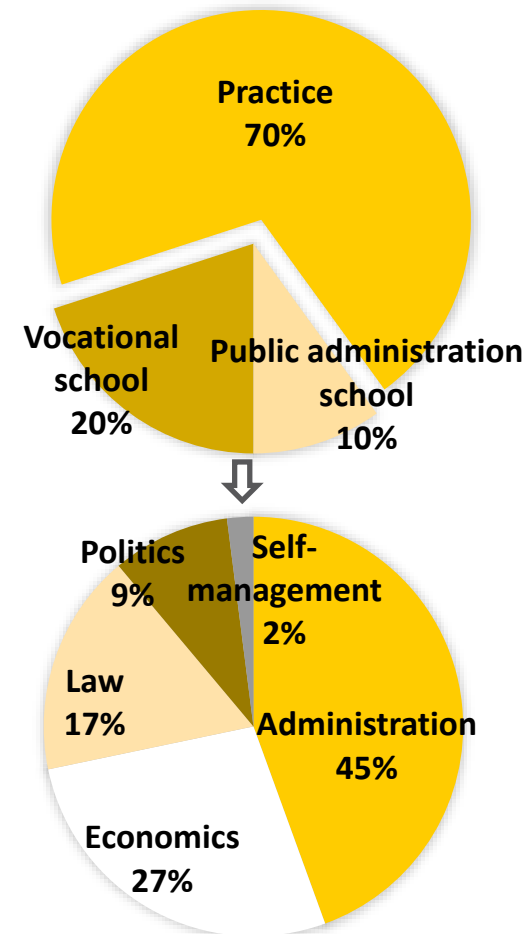
- » 3-year VET program (vocational school + practice) - specializations: federal, state, municipal and county level
- » Goal: forming “administration all-rounders“ who work in a service-oriented, effective, and efficient way
  - » Competences: application and implementation of law, management organizational and communication skills
  - » Values: rule of law, welfare and service orientation
- » Salary: 50-70% of starting salary which increases throughout the apprenticeship



## Education for Public Administration in Germany

Intermediate level – VET program

- » Practical training at agencies
  - › Rotation: different branches of agency (8-20)
  - › Qualified instructors
- » Education at school
  - › Regular vocational school
  - › Specialized public administration schools
  - › Blocks of several weeks
- » Coordination between theory and practice e.g. through yearly meetings, apprenticeship plans



## Education for Public Administration in Germany

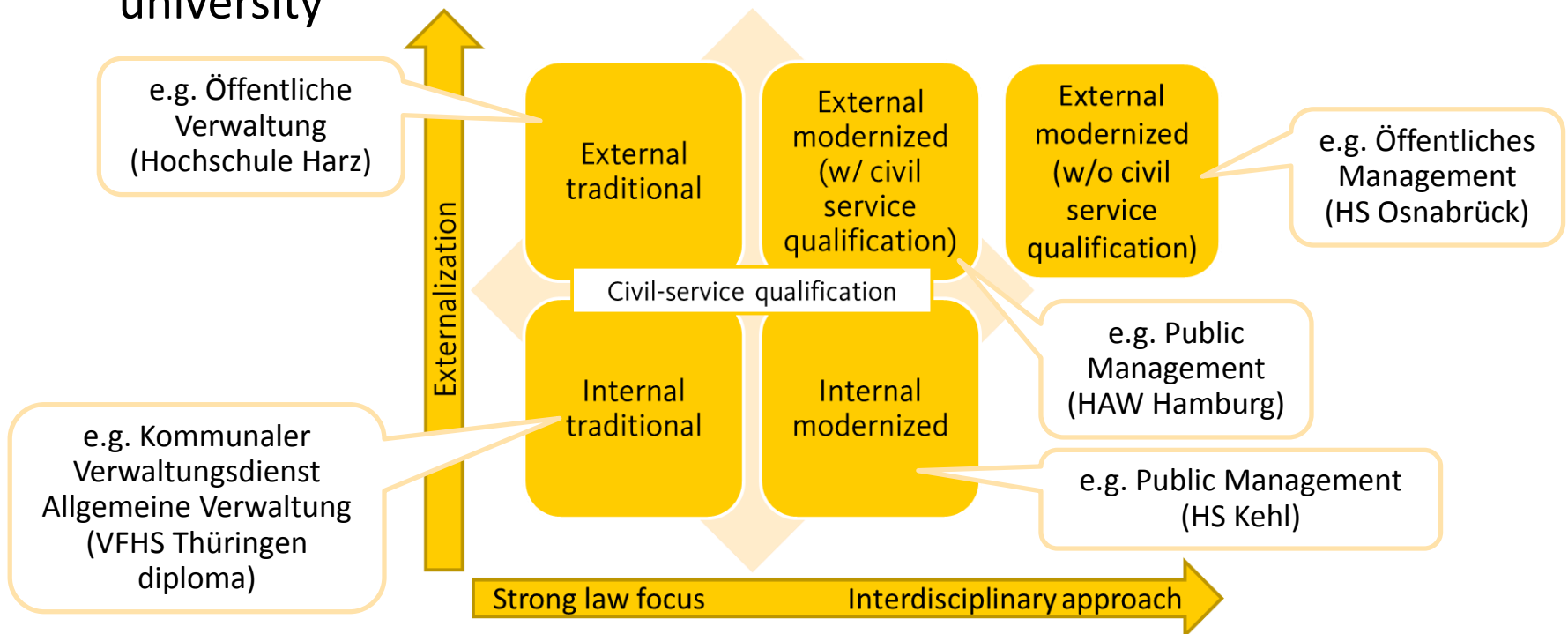
Higher intermediate level – dual study program

- » Dual study program (B.A. or diploma): 3 years at university of applied science – internal to the administration or regular external ones
- » Training “administration all-rounders“
  - » Focus: legitimate administrative actions (knowledge and application of law), business and administration
- » Salary about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of starting salary
- » Teaching staff: law, business administration and social sciences, IT experts, practitioners and part-time lecturers

## Education for Public Administration in Germany

Higher intermediate level – dual study program

- » Substantial variation between study programs: contents, type of university

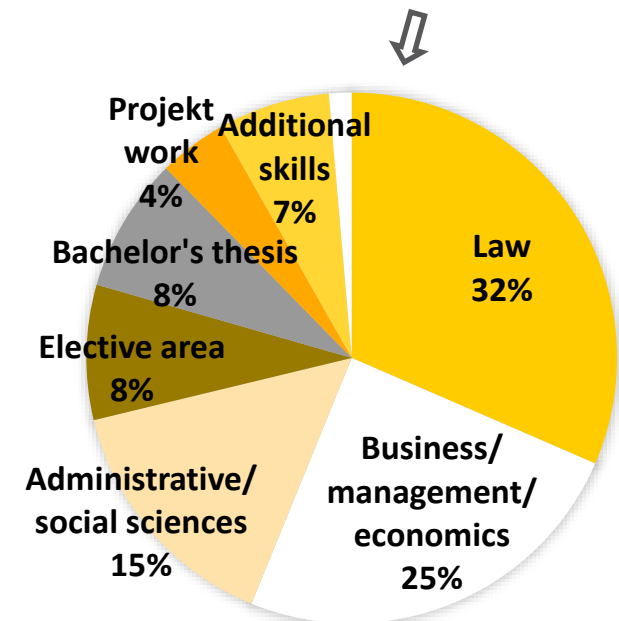
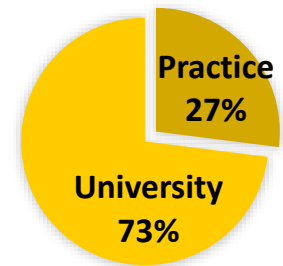


## Education for Public Administration in Germany

Higher intermediate level – dual study program

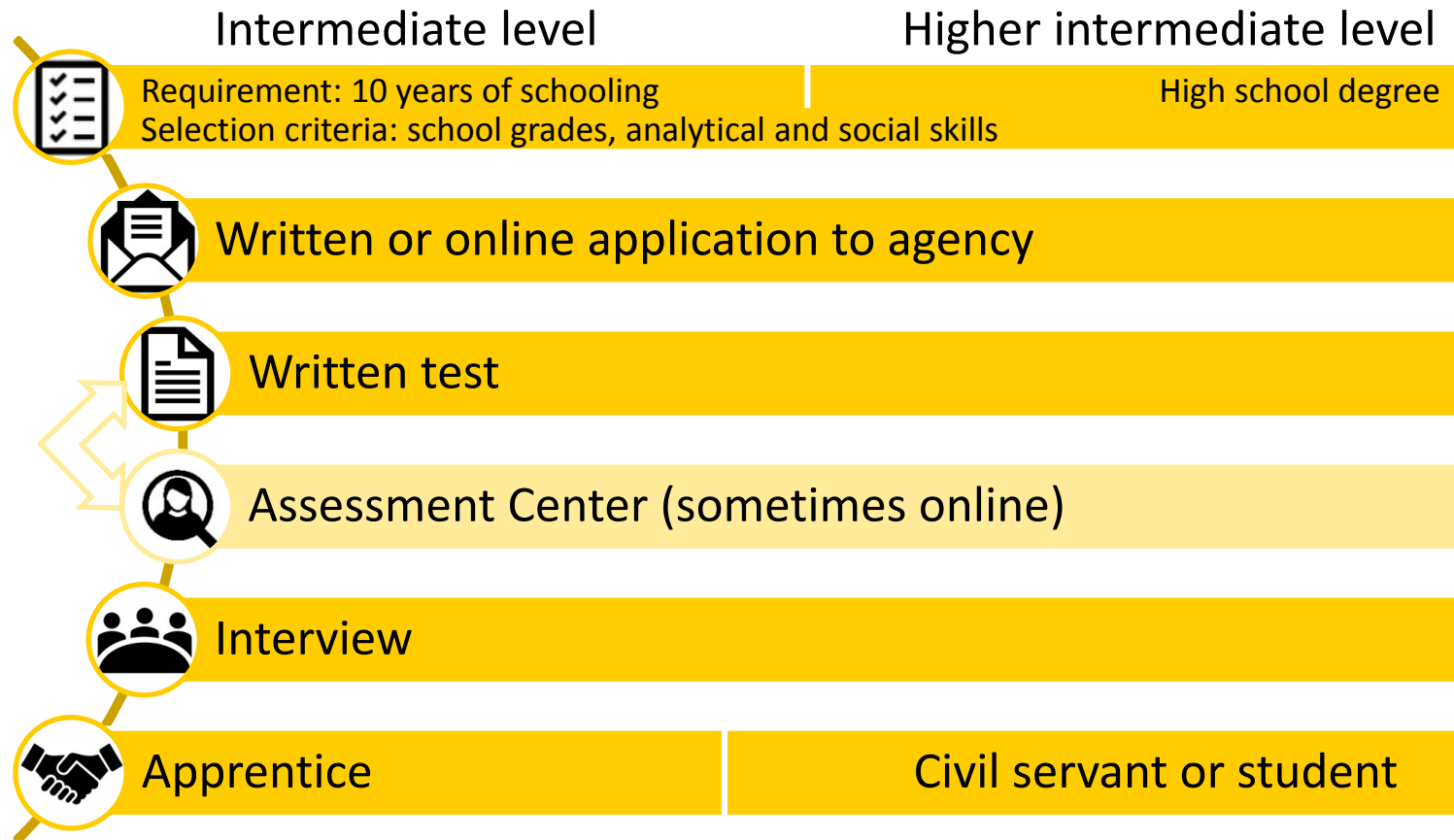
- » Practical training at agency
  - » Instructors/supervisors
  - » Project work and day-to-day work
- » Studies
  - » Share of law mostly 50% (necessary for civil service qualification)
- » Coordination between theory and practice e.g. through yearly meetings, internship reports etc.

Average public administration study program (n = 31)



# Education for Public Administration in Germany

## Recruitment – typical process



# Successful Elements of German Public Administration Education

## Recruitment



### Attractivity

- High job security provides long-term perspective



### Recruitment process

- Multiple stages
- Objective



### Selection criteria

- Performance
- Social skills
- Value orientation

# Successful Elements of German Public Administration Education

## Goals and content

### Vocational education and training



#### Theory

- Law focus
  - Application of laws and regulation
  - Strong culture of Rule of Law
- Interdisciplinary approach
  - Different dimensions of administrative action
- Partial specializations
  - Decision-making and working in a complex environment



#### Practice

- Knowledge & skills
  - Work organization
  - Processes
  - Structure of the administration
- Applying theoretical knowledge
- Internalizing values through socialization
- Social skills

Application-oriented learning

Reflected practice

Goal: “administration all-rounders“



# Successful Elements of German Public Administration Education

## Organization & teaching staff



### Organization

- Variation between blocks of schooling and practical phases
- Numerous practical stations (mostly 8 to 10) foster comprehensive understanding of the agency and practical knowledge
- Clear-cut responsibilities: instruction managers and instructors in each department



### Teachers & practice instructors

- Interdisciplinary composition of teaching staff and mix of theory and practice
- Teaching skills training for teaching practitioners & instructors



### Legal and institutional framework

- Framework legislation defines job profiles and allows for flexibility in practice
- Boards for exchange and other bodies update contents





# Successful Elements of German Public Administration Education

## Fitness for Transformation



### Quality management

- Regular evaluations of classes and teachers
- Yearly exchange between instruction managers and schools
- Appointing quality managers
- Boards and committees
- Accreditation



### Reforms

- Institutional framework: board for exchange, self-organization of schools/ universities
- Reforms with the participation of all stakeholders (ministries for education and the interior, students, agencies)

# Education for Public Administration in Germany

## Weaknesses and current reform debate



### Weaknesses

- Didactic qualification of practitioners
- Fragmented responsibilities hinder reforms



### Reform debate

- Increasing the shares of public management, participative administration, and e-government
- Internal education institutions isolate civil servants from private sector and other federal states
- Bureaucratic socialization hinders innovative spirit

## Potential Elements for an Idea transfer

### Basic conditions

- Political consensus on a professional administration
- Appreciation of practical knowledge
- Career perspectives in the public sector
- Clear job profiles entailing study objectives and a competence catalog

### Potential elements for an idea transfer to partner countries

- Improving recruitment through multi-stage, (more) objective application processes
- “Dualizing” the education for public administration
- Institutional framework for quality management, reform processes, flexibilization of the education for public administration
- Introducing basic module + modularized concept of continuous education

## Idea transfer

### Application process

- Conditions: Clear job profiles entailing a competence catalog to weigh selection criteria

Written or online procedure (ideally also app-based)



Written or online test



Interview or assessment center



## Idea transfer

### „Dualizing“ the education for public administration

#### Increasing share of practical elements in training and studies

- Conditions: financial and human resources
- Acquisition and qualification of practice instructors and teaching practitioners
- Attributing practice instructors in agencies
- Defining basic practice stations (typically main branches of the administration)
- Types of examination that combine theory and practice and foster reflection
- Optional: Blended Learning during practice phases

#### Introducing theoretical components to on-the-job training

- Conditions: financial and human resources
- Founding or enlarging existing vocational schools/ universities of applied sciences
- Defining learning objectives
- Developing concepts to reconcile schooling and work

# Idea transfer

## Anchoring fitness for transformation in institutions

### Quality management

- Evaluation of courses and teachers
- Quality managers
- Institutionalized and regular meetings on QM with relevant stakeholders

### Fitness for transformation

- Precondition: regular evaluations and needs assessment
- Sufficient freedom and flexibility
- Clear procedures and decision rules
- Participation of all relevant stakeholders

### Bottom-up adjustments

- Freedom to keep the coursework up-to-date
- Functional or territorial specialization

# Idea transfer

## Basic module of administration education



### Basic module

- Defining foundational values, skills and knowledge that every employee should learn
- Practical learning periods that enhance the understanding of
  - Administration structures
  - Organization
  - Procedures



### Optional: modularized concept of continuing education

- Devising a modularized concept of continuous education
  - Different career paths and specializations
- According salaries
- Human resources development concept

## Conclusion

1. The system of education for public administration in Germany can be considered as successful regarding several aspects.
2. Some of its elements are relevant and potentially transferrable in the context of development cooperation.
3. The system of education for public administration cannot serve as a blueprint, however. Each idea transfer has to be based on a needs assessment.



## Discussion

- » Which aspects of this study are interesting against the background of your experiences?
- » Which information regarding the system of education for public administration in Germany do you need to assess the possibilities for transfer?
- » Which elements of success are interesting for continuous education as well?