



Vocational Training Preparation – A new concept of vocational preparation for learning-impaired and socially disadvantaged young people

► Vocational preparation schemes are in a state of upheaval. The present public employment services measures will merge into three qualification levels of a new concept. Up to now the legislators have formulated clearly delineated guidelines for vocational preparation schemes as an integral part of the Vocational Education and Training Act (BBiG) and introduced a new term for them, Vocational Training Preparation.

This article will show some of the differences between Vocational Training Preparation and the new concept of the public employment services. It will show some of the reasons for the existing differences and at the same time indicate some of the preconditions for resolving them.

From vocational preparation to vocational training preparation

Vocational preparation schemes were introduced during the worldwide economic crisis, after World War II and after 1974 in the western part of Germany as a response to four developments:

(1) In 1969 the Vocational Education and Training Act entered into force, § 28, paragraph 2 of which stipulated that young people under 18 years of age could only be trained in recognised training occupations. The semi-skilled training provided by companies until then, which was losing importance, was abolished by the exclusivity principle in the Vocational Education and Training Act (BBiG) for young people under 18 years of age. It was replaced by the “vocational preparation schemes” funded by the public employment services and/or the federal states, the participants in which were prepared either for employment or for initial vocational training. Thus despite the exclusivity principle of the BBiG there continued to be young semi-skilled workers available on the labour market.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of § 28 BBiG, it continued to be and still is permissible to employ young people under the age of 18 in regular employment. But in the long run it turned out not to be very attractive for companies to employ young people of compulsory vocational school age. The practice of dividing up periods of vocational school attendance and shifting them to times when the young workers¹ were unemployed² did nothing to improve the situation, often considered annoying, in which young workers were placed in part-time vocational schools. The young people were able to perform their part-time vocational duty by taking part in vocational preparation schemes before taking up a job. After that year they were available to the labour market without restrictions.



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(3) Vocational preparation schemes were introduced in periods when training places were not in sufficient supply. The number of participants increases when apprenticeships are scarce. Thus vocational preparation was also created as a substitute in the absence of training places, and contributes in no small measure to reducing the number of young people without training places. Thus in the 2002/2003 school year there were about 79,500 young people in the school vocational preparation year, and the number of participants has increased continuously since 1993.³ The vocational preparation schemes of the public employment services had an annual average of 108,018 participants in 2003, so that the total number of persons in vocational preparation schemes in 2003 was 187,000.⁴

(4) After completion of full-time compulsory schooling, many young people are not yet capable of choosing a course of vocational education and training. They are often termed “not yet ripe for training”. Another reason for introducing vocational preparation schemes was to give them the possibility of choosing a recognised occupation and preparing for a course of vocational education and training.

The heterogeneity of the addressees made it necessary from the beginning to differentiate the vocational preparation schemes. Up to August 2004 a total of eleven different measures were implemented in Germany in the employment services sphere (including special measures for young people with disabilities).

The course was set for a re-orientation of vocational preparation schemes in 1999 in the context of the Alliance for Jobs. The goal was to establish not only a link in content but also an organisational link with vocational education and training. The qualifications acquired were to be certified. In addition, periods of company training were to be given more weight in vocational preparation. For that purpose, enterprises were to be recruited that had not previously been providing training or were unable to provide

full training.⁵ The results of the Alliance opened up the possibility of dividing up the work between companies and education providers. All the practical technical training can be provided in the context of periods of practical company training. All other training activities, especially the social-pedagogic work, can be undertaken by education providers. The *Basic Training Courses (G)* of the public employment services functioned as a general model for the further development of vocational preparation schemes. They are characterised by two features: the recipients are trainable young people whose training objective is to begin vocational training.

Since the January 1, 2003 amendment of the BBiG, vocational preparation schemes have been an integral part of the BBiG. The discrete term “*vocational training preparation*” was chosen for them. The legislators adhered to the Alliance concept while at the same time making it more precise. Vocational training preparation is now rigidly oriented towards subsequent vocational training. Its content, which can be imparted in the form of qualification modules, should therefore be derived from recognised training occupations or comparable training occupations. The targeted certification of qualifications acquired is also a part of the vocational training preparation. Guidelines for developing qualification modules and the targeted certification were enacted in the form of an ordinance (BAVBVO).⁶

However, vocational training preparation addresses a target group that is quite distinct from that in the G-courses, which served as a model for the Alliance decision. The target group includes only learning-impaired or socially disadvantaged young people who are not yet capable of commencing vocational education and training with any prospect of success. Those not provided with apprenticeships are explicitly excluded from the recipients of vocational training preparation.

For learning-impaired or socially disadvantaged young people, the training target could only be achieved if principles were implemented in vocational training preparation that had proved their worth in the training of disadvantaged young people. In that respect it is only logical that the legislators should prescribe the individualisation of vocational training preparation and comprehensive social-pedagogic supervision of the participants.

Qualification modules

- qualify one to do a job that is part of the training in a recognised training occupation or equivalent vocational training,
- have a binding reference to the skills and knowledge included in the training framework of the corresponding training regulation or to the training content of an equivalent course of training,
- should have a placement volume of between 140 and 420 hours,
- end with an ascertainment of performance.⁷

Qualification modules as the innovative core of vocational training preparation

Fundamentals of the ability to perform in a profession have to be imparted in vocational training preparation. That can be done through the use of qualification modules that are described as learning units, limited in content and time, that have a series of specific features. (cf. inset, p. 37)

Qualification modules are currently being developed in many places. Initial orientation aids for this task exist for the providers of vocational preparation schemes. They differ substantially in concept and detail, especially in the degree of their orientation on the guidelines of those enacting laws and ordinances for the development of qualification modules for vocational training preparation.⁸

It is proposed in the orientation aids of BIBB that the following quality standards should serve as orientation in future for the development of qualification modules for vocational training preparation:⁹

Adherence to formal standards

Qualification modules shall be described in qualification descriptions. The data to be entered are to be found in Annex 1 of the BAVBVO. The developers of qualification modules should adhere strictly to those guidelines and thus help ensure that even though they have been developed by a wide range of education providers and for various recognised training occupations they can be unequivocally identified as qualification modules for vocational training preparation.

Content geared to training occupation

Activities are to be described in the qualification descriptions that are derived from the framework training plan of a recognised training occupation (or equivalent vocational training), i.e. only those activities that are an integral part of the vocational training are to be imparted in vocational training preparation.

The ability to act in a vocation as didactic orientation

Developers should select in particular those activities that open up learning opportunities for the participants corresponding to those in action-oriented vocational training.

Target group orientation when determining training time

The time corridor of 140 to 420 hours is a binding stipulation for the duration of placement. It is intended to ensure that participants in vocational training preparation have not just “acquainted themselves with” the activities contained in the qualification description but really master them at a level corresponding to that of vocational education and training. The large time margin is intended to

ensure that the target can be aspired to under the conditions given, and will also be achieved if possible.

Regionalisation of curriculum work

The individual providers of vocational training preparation are required under § 3 paragraph 2 BAVBVO in conjunction with § 51 paragraph 2 BBiG to develop qualification modules (if qualification modules are to be used in their vocational training preparation). In the words of § 3 paragraph 2 BAVBVO this is a binding stipulation of the enactors of the ordinance. It is the precondition for ensuring that the given training conditions of the individual provider can be taken into account when qualification modules are developed.¹⁰



Stumbling blocks: Vocational training preparation facing the acid test

At the present time, however, the clarification undertaken in vocational training preparation, while welcome from the education policy standpoint, is normative only; for it is still vocational preparation that is being carried out in the form of vocational preparation years at vocational schools and in particular vocational preparation schemes of the public employment services, which as of September 2004 may only be carried out in the form of a new concept,¹¹ and not “vocational training preparation”.

Since it is not possible to predict that the legislators will budget for incentive funds so that vocational training preparation can be carried out according to their stipulations, in fact, apart from what is offered in school and independent social work measures for youth, only the vocational preparation schemes of the new concept will be implemented. For them, however, the Social Code (SGB) Book III is the decisive standard and the unlimited implementation rules of the Federal Employment Services are the decisive stipulations for the providers of such measures.

Features of vocational training preparation under the terms of the BBiG and the new technical concept of the public employment services

Circumstances	Vocational training preparation under the terms of the BBiG	New technical concept of the Federal Employment Services
Target group	Learning-impaired or socially disadvantaged persons who are not yet capable of commencing vocational training (§ 50 paragraph 1 BBiG).	Persons not provided for under 25 years of age, irrespective of their school background and irrespective of whether or not they are personally capable of commencing vocational education and training (new concept, pp. 2 and 8).
Training target	Leading to vocational training in a recognised training occupation or equivalent vocational training (§ 1 paragraph 1 a BBiG)	Alternatively: commencement of training or commencement of employment (new concept, p. 2)
Stipulation regarding design and implementation of measures	Vocational training preparation must correspond to the special needs of the target group in content, type, goal and duration and be accompanied by comprehensive social-pedagogic guidance and support (§ 50 paragraph 2 BBiG).	The measures (qualification modules) must be geared to the participants and offer on-the-job qualification (new concept, p. 18).
Use of qualification modules	Qualification modules pursuant to BBiG and BAVBVO can be used (§ 51 paragraph 1 BBiG and § 3 paragraph 1 BAVBVO).	The content of the educational measures for vocational preparation is generally offered in the form of "promotion and qualification sequences" (new concept, p. 17) Qualification modules pursuant to §§ 50 ff. BBiG and BAVBVO are the "central element" for imparting basic vocational skills. They "have to be tailored to the specific target groups and fulfil defined standards and legal stipulations" (new concept, p. 18).
Content of qualification modules	Selected content from recognised training occupations or equivalent courses of vocational training only (§ 51 paragraph 2 BBiG).	Basic inter-occupational qualifications or elements of a course of vocational education and training (new concept, p. 18)
Providers of vocational training preparation	Both enterprises and education providers. Enterprises where possible (Bundestag document 15/26 re § 50 paragraph 2 and § 52 paragraph 2 BBiG).	Education providers (in close cooperation with enterprises pursuant to the new concept, p. 20).

The reason for this parallel existence of vocational training preparation and the actually implemented or planned vocational preparation schemes is that there are no provisions in the BBiG for vocational training preparation which could operate as an "exclusivity principle" such as exists in § 28 for vocational training.

An unresolved relationship: Vocational training preparation and the new concept of the Federal Employment Services

The main features of the new technical concept have been developed since January 2001 in independent pilot projects¹². To start with, all participants are subjected to an admission analysis. After that they are assigned to the various qualification levels, elementary stage, promotion stage and transitional qualification. The direct transition from the admission analysis to a course of training or a job is also possible. All qualification levels can either be attended one after the other or alternatively attained

through direct transition to one of the higher qualification levels.

Two questions that have not been resolved are whether the existing vocational preparation schemes of the employment services are "vocational training preparation" under the terms of the BBiG and which of the qualification levels of the new concept can be considered to be vocational training preparation, for which recourse can legitimately be had to the instruments created for vocational training preparation and for which there are binding stipulations in the BAVBVO.

However, there are also some irreconcilable discrepancies between the stipulations of the Federal Employment Services in the new concept and what the BBiG says about vocational training preparation (see overview). They lead to irritations in the run-up to the introduction of the new concept. One thing seems very clear, however: it is certain that only a part of the qualification levels of the new concept can be considered vocational training preparation, and that only under the precondition that they comply with all the features of vocational training preparation listed in the overview.

Outlook

The BBiG's vocational training preparation offers a chance to ensure that in future vocational preparation schemes will be implemented only for those young people who really need them. For young people who go through vocational preparation schemes because they have not found a training place, the Law on Securing Vocational Training¹³ offers a new prospect of access to vocational education and training. The two instruments, BBiG vocational training preparation and apprenticeship funding pursuant to the Law on Securing Vocational Training, comprise a harmonised concept, the implementation of which could help enable and accelerate the admission of many young people to vocational education and training. Last but not least, this would mean an end to the squandering of substantial resources in the field of vocational preparation, since there are many young people in these schemes who actually would like to complete a course of vocational training and have the aptitude to do so without any special preparation.

As long as the Law on Securing Vocational Training has not come into effect and cannot develop the hoped-for

effect, the new concept of the public employment services (together with the vocational preparation years at the vocational schools) will take over the sponge function of vocational preparation, since an independent offer of vocational training preparation does not exist. Nevertheless, essential features of the BBiG's vocational training preparation have had a deciding influence in shaping the new concept of the public employment services. These include the greater alignment of the content of vocational preparation with the content of vocational training in the form of qualification modules, and the intention to involve enterprises to a greater extent.

The existing discrepancies between the provisions on vocational training preparation and the assertions in the new concept can be attributed to the fact that the new concept necessarily has to cover a much wider range of vocational preparation schemes than is intended with vocational training preparation. Only when no one but the young people for whom it is intended are taking part in the employment services' vocational preparation schemes will the preconditions be given for the employment services' vocational preparation schemes to correspond to the stipulation of the BBiG on vocational training preparation. ■

Notes

- 1 Cf. Herkert, § 19, RdNr. 5 a. If the young unskilled workers are of compulsory vocational school age they are called young workers (or young office workers).
- 2 Thus in gardening enterprises, for example, young workers were laid off in winter when there was little work to be done and re-hired at the beginning of the gardening season. The young people were then given "schooling" during that enforced break.
- 3 Report on Vocational Education and Training 2003, Chapter 2.5.1.
- 4 Those participating in independent courses offered by Youth Social Work on the basis of SGB VIII are not included.
- 5 Alliance for Jobs. Decision of 29th March 1999: Content linkage and organisational linkage of vocational preparation education measures and subsequent vocational education and training, p. 1
- 6 Verordnung über die Bescheinigung von Grundlagen beruflicher Handlungsfähigkeit im Rahmen der Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung (Berufsausbildungsvorbereitungs-Bescheinigungsverordnung BAVBVO) of July 16, 2003 (BGBl I No. 36, pp. 1472 ff. of July 21, 2003) (Ordinance Concerning the Certification of Fundamentals of Vocational Capacity to Act in the Context of Vocational Training Preparation)
- 7 Cf. § 3 of Verordnung über die Bescheinigung von Grundlagen beruflicher Handlungsfähigkeit im Rahmen der Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung (Berufsausbildungsvorbereitungs-Bescheinigungsverordnung BAVBVO) of July 16, 2003 (BGBl I No. 36, pp. 1472 ff. of July 21, 2003) (Ordinance Concerning the Certification of Fundamentals of Vocational Capacity to Act in the Context of Vocational Training Preparation)
- 8 Borsdorf, E. et al.: Entwicklung und Einsatz von Qualifizierungsbausteinen in der Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung. Offenbach: IINBAS 2003 (Berichte und Materialien, volume 10); ZDH and ZWH (ed.): Qualifizierungsbausteine im Handwerk. Grundkonzeption. Berlin and Düsseldorf 2003. BIBB team of authors Brötz, Elsner, Gathmann, Mettin, Rütter, Schwarz, Webers, Westphal, Zielke: Vocational Training Preparation. Entwicklung von Qualifizierungsbausteinen. Bonn, March 2004
- 9 In addition to the database of qualification modules, the examples and practical aids developed by BIBB for the development of qualification modules and the relevant legal bases are to be found under www.good-practice.bibb.de.
- 10 In individual cases that do not rule out the adoption of already existing qualification modules, if scrutiny by the provider does not indicate the need to modify the qualification module, and if no third party rights are violated through such adoption (respect of copyright).
- 11 Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Berufsvorbereitende Bildungsmaßnahmen. Neues Fachkonzept. January 12, 2004.
- 12 Cf. the April 2003 issue (No 16) of the journal *Direkt: Fördern und Qualifizieren*, devoted to the development initiative "New Support Structure for Young People with Special Support Requirements".
- 13 Cf. Draft of the Gesetz zur Sicherung und Förderung des Fachkräftenachwuchses und der Berufsausbildungschancen der jungen Generation (Berufsausbildungssicherungsgesetz – BerASichG), BT document 15/2820 of March 30, 2004