

VET in Schools in Germany – Reflections on re-defining the function of school-based training against the background of the training market crisis

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Universität Konstanz

Lehrstuhl für Wirtschaftspädagogik

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Structure of presentation

- **1 Structural Context**

- **2 Strengthening VET in Schools: 2 Strategies**

- **3 Practice Firms: Findings from a Research Project**

- **4 Perspectives for Full-time VET in Germany**



Germany – an apprenticeship country?

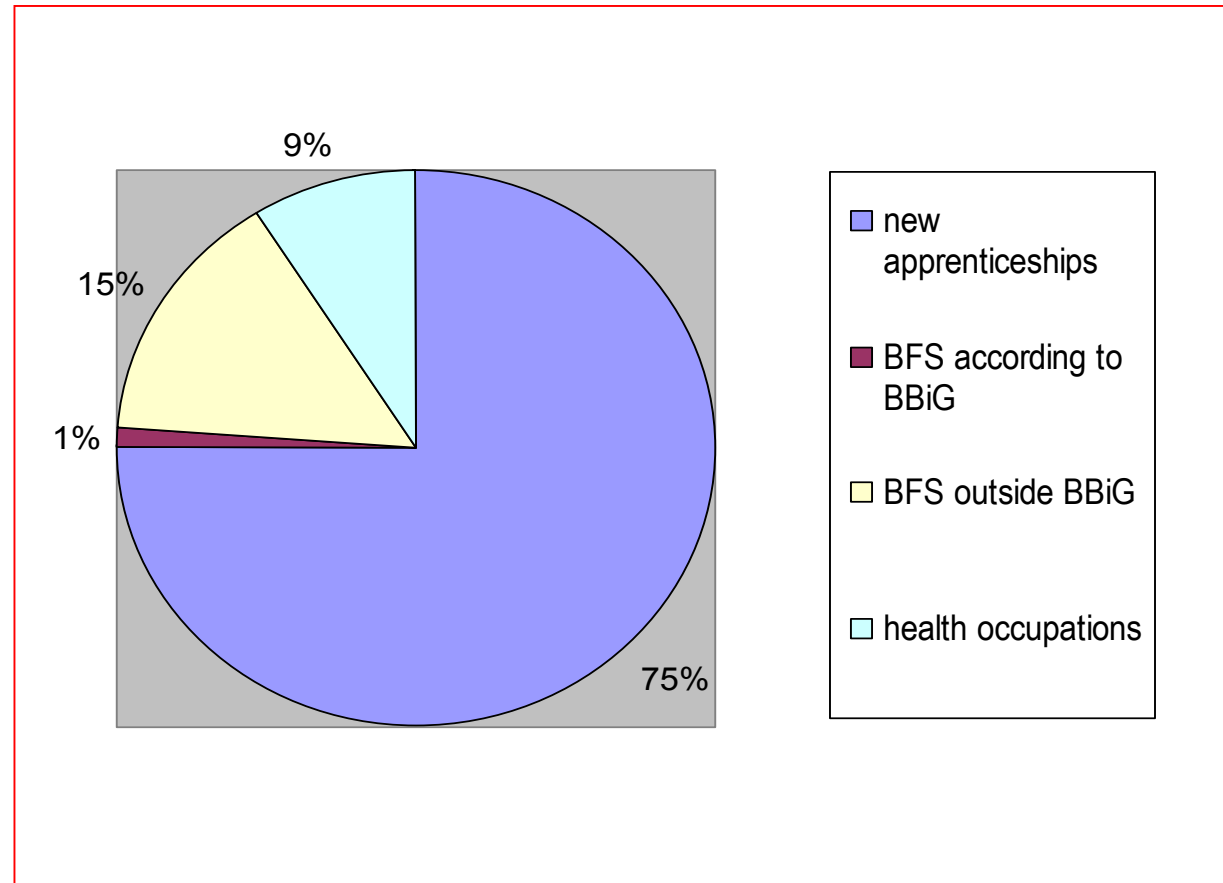
Share of private training contracts in the apprenticeship system (2004)

- Old federal states: 95.6 %
- New federal states: 72.3 %

[Source: Berufsbildungsbericht, 2005]



Training in Germany in the non-academic secondary sector



[Source: Berufsbildungsbericht, 2005]



Germany – an apprenticeship country?

Vocational Full-time Schools (Berufsfachschulen)
- increasing student attendance

- + 183 %: full-time VET courses outside BBiG/HwO (1990-2003)
- + 203 %: full-time VET courses according to BBiG/HwO (1995-2003)

Total number of full-time students in BFS (2003): 498.000

Total number of apprentices in the Dual System (2003): 1.6 m

[Source: Berufsbildungsbericht, 2005]



Dual System vs. VET in schools

2 subsystems that differ in terms of...

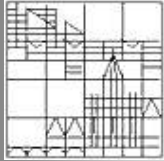
- Function
- Pedagogical orientation
- Didactical organisation
- Status and public perception
- Types of qualifications
- Legal and administrative regulation



Dual System vs. VET in schools

Major differences: function and types of qualifications

- DS is an apprenticeship system and therefore has an exclusive function to create intermediate level skills needed on the labour market
(occupational qualifications)
- Full-time VET courses in schools are much more heterogeneous and also provide for qualifications leading – directly or indirectly - into higher education
(educational qualifications)



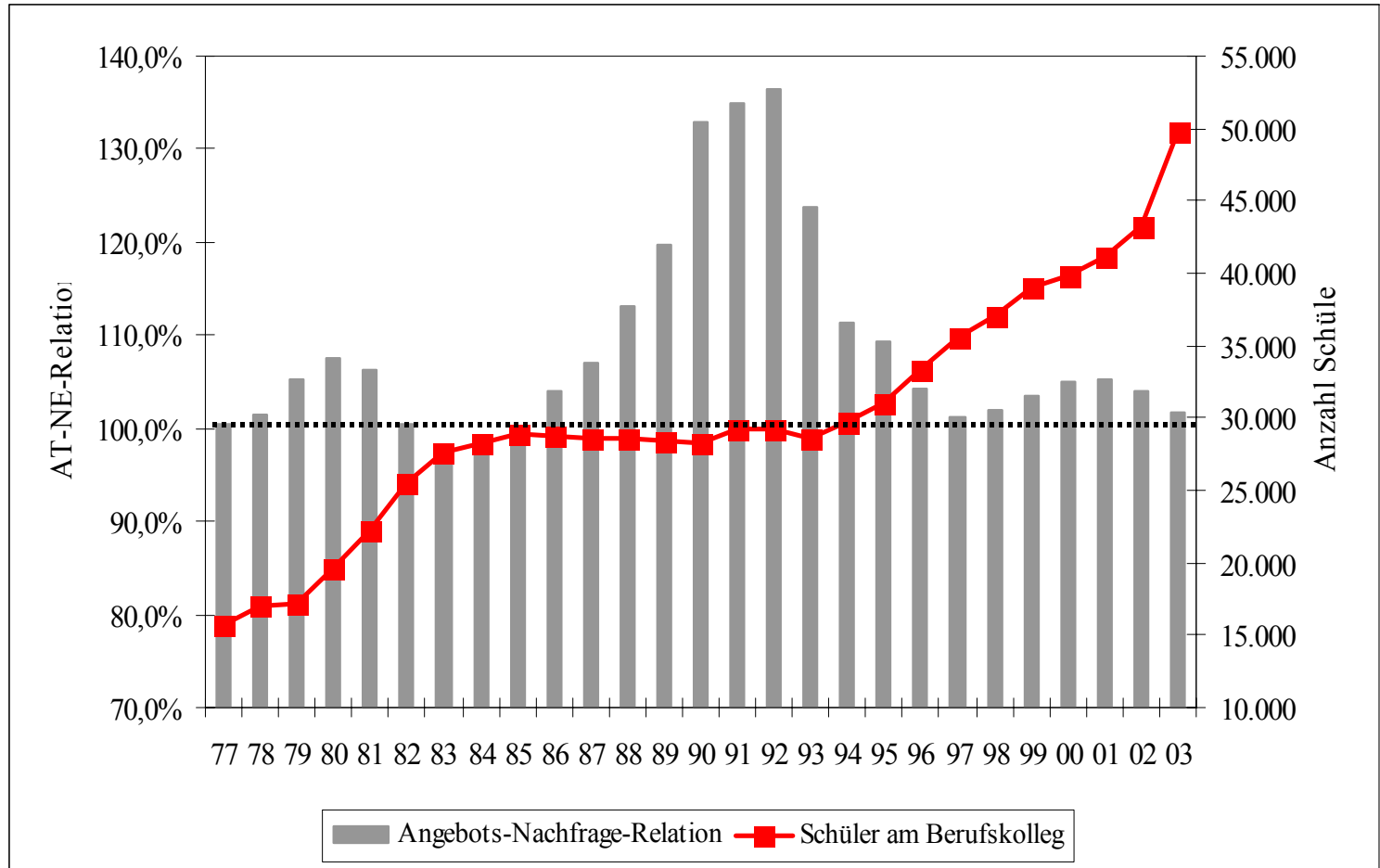
Problems associated with VET in schools

- Heterogeneous types of schools and courses
- Heterogeneous length of courses
- Heterogeneous access requirements
- Heterogeneous functions and types of qualifications
- Federal state specific regulations
- Lack of acceptance and public perception among employers
- Schools often function as „parking institutions“

[cf. Feller, 2002; Euler, 2000; Gebbeken/Kahl, 2001]



Training market vs. VET in schools (BK in Baden-Württemberg)





The Vocational College (Berufskolleg – BK) in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg

- BK I (preparation for Dual System)
- BK I/II
 - Assistant qualification (conventional type)
 - Assistant qualification + polytechnic entrance qualification
 - BK Languages (BK-F)
 - BK Business Information Management
 - Dual BK (special Dual System for grammar school leavers)
- BK-FH (access studies out of employment; leads to polytechnic entrance qualification)
- BK with practice firm



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The National Strategy: The New Vocational Training Act (2005)

Objectives/new regulations:

- Bridging the two subsystems (apprenticeships and full-time VET) through RPL/APL (accreditation) - § 7 BBiG
- Easier access to the chamber examination for graduates from full-time VET courses - § 43 BBiG



The Regional Strategy: Reforming the curriculum of VET in Schools

► “Making schools practical” – curriculum development and new teaching methods using simulation-based learning environments such as *practice firms (Übungsfirmen)*

**Objectives of „Zukunftsoffensive III“ (since 1997)
in Baden-Württemberg:**

- Increasing the acceptance of full-time VET among companies
- Helping young people to apply for an apprenticeship more successfully
- Using public expenditure on VET in schools more efficiently



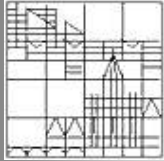
The Implementation of Practice Firms in the BK

- ▶ **Modification of the curriculum leading to more self-regulated and realistic learning opportunities for students**
- A practice firm is a fictitious company within a vocational school that works like a normal company though no real goods or money are exchanged
- Training firms cooperate with other training firms within a national and international network
- A real company normally provides support, money and the product name for the training firm
- Normal number of lessons per week: 5 to 7 (in BW in the BK)



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Research Project on Practice Firms in the BK in BW (2003-2005) [Deißinger & Ruf 2005, publication in early 2006]

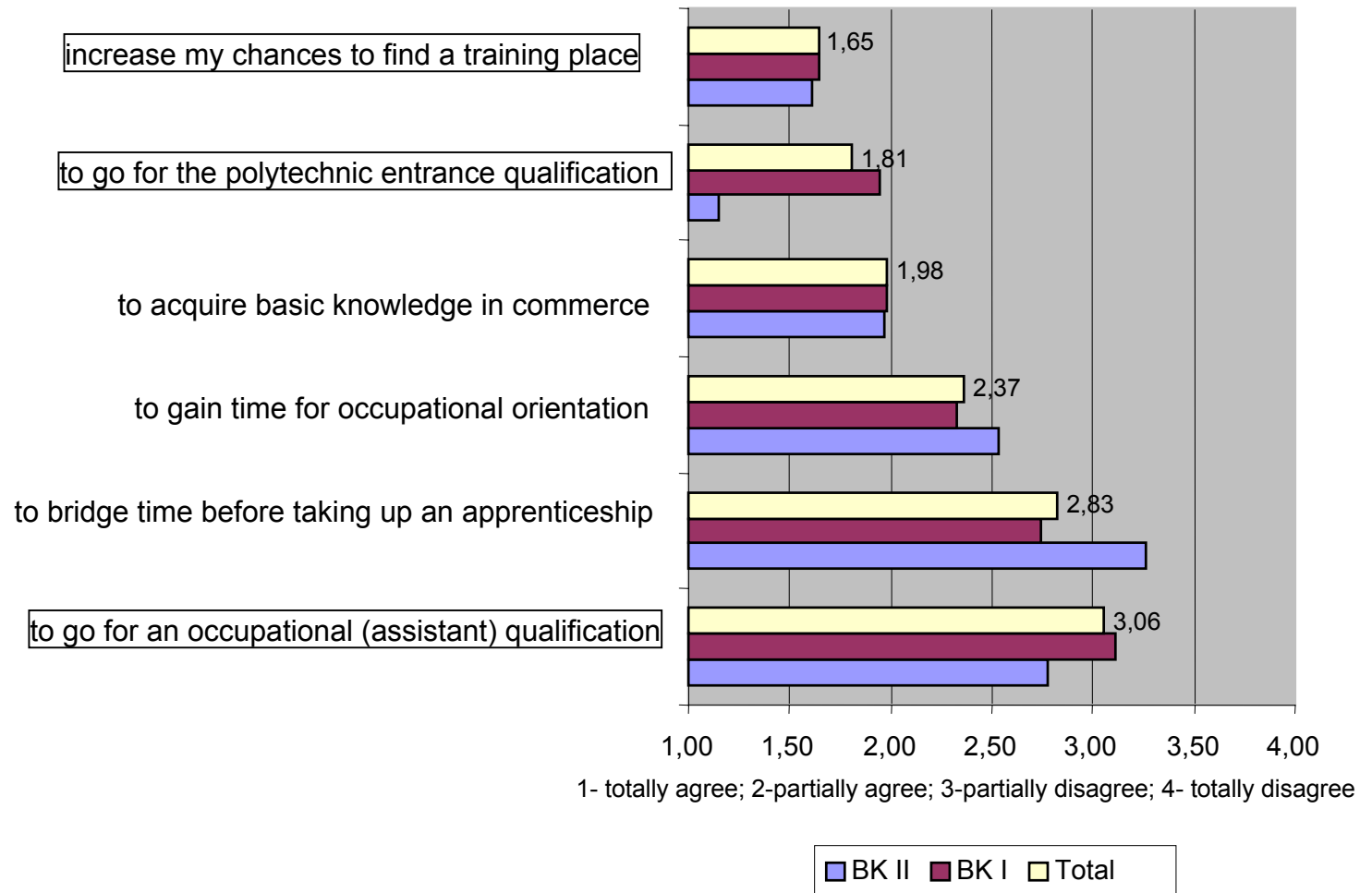
2 leading questions:

- **Does the implementation of practice firm lead to new and more “realistic” learning opportunities and does it help students to develop a “comprehensive occupational competence”?**
- **Has the practice firm concept potential to change companies’ attitudes towards full-time vocational courses and respective qualifications?**

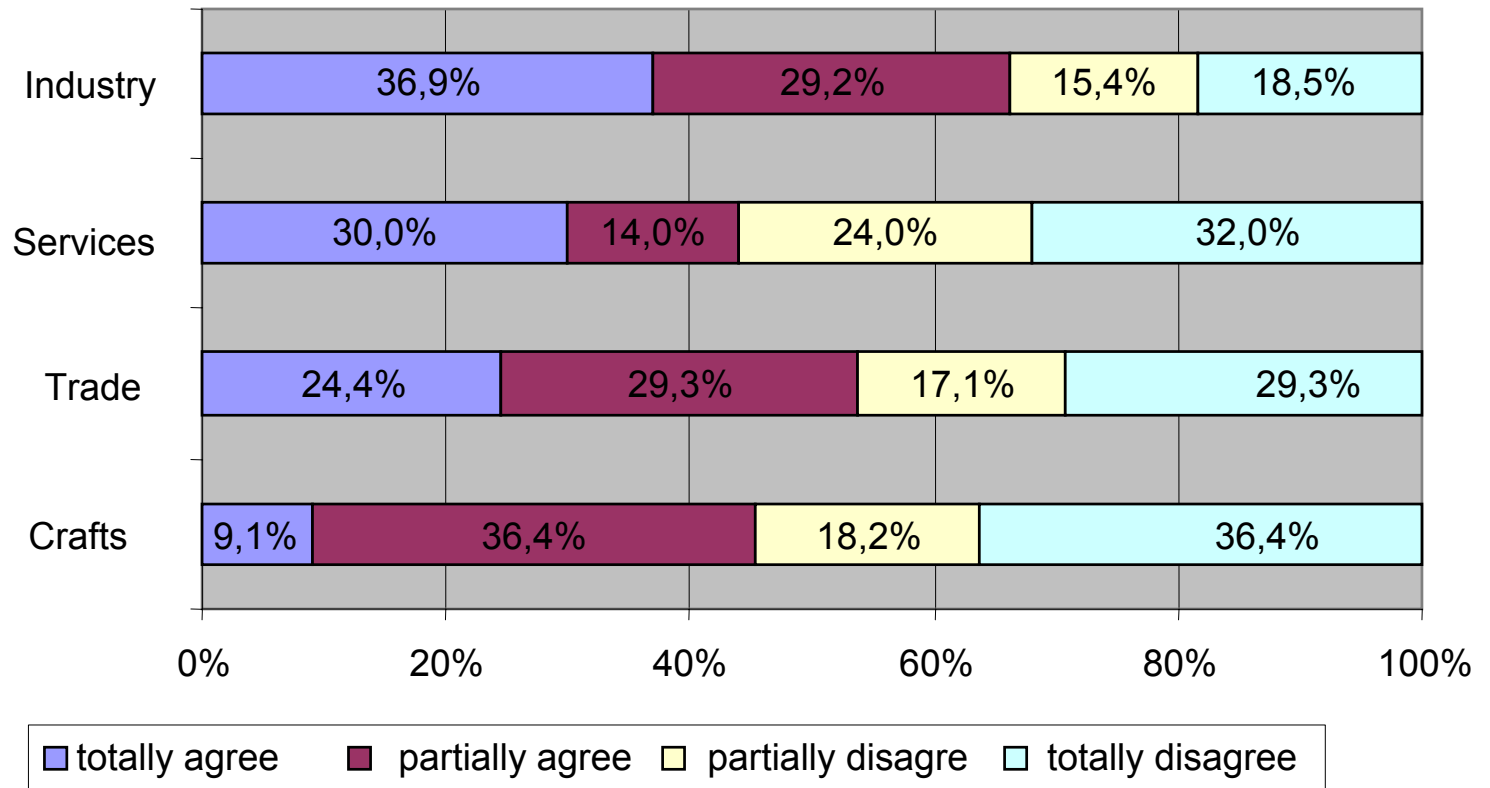


Motivation for Training in the BK (students)

„I joined the BK in order to...“

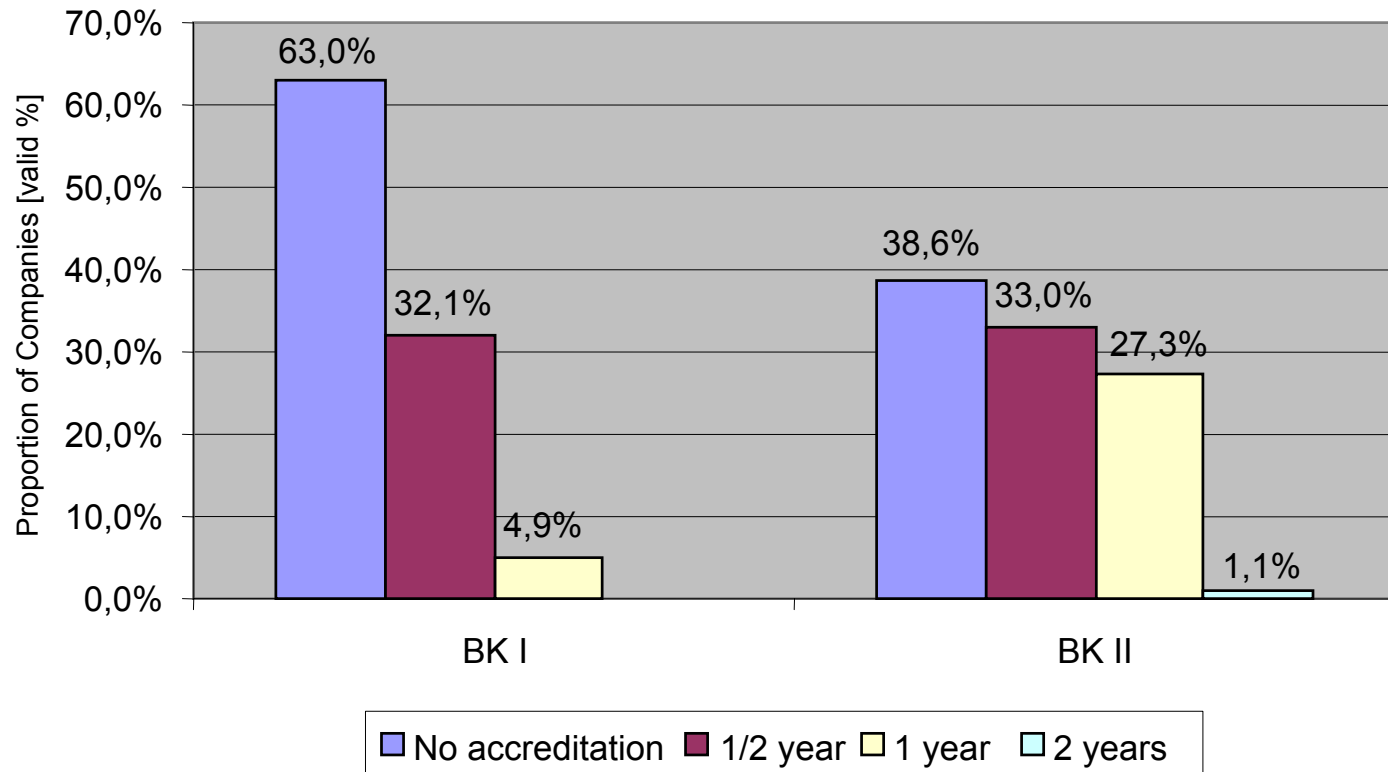


Lack of Practical Orientation in the BK (companies)



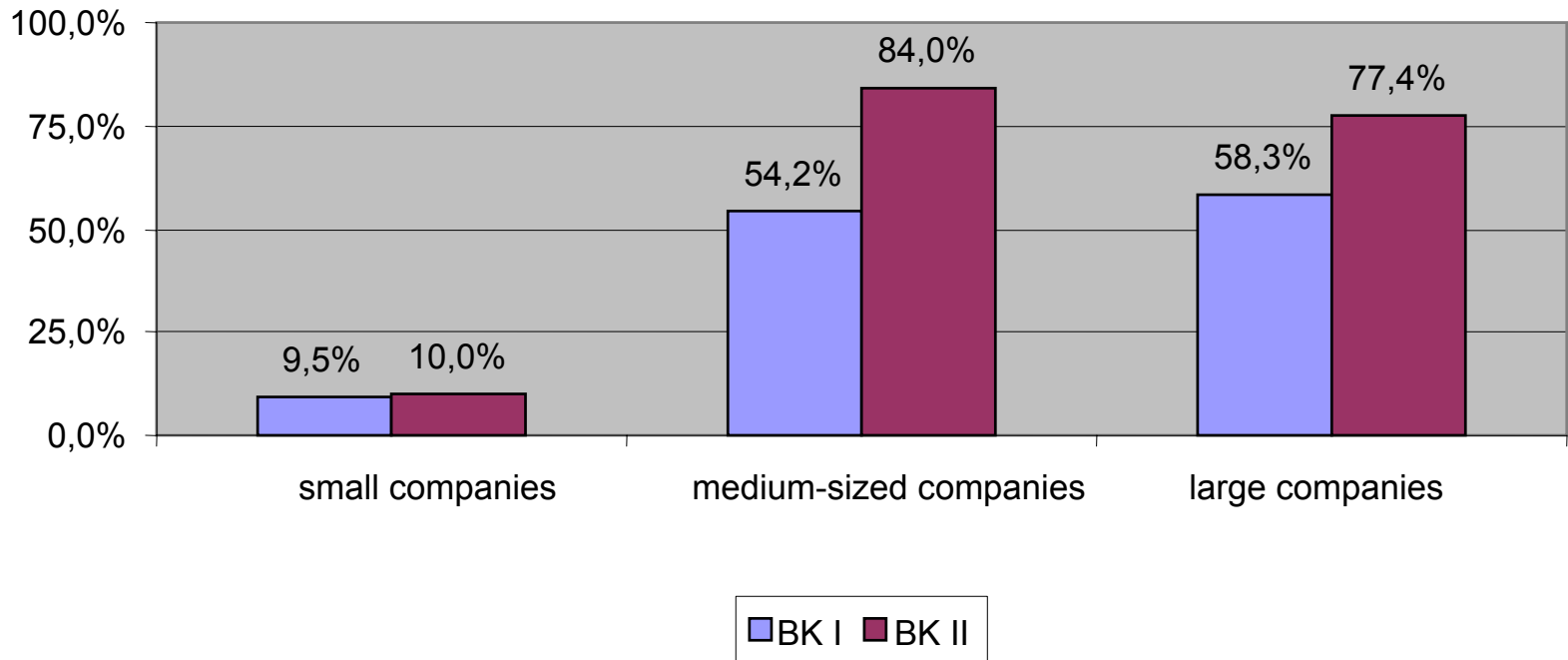
Accreditation of BK Courses in a Subsequent Apprenticeship (companies)

„Does your company allow for a reduction of the apprenticeship duration?“



Accreditation of BK Courses in a Subsequent Apprenticeship (according to size of companies)

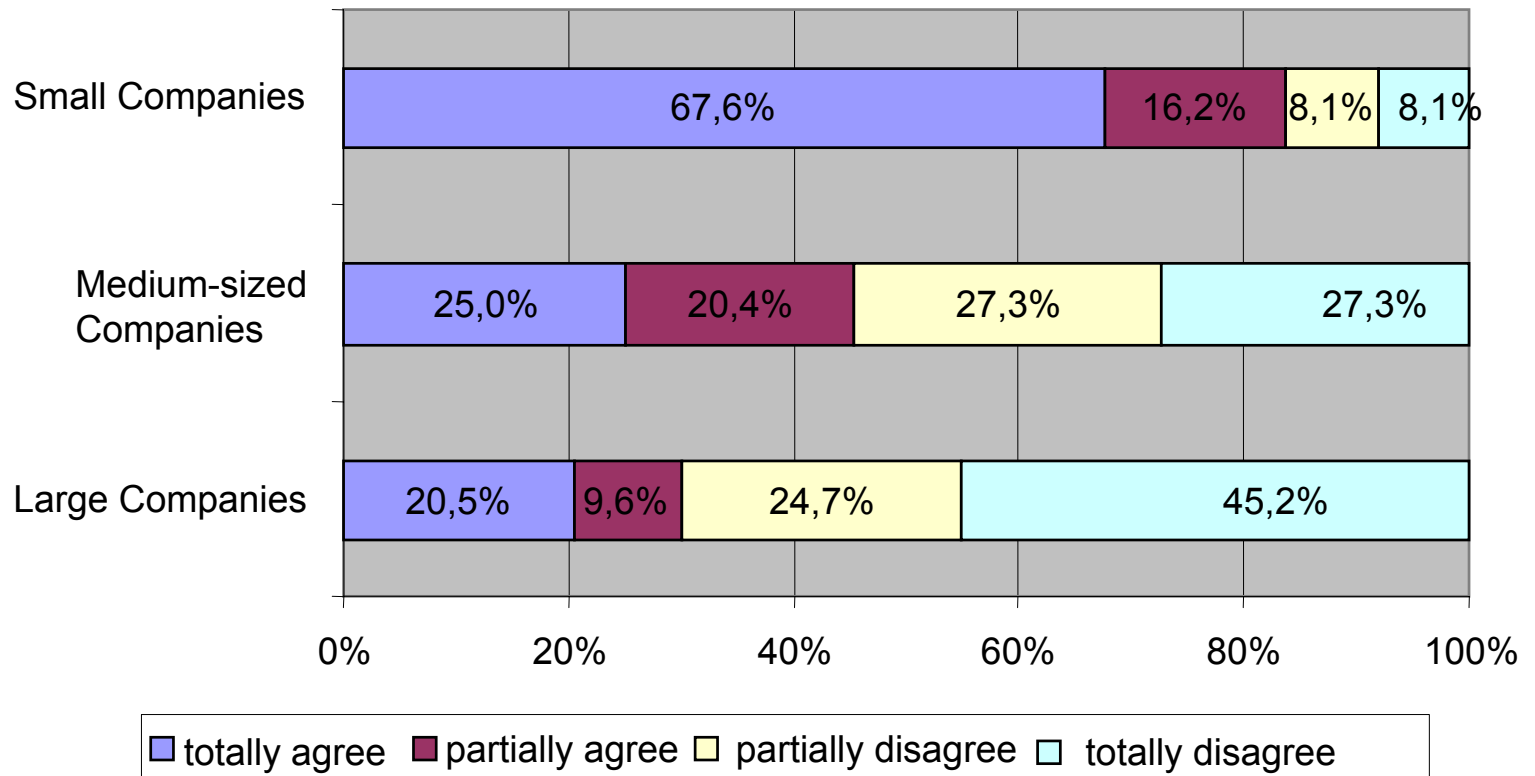
„Does your company allow for a reduction of the apprenticeship duration?“





Marketability of the Assistant Qualification (according to company size)

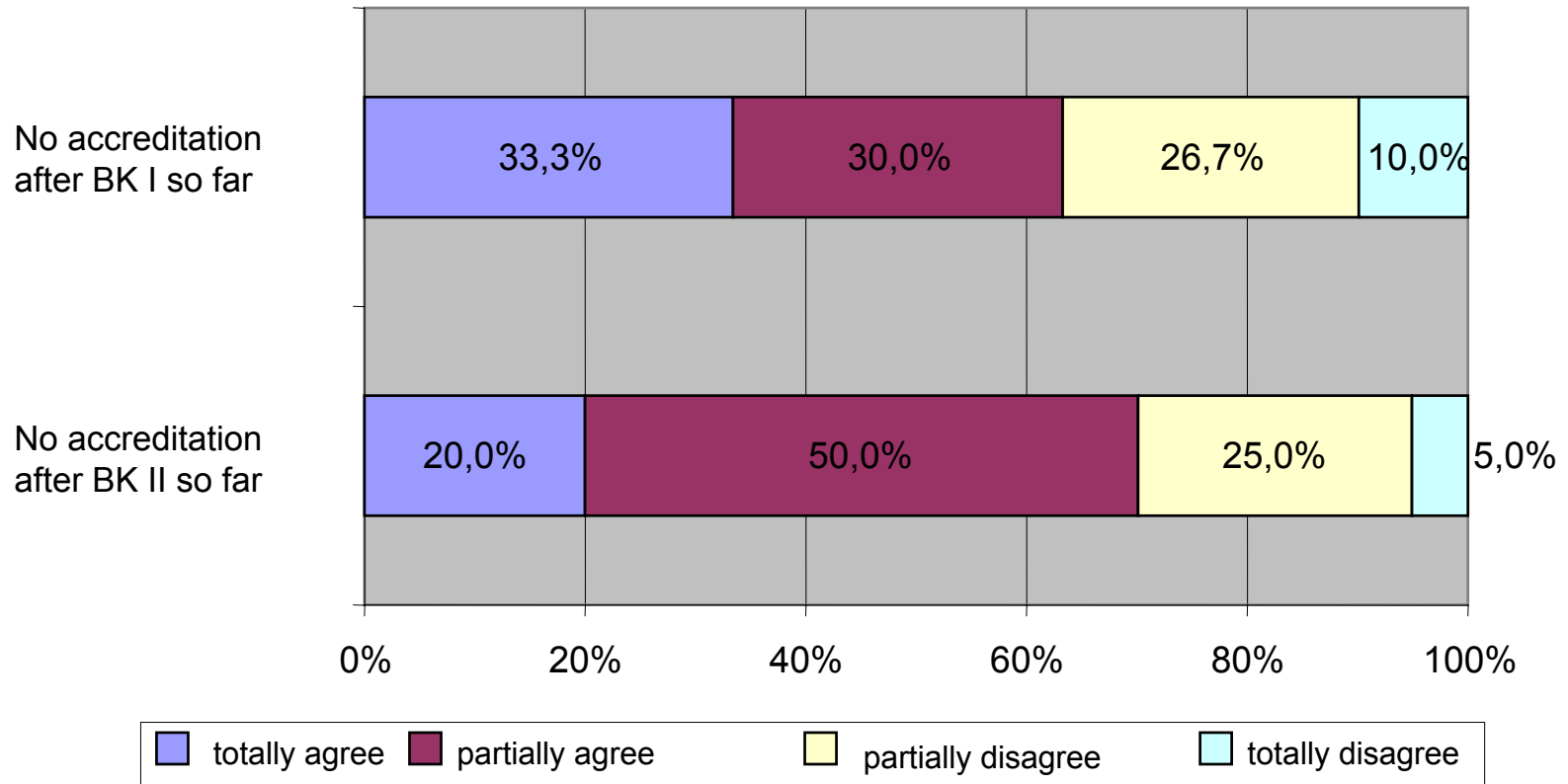
„The vocational college (degree: commercial assistant) qualifies for direct uptake of employment“





Valued Potential of Practice Firms in the Training Market (companies)

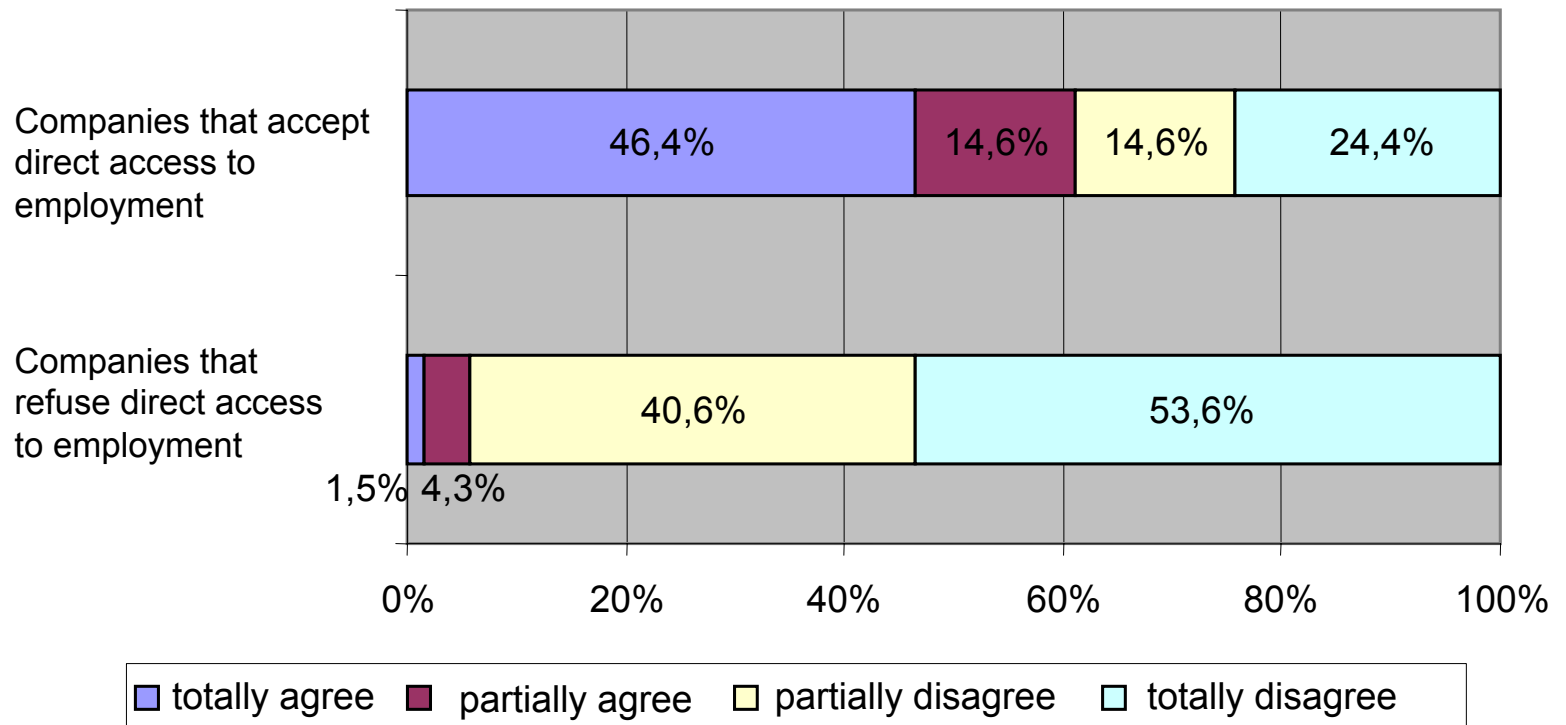
„Would practice firms lead to accreditation of courses in your company?“





Valued Potential of Practice Firms in the Labour Market (companies)

„Would practice firms increase the acceptance of the assistant qualification?“





Summary of Project Findings

Young people rate practice firms as

enriching learning environments offering realistic learning experiences

more motivating and interesting than traditional lessons

Companies rate practice firms as

not yet full substitutes for an apprenticeship

although the overall acceptance for partial accreditation of BK courses lies at around 50 % and might be increased by implementing practice firms

and acceptance of the assistant qualification is quite high with smaller companies



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3 alternative or complementary strategies for re-defining the status of full-time VET

- **Strengthening the qualification function and the „practical curriculum“ of full-time VET without changing the „system“ and its relationship to the Dual System (making use of the new BBiG)**
- **„Dualising“ vocational courses in schools by linking up the school with the company (structured internships, block training, sandwich system etc.)**
- **Shifting qualifications based on the BBiG away from the Dual System and into the school system**

[see also: Euler, 2000; Feller, 2005]