

4 Plural Administration in Dual Systems in Selected European Countries

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Abstract This chapter presents a comparative qualitative analysis of governance structures in the dual VET systems of Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. First a theoretical framework for the classification of plural systems such as dual apprenticeship training is discussed. It is argued that governance in VET can be described according to the coherence of the system on the one hand and the rationale of agency on the other, and that four ideal types of governance can be distinguished. We present a methodology to implement this framework in data collection and analysis on the basis of desk research and an evaluation tool for expert workshops. In the final sections some results of the qualitative studies and the expert workshops are presented and some conclusions for VET practice and VET research are suggested.

4.1 Introduction

The topic of the present chapter is a comparison and evaluation of the dual systems of vocational education and training in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland with a view to identifying strengths and weaknesses. This comparison is based on desk research and a qualitative evaluation tool for expert workshops. The study was carried out with the aim to assess the performance of the German VET system in an international perspective with a particular emphasis on the optimisation of administrative structures. It is these governance and support structures that have a crucial influence on the quality of VET systems.

Dual vocational education and training is often perceived as a particularity of the German education system. It is a feature that is rooted in the German industrial culture and contributes to the competitiveness of the national economy. At the same time this alleged particularity seems to be the reason for the relatively low acceptance of dual apprenticeship training in the international context. This, how-

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ever, is a misconception which is based on a somewhat fuzzy terminology in the discourse on vocational education and training.

If vocational education and training is understood as the qualification of skilled workers, then the aim of VET is to impart vocational competence (i.e. the competence to act professionally) to the trainees. The acquisition of vocational competence (professionalism) requires reflected working experience, which is the crucial point of vocational learning and development processes. Professional working experience alone is insufficient, as is the impartation of subject-specific theoretical knowledge. The latter does not lead to practical competence. Therefore the *combination* of professional working experience and the acquisition of related theoretical knowledge is fundamental for vocational education and training. This means that each occupation, be it mathematician, medical doctor or bank clerk, must ultimately be learned on the job as well. The dual organisation of vocational education and training is therefore no special type of vocational education, but its constitutive feature.

Two types of dual vocational education and training can be distinguished: (1) the one-phase or integrated duality and (2) the two-phase or alternating duality. Higher vocational education at universities is typically organised according to the two-phase model. A study programme relevant for the chosen occupation is followed, after graduation, by a phase of practical training on the job, e.g. by means of a preparatory service. In non-academic VET the two models compete with each other.

Given a differentiated understanding of duality one can observe that dual vocational education and training is by no means a German speciality, but the genuine form of vocational education and training, which is established in any place where prospective skilled workers are qualified for their tasks. The dual organisation of vocational education for non-academic occupations presupposes a plural administration, the quality of which varies considerably from country to country.

4.2 Research problem

Systems of vocational education and training may be classified according to various sets of criteria depending on the perspectives of different research disciplines. Whereas in vocational pedagogy there is usually a classification according to the learning venues – a typical example is the distinction of “company-based” and “school-based” types of vocational training, which may be supplemented by the identification of mixed types of collaborative training –, the economic and social sciences tend to favour a classification according to the patterns by which processes of vocational education are controlled. This is the perspective of the coordination of agents from society and politics and the accommodation of interdependence between them, which has received increasing attention over the past two decades under the heading of “governance”. The reason is that traditional approaches to

collective agency such as hierarchy or the market were found insufficient for the explanation of a number of phenomena (see Benz et al. 2007). It is the intention of the present chapter to investigate the performance of these governance structures in the domain of vocational education and training.

In vocational education and training three ideal types of regulation and governance are usually distinguished on the basis of the roles of the agents and the underlying rationale of agency. The dominant influence may come either from the state, the market or professional groups. On the basis of the categories of social regulation that have been commonplace in sociology since the time of Max Weber – tradition, market and bureaucratic rationality – the prevalent typology in the social sciences distinguishes three models of governance, which can be termed market-driven, state-controlled and occupation-driven or corporatist VET governance (see Greinert 1998, 19–22; Clematide et al. 2005, 3–4).

The market-driven model of VET governance is characterised by the immediate control of vocational qualification by the employment system and the demand on the labour market. Vocational qualification is oriented towards the requirements of employers and takes place on the job and in a private sector of training providers offering job-related learning modules. The responsibility for the training process rests with the learners, who are expected to acquire the qualifications required by employers on their own. Typical examples of this model are the United States and Japan, where the relative absence of a regulated VET system is associated with a large number of students attending upper secondary schools and higher education. In this system VET as well as the access to VET are controlled by employers as “customers”, whose needs and demands determine the contents of training so that the transfer of qualifications from one company to another is difficult (cf. Greinert 1998, 20–21). On the one hand this system is regarded as quite flexible and adapted to the needs of the employment system, on the other hand the dependence on the private supply of training opportunities and the risk of underinvestment in vocational education are seen as serious flaws of this model (cf. Clematide et al. 2005, 3).

The state-controlled model of VET is characterised by a dominance of school-based vocational education, which is subject to a relatively tight regulation by state authorities. In this model, which is prevalent, for instance, in France or China, the regulation is based on the school’s logic of action and includes a focus on civic education. Enterprises do not have an institutionalised role in this system, but serve as suppliers of internships while all regulatory functions – planning, management and control – are concentrated in the public sector. The contents of vocational education are typically based on theoretical and academic types of education (cf. Greinert 1998, 21–22). Due to the integration into the state-controlled education system there is a relatively close connection to general education. Moreover, the supply of training opportunities is independent of the provision of training places by private companies. The major difficulty of this system is the weak linkage to the labour market (cf. Clematide et al. 2005, 3).

The third model is usually referred to as traditional occupation-based or corporatist regulation (cf. Greinert 1998, 19–20). Historically this model is derived from the apprenticeship tradition in the craft trades. It is characterised by a strong influence of the training companies and the chambers (i.e. the corporate bodies or associations that represent the business community at the local or regional level). This concerns the access to training as well as the definition of training contents and the responsibility for examinations. Today occupation-based regulation is part of “mixed” systems of cooperative governance in which the regulation of vocational education takes place in a plural network of state bodies, enterprises or employers’ associations as well as trade unions or professional associations. Variations of these mixed models of regulations can be found in systems of cooperative (dual or alternating) VET as they exist in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland.

In practice the most important examples of these mixed VET systems are the models of alternance and dual apprenticeship training. The common feature of these models is the combination of in-company training and school instruction. In the case of alternating training the phases of school instruction and practical training alternate in relatively long periods, and the vocational school or college remains the dominant learning venue. Curricula are usually fixed by state authorities, and despite the involvement of enterprises the state has a dominating role in this model.

The situation is somewhat different in the model of dual apprenticeship training. This model is characterised by the fact that the vocational education and training system is composed of two independent but interrelated subsystems, namely, an in-company training sector organised by private enterprises and a corresponding sector of vocational school instruction for which the state is responsible (cf. Greinert 1998, 23–24). Although this model appears at first glance as a combination of market and state regulation, there are also considerable elements of occupation-based and corporatist governance. In Germany, for instance, the traditional strong role of the occupational principle (*Berufsprinzip*) entails a control of the access to vocational training by the occupational groups concerned. Following the tradition of the guilds, they participate in the formulation of training curricula and influence the organisation of vocational examinations through the chambers, which are the bodies that officially represent the companies.

In what follows we will discuss the problem how the systems of dual or alternating apprenticeship training in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland can be characterised and situated with regard to their governance structures, and how this affects the performance of the systems. The epistemic interest is to identify examples of good practice in plural administration that can serve as a basis for policy recommendations.

4.3 Methodology

Plural governance systems in which state-controlled and market-driven or corporatist types of governance overlap can be classified on the basis of two dimensions of the governance process. The first dimension is the degree of coordination between the different agents with their respective internal logic or, to put it differently, the integration of the system. At one end of the scale the “plural administration” may be completely fragmented. In this case the public and private or corporative agents act autonomously within the legal framework and follow their own internal logic of agency without coordinating their activities. Each class of agents fulfils the tasks assigned to them in the context of the VET system independently. The responsibilities are not allocated according to functions, but according to subjects and domains, which means that the administrative functions of rule-making, execution and monitoring are dispersed across all types of bodies in varying constellations.

The second dimension is the aspect of the core principle that underlies the behaviour of the different agents and thus shapes the governance process. It is common in public management to distinguish between an input oriented type of management by rules and resources, and an output oriented management by means of the products and services to be achieved by the management process (cf. Jann 2001; Stöbe-Blossey 2001). Input control is typical of the traditional bureaucratic model of public administration, which is primarily concerned with the implementation of the law. Output control, on the other hand, is one of the cornerstones of the New Public Management approach, which claims to improve the efficiency of the public sector by means of management techniques adapted from the private business sector (cf. Osborne and Gaebler 1993; Spicer 2004).

From an ethical point of view the classical input orientation is an expression of a deontological conception, of which the most important example is Kant’s theory of ethics, whereas output orientation is based on a teleological point of view, which is rooted in pre-modern conceptions like Aristotelianism. To put it differently, input control is equivalent to the orientation and evaluation of one’s activities according to universal principles or norms that take primacy over the specific goals of a particular action, whereas output control means that actions are judged according to their contribution to the fulfilment of the objective in question. Taking into consideration the fundamental concerns that a consequentialist ethic almost inevitably evokes because an exclusive orientation towards ends always lacks the impartiality that is necessary for the morality of actions, one can assume that an output oriented type of management cannot replace, but only supplement a management by rules.

These two dimensions allow for the construction of a coordinate system whose four quadrants represent the different types of plural corporatist governance system in vocational education and training. In the case of *afragmented input control* the management processes follow the paradigm of the implementation of norms as

expressed in the principle of the rule of law. The responsibilities are dispersed among different institutions or sub-systems of the political system. This includes rule-making as well, which is carried out by different bodies for their respective domains. The distinctive feature of fragmentation is that competences are allocated according to policy areas and that a vertical integration takes place at best within these areas. The result is that the institutions operate relatively independently of each other and have few incentives to coordinate their actions. A *coordinated input control*, on the contrary, is also characterised by a primacy of rules, but institutional arrangements such as the concentration of legislative powers and a consistent responsibility of government departments allow for a coordination of the bodies involved. Coordinated input control therefore features a more systematic structure of the legal framework and a consistent and coordinated implementation of the rules. The third model is *fragmented output control*, which combines a highly decentralised set of administrative bodies with a management by objectives. As this type of management automatically entails a relatively high autonomy on the part of institutions, the integration of the system as a whole can be secured only by means of a coordinated or centralised definition of the objectives in question. In the absence of such a centralisation or coordination there is the risk of the ultimate disintegration of the VET system and its replacement with a market of qualifications. Accordingly the fourth model, which can be termed *coordinated output control*, aims to secure the integration of the system by coherent objectives, which are formulated by a central body or developed jointly by the bodies involved. The following table summarises this conceptual framework:

Table 4.1 Types of governance in vocational education and training

	Integration of the system	
	Low	High
Rationale of agency	Fragmented output control	Coordinated output control
Input Output	Fragmented input control	Coordinated input control

The classification of existing VET systems according to the taxonomy described above allows for the development of policy recommendations if a type of governance can be identified that can reasonably be considered the optimum for dual or alternating vocational education and training. Governance within the public sector faces the problem that a simple adaptation of evaluative criteria that were originally developed for the private business sector is not possible. The reason is the difference between the internal logic of the economic system on the one hand and the state or public sector on the other. Whilst business firms in a market economy op-

erate within a fixed system of objectives with the supreme goal of profit maximisation, this fixed system of goals is alien to political (sub-) systems – at least from the standard liberal perspective of an open society with democratic institutions and procedures. The only exception are communitarian models, which view politics as the pursuit of a shared conception of the good life and accordingly assign to public institutions not only procedural, but also substantive functions. As already stated above, this teleological interpretation of policy making is inadequate under the conditions of modern societies since it cannot satisfy the legitimate demand for impartiality and therefore needs at least to be complemented by procedural norms.

One example of a position that views governance in the public sector as a process exclusively oriented towards efficiency and performance is the New Public Management approach, which is characterised by a technocratic concept of governance and an instrumentalist view of the state (cf. Spicer 2004; Spicer 2007). This view misconceives the specific character of *political* governance and supports a model of collective decision-making that ultimately lacks democratic legitimacy. Spicer (2004) criticizes this model as “teleocratic”. The factors neglected in this model are the openness of societal and political goals and the diversity of interests that needs to be accommodated by deliberative institutions and procedures. This also has consequences for the scientific analysis of the phenomenon of public policy. An economic or managerial approach can only be supplementary, and a purely technical concept of governance has to be avoided in order to maintain the necessary room for manoeuvre with regard to negotiations and compromise. It must be observed that coordination between the agents is not good by itself, but only if it is based on deliberation and the autonomy of agents. Notwithstanding the sound objections to the low efficiency of traditional input control and the fragmentation of competences one cannot simply conclude that the opposite model of coordinated output control must be the optimum.

Accordingly the approach of the New Public Management, which is purely output oriented, is no adequate way of evaluating the quality of governance structures in VET with the aim to define an optimal state of affairs. An alternative approach that pays more attention to the special character of the political process has been discussed under the heading of “public value” since the 1990s (cf. Smith 2004). This approach is based on the idea that public accountability can increase the efficiency of state institutions. The difference from New Public Management is that the “value” of public services is not defined by reference to a given set of preferences in combination with a monetary performance criterion, but established by public deliberation. The core idea is to combine democratic legitimacy and economic efficiency. The term “public value” can be defined as the value for the community generated by public services and management activities. This value is defined by the preferences of the citizens as established in collective decision-making procedures and quantified by the difference between the benefit for the public and the necessary costs (cf. Kelly et al. 2002, 4).

The concept of public value leads to somewhat different interpretations of the various dimensions of public management (cf. Smith 2004, 77). This starts initially

with the conception of *public interest*, which is neither an aggregation of individual preferences as in the market model nor defined unilaterally by politicians or experts as in traditional public administration. Instead, the goals to be pursued are the topic of public deliberation, in which individual and collective preferences are shaped by argumentation. Accordingly the *performance objectives* are complex as well; besides the provision of service outputs they may include the satisfaction of citizens/customers, the assurance of the desired societal outcome, and the maintenance of trust and legitimacy. There is a *multiple accountability* to the public as people are addressed as citizens, customers and taxpayers. This distinguishes the Public Value approach from New Public Management where accountability is established hierarchically through performance contracts and sometimes through market mechanisms. A crucial part is played by *public participation*, which extends beyond elections in the traditional bureaucratic model or customer satisfaction surveys in the managerial model and requires public deliberation about policy objectives. Finally the *role of managers* has to be considered. Their role is not just to respond to political direction or to meet agreed performance targets, but to respond to the preferences of citizens and to renew trust through guaranteeing quality services.

It can be expected that the “public value” model of plural and deliberative governance is a promising alternative to state-controlled or market-driven types of public policy. The integration of different stakeholders into complex decision-making processes is discussed in public policy research under the concept of *governance network*, which can be regarded as a particular way of implementing plural administration. The current debates on the democratic anchorage of governance networks (for a summary, see Sørensen 2005) show that the measures that may be taken for this purpose correspond to relevant elements of the public value approach and are capable of promoting the implementation of the latter. The ideas of public deliberation, multiple accountability, publicity and the continuous renewal of legitimacy are taken up in these democratization strategies. The following measures can be considered for the democratic anchorage of governance networks: adequate control of networks by democratically elected politicians, adequate representation of relevant stakeholders through the organisations and institutions in the network, adequate means for the citizenry to contest political decisions, and observation of democratic rules and norms that allow for inclusive and deliberative decision-making (cf. Sørensen 2005, 353f.). What is emphasised by these characteristics is that public management within a network – and the VET system may well be considered a network due to its plural structure – must be based on objectives defined by public deliberation as well as on norms and thus combine input and output control if it is to meet the requirements of democratic instead of merely efficient governance. A governance model for the VET system that is optimal in this sense should therefore include a high degree of coordination between the bodies involved and should combine elements of input orientation like participation and deliberation with elements of output orientation such as performance orientation, efficiency and quality assurance.

This model is operationalised by an evaluation tool with several indicators that are listed below. In addition to desk research carried out on the basis of the theoretical framework the set of criteria opens the opportunity to carry out expert interviews with a view to situating the different VET systems within the coordinate system described above. There are seven main criteria, of which five relate to the integration of the system (i.e. coordination and fragmentation) and two to the dimension of input and output orientation. These main criteria are the following:

- Dimension 1: Integration of the system
 - Category 1: Consistent legal framework
 - Category 2: Cooperation of the various bodies
 - Category 3: Innovation strategies
 - Category 4: Balance of relevant policy areas
 - Category 5: Allocation of strategic and operational functions
- Dimension 2: Input and output orientation
 - Category 6: Outcome orientation
 - Category 7: Input orientation

These criteria are operationalised by approximately 30 sub-criteria or items that are evaluated and discussed by experts in the course of evaluation workshops. Respondents are asked to judge the items on a scale from 1 (= not realised) to 10 (= fully realised). The aggregated answers determine the position of the VET system within the matrix described above. The position on the horizontal axis “integration of the system” is defined by the mean of the values for the main criteria 1 to 5 with increasing numerical values indicating a higher degree of coordination. As regards the second dimension, the value is calculated on the basis of the mean of the two remaining main criteria 6 and 7. Given that the two main criteria have a reciprocal relationship so that a system is situated halfway between the poles of input and output control if the two criteria are equally realised, the values are standardised before the mean is calculated. Therefore the value for the position on the vertical axis is calculated according to the following formula:

$$(n_{\text{Outcome}} + 11 - n_{\text{Input}})/2 \quad (4.1)$$

The value expresses which of the two modes of governance has a stronger influence on the VET system in question. The evaluation tool was applied in four expert workshops in Berlin, Copenhagen, Vienna and Zurich in November 2007.

4.4 Research findings

The positioning of the four countries shows that in Germany the fragmentation of governance is particularly strong while in Denmark and in Switzerland there is a remarkable degree of coordination. With a score of 7.8 on the axis “integration” and 2.8 on the “input/output” axis Denmark exemplifies the type of coordinated output control. For Germany (4.4; 6.3) the analysis shows a weak coordination and a clear dominance of input orientation. Austria (6.0; 5.4) shows a stronger, but still relatively weak coordination and a balanced ratio of input and output control. In Switzerland (7.0; 5.1) the coordination is already very strong and almost reaches the Danish figure. In addition there is an almost equal distribution of input and output control, which suggests that the Swiss VET system comes closest to the ideal model of governance as discussed in the previous section.

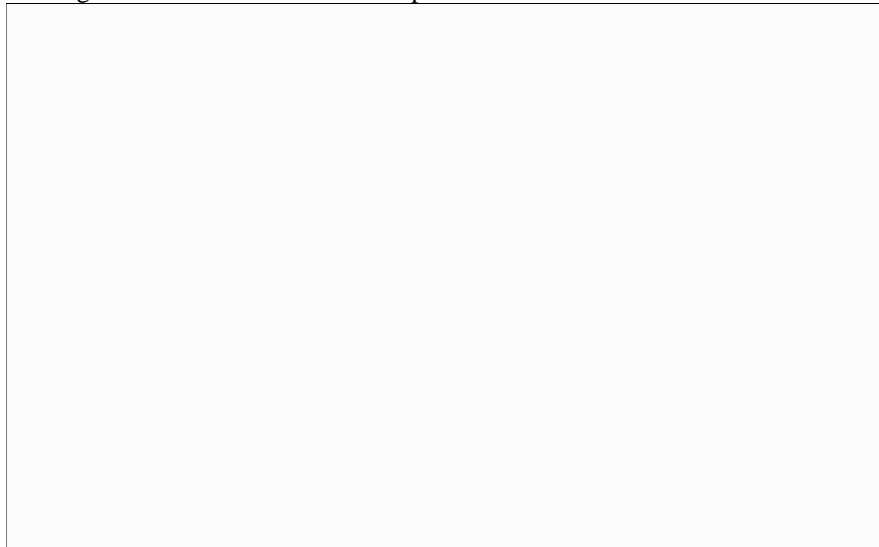


Fig. 4.1 Governance in dual VET systems in transnational comparison

It has to be emphasised also in the light of the previous desk research that Switzerland with its pronounced federalism and language pluralism has a well-developed and coordinated system of dual vocational education and training. The competences are allocated to the national, regional and local levels so as to ensure a good equilibrium of strategic and operational functions according to the principle of subsidiarity. The new Vocational Training Act that came into force in 2005 enacted a fundamental reform of the VET system, following a constitutional amendment in 1999 that concentrated the legislative power for the entire system of vocational education and training (except higher education) at the federal level (cf. Article 63 of the Swiss Constitution). The Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Technology (BBT) became the central institution for the coordination of the

VET system. At the same time all stakeholders in vocational education contribute to the development in VET in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

After the reforms of the past decade Denmark can be regarded as an example of coordinated output-oriented governance. This is illustrated by the fact that the political responsibility is concentrated in one body. It is exclusively with the Ministry of Education, which also ensures the coordination of general and vocational education (see Cort 2005, 13–16). The ministry guarantees that VET programmes comply with the guidelines of education policy. The ministry also supervises the vocational colleges that offer basic and mainstream courses in vocational education and training. All strategic functions like the development of occupational profiles or the recognition of qualifications are located at the national level as an institutionalised cooperation of all stakeholders. This dialogue includes the Council on Initial Vocational Training as the main advisory body as well as twelve trade committees that collaborate in the preparation of framework curricula. At the local level, on the contrary, all operational functions are located, which include also the development of concrete school and training curricula as well as the outline of individual training plans. The main actors at this level are the vocational colleges, the training enterprises and the local VET committees (cf. Cort 2005, 16–18).

Moreover, the Danish system is characterised by a strong outcome orientation. This is shown, for instance, by the autonomy of the vocational colleges and the absence of detailed regulation from the national parliament. The colleges are independent public institutions with their own budgets and a performance-based funding scheme, which have the power to develop their own curricula and training plans within the national framework. This means that the process of curriculum development starts at the national level and is continued at the lower levels as a process of increasing differentiation and individualisation, which ultimately leads to the formulation of individual education and training plans for the trainees. However, this principle of individualisation has little effect in practice given that the local organisation of VET is still strongly influenced by the class structure of the colleges.

To some extent the German system can be regarded as the opposite model to the Danish system. A long tradition of decentralisation has led to a strongly fragmented governance system, as is already shown by the separation of the legislative powers for the two branches of vocational education and training. While the school part of dual apprenticeship training and the school-based VET programmes are under the responsibility of the states (*Länder*), the federal government is responsible for in-company training within dual VET. Finally, the domain of continuing vocational education and training is characterised by an uncoordinated variety of both federal and state regulations.

A distinctive feature of the German system is therefore the distribution of virtually identical functions across different levels of government. In addition there is a heterogeneous involvement of government departments as the ministries of education are responsible for vocational education whilst the supervision of in-company training is in most cases a task of the ministries of economics or labour.

Like Germany and Switzerland, Austria is characterised by strongly developed federal structures. However, contrary to Germany the responsibility for educational policy is concentrated at the federal level, and this applies also to vocational education. This allows for a better coordination of the system than in Germany. The implementation of VET is regulated at the state level, and the Federal Ministry of Education is the supervisory body for the entire education system. In recent years a number of reforms were implemented that followed the modern principles of deregulation and decentralisation, but the dominant paradigm is still juridical and bureaucratic.

The two following charts summarise the means of the experts' assessments given in the evaluation workshops of the main criteria described above. As explained before, the participants evaluated the status quo in their countries for each item on a scale from 1 (not realised) to 10 (fully realised).

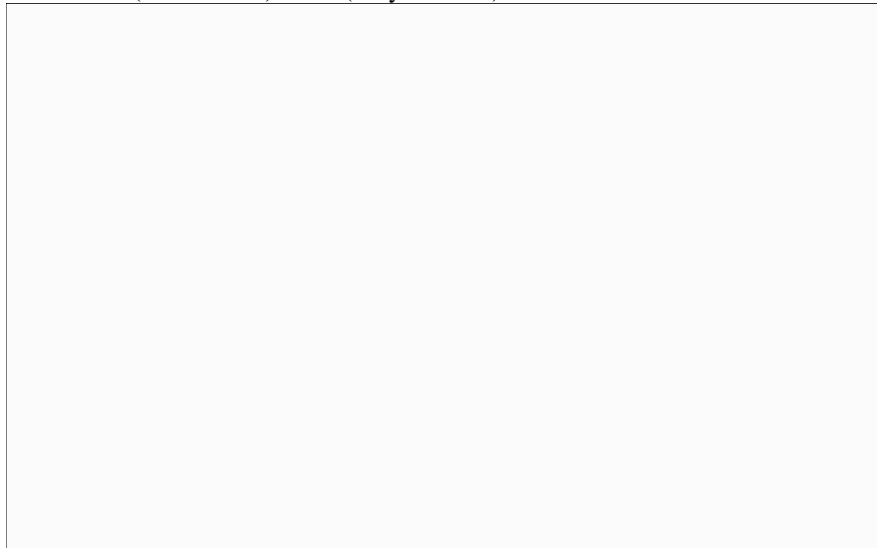


Fig. 4.2 Summary of results (means) of the expert evaluation on governance in dual vocational education in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland (integration of the system)

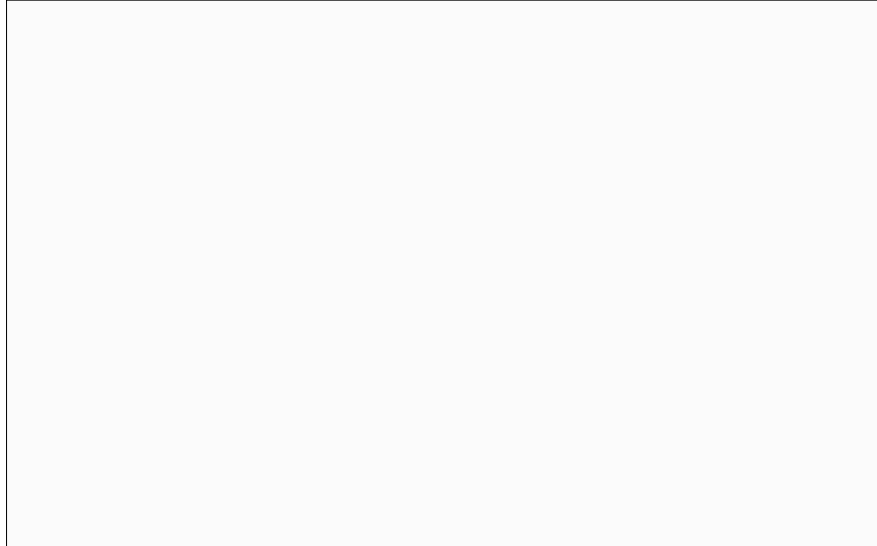


Fig. 4.3 Summary of results (means) of the expert evaluation on governance in dual vocational education in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland (input and output orientation)

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview of a theoretical framework by means of which several types of plural governance in dual or alternating vocational education and training can be identified. In addition to this classification scheme the public value approach was discussed as a yardstick for evaluating the performance of existing VET systems on the basis of their position within the coordinate system. It was argued that the theoretical optimum for governance in dual systems of vocational education and training was a type that combined a high degree of coordination between the bodies involved with a balanced ratio of input and output control, i.e. of management by rules and management by objectives.

The case studies and evaluation workshops in which this methodology was applied for the study of the dual training systems of Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland came to the conclusion that the Swiss model most closely approached to the ideal model. One of the strengths of the Swiss system that were identified is the consistent legal framework for vocational education and training at the national level, which lays the foundations for an integrated governance system. This is complemented by the concentration of the supervisory functions in one national authority. The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Technology serves as a link between the national government and the actors at the regional level. This centralisation of strategic functions also allows for a balance between the relevant policy areas, as is expressed by the high score of Switzerland for this item in the

evaluation workshops. As regards the allocation of strategic and operative functions, the results suggest that the high autonomy of local bodies concerning the implementation of vocational training represents an advantage of the Danish and Swiss systems.

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