

An organized anarchy? Understanding the role of German cooperation in the construction and export of the dual training model

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Abstract

The role of German cooperation as a key force behind the worldwide dissemination of dual training is well-established within the specialized literature. The multilayered and fragmented nature of the German cooperation landscape suggests that German efforts in this area follow a complex and evolving interplay of motivations—yet the rationales behind Germany's bilateral work in the area of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) have rarely been examined in a systematic way. Additionally, existing approaches to the question of aid motivations as provided by economics and international relations scholarship appear to be ill-suited to understanding the rationales behind Germany's TVET cooperation efforts. Drawing on a combination of document analysis and interviews with key stakeholders, this paper investigates the heterogeneity of drivers and motivations behind German cooperation efforts in the promotion and export of the dual training model and examines the coordination challenges posed by this diversity. The paper finds that German efforts in the international promotion of dual training are driven by

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at least three analytically distinct rationales that correspond roughly to three differentiated poles within the German policy space—namely, the economic, development and education arenas. The paper also finds that this diversity of motivations poses important coordination challenges—and that, while recent coordination efforts have succeeded in securing some degree of rhetorical consistency, only limited progress has been made in terms of operational coherence.

INTRODUCTION

The role of German cooperation as a key force behind the worldwide dissemination of dual apprenticeships is well-established within the specialized literature. In their role as bilateral donors,¹ German-speaking countries have been longstanding supporters of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a key area of cooperation, and have generally favoured policies aligned to (or inspired by) the dual model of apprenticeships that is in place in the donor countries (Langthaler, 2015; Maurer & Gonon, 2014). German cooperation in particular has openly embraced the *transfer* of different forms of dual training—and while efforts in this area experienced a decline during the early 2000s, they have recently undergone a renaissance.

This resurgence cannot be disconnected from the broader upsurge of interest in TVET within the development arena. Hence, over the last decade, and after a long period of decline², TVET has again become an area of great political interest for development actors (cf. OECD, 2012; World Bank, 2013), largely as a result of growing demand for further education in low- and middle-income countries, as well as the challenges posed by the 2008 global financial crisis. These factors are at the root of renewed international interest in the success of the German dual model, perceived as an effective remedy against youth employment challenges, and in growing demand on the part of developing countries.

Against this background, the resurgence of the dual model owes much to the leadership exerted by German cooperation actors in the area of education aid—in fact, and as discussed below, Germany was the top DAC bilateral donor in the area of vocational training from 2016 to 2019. Equally important are the interests of German industries operating abroad, who perceive the export of the German model as an opportunity to create a skilled labour force aligned to their own needs, thus maximizing the profitability of their investments. Additionally, it has also been noted that German efforts in the promotion of the dual model are oriented at

¹The notion of *bilateral donors* refers here to countries that provide Official Development Assistance, or ODA, directly to other states (known as *recipient countries*). The notion of ODA, in turn, defines those resources transferred to developing countries, on concessional financial terms, and targeted at the promotion of economic development and welfare (cf. OECD, 2022).

²During the 1980s, and with the ascendancy of the neoliberal programme, the centrality of TVET in international cooperation declined sharply.

expanding the portfolio of German training providers and consultancy firms (Euler & Wieland, 2015; Li & Pilz, 2021; Maurer & Gonon, 2014; Stockman, 2014).

These developments suggest that German cooperation efforts in the area of TVET are not driven by a single rationale, but rather follow a complex and evolving interplay of motivations. However, the motives and rationales behind Germany's bilateral work in the area of TVET constitute the object of a rather modest body of literature and, to our knowledge, have rarely been examined in a systematic way. Relatedly, there is limited insight on the process through which the German dual model *as used for transfer purposes* came into being—that is, how the dual system in place in Germany was (re)theorized and articulated for export purposes; and how the model has been revisited and adapted in response to the diversification of 'target countries'.

This is all the more relevant given the multilayered and fragmented nature of the German cooperation landscape. The German aid architecture has been characterized as distinctively complex as a result of the intricate division of labour between different federal and subnational agencies, the diversity of implementing agencies operating under the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) umbrella, and the competition between the BMZ and the Federal Foreign Office (AA),³ *i.a.* (Faust & Ziaja, 2012; Nunnenkamp & Öhler, 2011). The heterogeneity of actors populating the German cooperation arena,⁴ and the autonomy enjoyed by most of them, calls for a more fine-grained understanding of how the rationales behind the transfer of dual training differ *across* the German arena, and of how different actors have contributed to the construction of an 'export-ready' model of dual training.

The role of German actors in the international promotion of dual training constitutes in fact the object of an emerging strand of research. The work of Gonon (2014), Lewis (2007) or Euler and Wieland (2015) has captured the active role of the German cooperation in the export, policy transfer or policy lending of dual training. However, much of this scholarship has tended to focus on the difficulties and challenges posed by the implementation of these policies in a non-Germanic context—leaving unexamined the ultimate rationale of such transfer efforts.

In light of these considerations, our paper investigates the heterogeneity of drivers and rationales behind German cooperation efforts in the promotion and export of the dual training model. More specifically, the paper aims to (1) characterize the motivations and logics of action of the main German cooperation actors in TVET, identifying commonalities and differences in their ultimate goals and agendas; and (2) examine the coordination challenges faced by this diversity of actors, and analyse how major coordination efforts in German cooperation have shaped the nature of the dual apprenticeship model that is used for transfer purposes. Following a qualitative approach, the paper is based on document analysis and interviews with key policy stakeholders.

The paper is organized as follows. In the first section, we map out existing literature on the question of motivations for development—highlighting the main advancements made in this area, but also the limitations of the methodological approaches guiding much of this literature.

³As captured by Faust and Ziaja (2012) in their discussion of the organizational complexity of the German aid system, the BMZ and the AA have historically competed for visibility and relevance in the international sphere. This dynamic has frequently been magnified as a consequence of partisan politics, for the two ministries have often been led by different coalition parties.

⁴That is, the myriad of organizations directly or indirectly involved in financial and technical cooperation with developing countries as part of Germany's development efforts, including government agencies but also NGOs, foundations, aid branches connected to different churches, and so forth.

The paper continues with an outline of the objectives of the study and the empirical strategy on which it relies, and then turns to a discussion of the main findings of the research. The fourth section thus examines the multiple rationales guiding the efforts of a range of German stakeholders in relation to the international dissemination of dual training, while the fifth section discusses the coordination efforts recently launched by these organizations. Finally, the paper concludes by synthesizing the main findings of the research and discussing their implications for the study of aid motivations and TVET cooperation.

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The question of motivations for development cooperation⁵ and their impact on aid allocation patterns has been extensively studied by economists and international relations scholars. However, as this section argues, the resulting literature appears to be ill-suited to understanding the motivations and drivers behind Germany's cooperation efforts in the area of TVET.

Research on the motives driving international development assistance was pioneered and has long been dominated by international relations scholars. The resulting body of literature has tried to explain national motivations for development cooperation as driven by a mix of three main motives: humanitarian, economic and political (Nossal, 1988). While the humanitarian motivation is associated with an altruistic 'sense of obligation' towards the most disadvantaged, the other two are considered self-interested motivations (Gounder, 1994). Economic motives refer to the interests of donors in protecting their economic investments, increasing exports, or guaranteeing access to commodities. Political motives, in turn, refer to the willingness of donors to gain influence in a recipient country due to security interests or geostrategic calculations. It is important to clarify that, under this framework, researchers do not try to explain donor motivation by only one of these motives but by a mix of them. It is through empirical research that scholars try to determine which motivation is the dominant one in development cooperation.

Since the seminal work of Alesina and Dollar (2000) *Who gives foreign aid to whom and why?*, comparative quantitative studies have consistently found that donor self-interest plays a large role in deciding how much aid a country receives. Alesina and Dollar (2000) demonstrated a strong link between aid commitments, historical colonial ties and UN voting patterns. The relationship between aid allocation and geostrategic political motives was later confirmed by Berthélemy and Tichit (2004) through more sophisticated econometric estimations. In addition to political motives, Neumayer (2003) showed how bilateral donors allocated greater aid to countries that had purchased a higher share of their total exports. These economic motivations have been confirmed by further studies analysing the export of capital goods (Younas, 2008), and the competition for economic infrastructure and production exports (Barthel et al., 2014). Interestingly, this type of studies found no association between how much foreign aid a country receives and its level of institutional corruption (Alesina & Weder, 2002).

⁵Development cooperation is defined as the ensemble of activities aimed at supporting developing countries in their efforts towards economic development and the improvement of living standards (Klingebiel, 2014). The notion of development cooperation is thus broader than the concept of ODA or financial cooperation, and it also includes technical cooperation, capacity support, and so forth. (Alonso & Glennie, 2015).

As the paragraphs above suggest, most of the analysis of motivations for development cooperation have relied on nationally aggregated aid statistics. However, this approach presents several methodological problems or limitations. First, aid from a single donor country can be expected to reveal as much heterogeneity between aid channels (public vs. private) as comparisons across donor countries (Nunnenkamp & Öhler, 2011). Second, large within-country variation is also expected in relation to the type of aid (e.g., education, infrastructure, security) due to the specific logics and global harmonization efforts of each sector (Thiele et al., 2007). Third, the bulk of development cooperation is not as dependent on financial aid (i.e., hard cooperation) as it was in the past, instead being more focused on the transfer of knowledge and development ideas (i.e., soft cooperation), which cannot be quantified through national accounts (Janus et al., 2015). Fourth, a qualitative approach is necessary to understand the tension between donor bureaucracies' intent to formally deliver on their public mandates and their need to informally secure their organizational power and resources (Rahman & Giessen, 2017). Finally, development cooperation logics do not only depend on individual donor agendas but also on competition and collaboration dynamics with other donors in specific sectors and contexts (Müller, 2021).

In this paper we present a singlecountry, qualitative study of motivations for development cooperation in the TVET sector among public and private German donors, with a focus on the efforts of such actors around the transfer of the dual model of apprenticeships. While other German-speaking countries are also actively engaged in the transfer of dual TVET,⁶ Germany is a particularly interesting case study of aid motivation due to its financial importance within international development cooperation, and the education field in particular. In 2019, Germany featured as the top education donor in absolute terms; in the area of vocational training, Germany was the top DAC bilateral donor from 2016 to 2019 in terms of ODA disbursements (OECD, 2021). While German cooperation would be expected to be more need-oriented due to the absence of a former empire,⁷ literature has classified the country as moderately self-interested due to links between foreign aid and trade intensity (Dreher et al., 2015). Previous studies indicate that, in the long term, German aid is associated with an increase in the exports of goods that is larger than the aid flow: estimated to value 140% of the aid given (Martínez-Zarzoso et al., 2009; Nowak-Lehmann et al., 2009). This trade orientation of German aid may explain its traditional preference for development cooperation with middle-income countries and emerging economies (Faust & Ziaja, 2012). Another interesting aspect of German development cooperation is its institutional complexity, which can potentially lead to a

⁶Hence, countries like Austria and Switzerland also appear to be important proponents and advocates of the dual model. German-speaking countries in fact share a common approach to cooperation efforts in the area of TVET—one that puts a premium on the transfer of dual training. This shared approach has led them to constitute the DC dVET, a donor committee bringing together cooperation agencies from different German-speaking countries and oriented at pooling expertise and research on dual training (cf. DC dVET, n.d.). However, and as noted by Langthaler (2015), Austria is more of a late-comer to the international promotion of dual training, while Switzerland has only recently resumed its efforts in this area. In addition, in quantitative terms, Germany continues to be the most important donor in the education and TVET area—and thus enjoys a leading role in the dissemination of dual training.

⁷All in all, and despite the absence of a colonial *empire*, Germany's aid allocation patterns cannot be fully disconnected from the country's colonial past. For instance, in acknowledgement of the genocide of Namibia's Herero people perpetuated by German troops at the start of the twenty-first century and during the period of German colonial rule in Namibia (1884–1915), Germany has recently agreed to pay Namibia over €1bn in the form of targeted development projects, as an alternative to financial reparations (Government of the Federal Republic of Germany/Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2021).

duplication of effort and fragmentation between public and private actors and to the imposition of high transaction costs on recipient countries (Nunnenkamp & Öhler, 2011).

Our study aims to overcome some of the limitations of literature on aid motivation outlined above by analysing public and private aid channels within a single country (Germany), focusing on a specific sector of cooperation (TVET), and considering not only hard but also soft forms of development cooperation. Our research thus examines the motivations, mandates and organizational logics of different German actors through a qualitative methodology, and problematizes the effects of national coordination efforts on the development cooperation activity of these actors.

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

This study investigates the heterogeneity of drivers behind German cooperation efforts in the promotion and export of the dual training model. More specifically, the paper aims to (1) characterize the motivations and logics of action of the main German cooperation actors in TVET, identifying commonalities and differences in their ultimate goals and agendas; and (2) examine the coordination challenges faced by this diversity of actors, and analyse how major coordination efforts in German cooperation have shaped the nature of the dual apprenticeship model that is used for transfer purposes. The study follows a qualitative research strategy and relies on a combination of two main data sources, namely, policy documents and interviews with key policy stakeholders.

The review of *policy documents* includes legislation, strategy documents and position papers produced by German ministries and federal agencies in relation to cooperation efforts in the area of TVET ($n = 6$), along with other documents prepared by such bodies in an attempt to define the German model of dual training and/or summarize their own work in this area to a non-German audience ($n = 5$).⁸ The collection of such documents was iterative in nature—it started with an initial round of online searches of the repository of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), complemented by additional screenings of the institutional portals of key organizations in the Germanic cooperation and TVET fields (e.g., BMZ, GIZ, DC dVET, i.a.). Occasionally, documents were added at the suggestion of interviewees, who were routinely asked for recommendations in this regard. The review of this literature allowed not only a better understanding of the motivations and logics driving the action of the different organizations of interest, but also the identification of key moments in the articulation of the dual model—including the introduction of major tweaks to the very conceptualization of dual training, the creation and reform of institutional arrangements by which German cooperation is governed, and the domestic and international shifts that appear to motivate such developments (e.g., financial crisis, changes in government, new development frameworks).

Interviews with key stakeholders included German actors that operate at the federal level along with private and regional actors judged to be of interest, as well as non-German bilateral agencies (e.g., Austrian or Swiss donors) and representatives from international/transnational organizations that were considered relevant for triangulation purposes. An initial list of potential interviewees was drafted building on the review of policy documents. After the first wave of interviews, a set of new actors was added to the

⁸The documents included in this *corpus* are marked with an asterisk in the References section.

list through a snow-balling sampling strategy. The reliance on this recruitment strategy was motivated by the political and/or elite profile of the researched population—as noted by Tansey (2007), snowballing sampling is an appropriate strategy in those contexts ‘where the most influential political actors are not always those whose identities are publicly known’ (p. 770). Thus, those first interviewees that proved to be particularly knowledgeable about the questions discussed were routinely asked for recommendations and interview leads. While this strategy made it possible to considerably expand our original pool of interviewees, it still did not secure exhaustiveness, and the scattered and unbounded nature of the population of interest (i.e., bureaucrats and specialists working across a wide range of organizations) rendered it difficult to reach a saturation point. This heterogeneity of actors at the federal level is further complicated by education and international cooperation activities conducted at the *land* (federated state) level. In this sense, our study should be understood as an exploratory one—that is, one oriented at *mapping out* existing rationales, as a preparatory step before an in-depth investigation of each one of them.

The combination of the above-described methods gave rise to a final corpus of 26 interviews, with an average length of 45 minutes. Table 1 offers a breakdown of the pool of interviewees by type of actor. German public actors were key to understanding and contrasting government strategies in this sector and included representatives from agencies such as the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). German private actors (including companies and trade unions) have great significance in development cooperation both in parallel and in coordination with government actors. This category included, among others, organizations such as the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH) and the German Trade Union Confederation. Non-German public and private actors were not so central to this study but interviewing a small sample of them proved particularly interesting for understanding how German development activity in TVET is seen by its main competitors and collaborators in the cooperation field. Some of the non-German actors included in the sample were international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Interviews

TABLE 1 Pool of interviewees—disaggregated by profile.

Interview group	Total
German actors—public sector (GPU) ^a For example, Federal Ministry of Education and Research, German Agency for International Cooperation, GOVET, BIBB	8
German actors—private sector (GPI) For example, Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce, German Confederation of Skilled Crafts, sequa, German Trade Union Confederation	11
International actors (IA) For example, ILO, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, CEMETS	7
Total	26

^aNote that the bracketed acronyms correspond to the nomenclature used to quote interviewees in Sections 4 and 5.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

were carried out by the authors of the paper through Zoom or similar online communication software between January and June 2021.

After informing interviewees of the ethics regulations of the University of Glasgow on voluntary participation and anonymity procedures, we obtained verbal consent to audio-record the online interviews, which were later transcribed by university trusted providers. Interview transcripts were coded⁹ and thematically analysed according to five main thematic blocks: guiding rationale, relationships between actors, targeted countries, scope and nature of cooperation projects and activities, and approach to policy transfer. The analytical distinction of these blocks allowed for the comparison of rationales for cooperation in dual training among German actors in different policy arenas (see next section). It also allowed us to better understand the difficulties in coordinating development cooperation efforts among these different types of actors.

COMPETING RATIONALES IN THE PROMOTION OF DUAL TRAINING

In this section, we examine the multiple rationales guiding the efforts of a range of German stakeholders in relation to the international dissemination of dual training. To do so, we group these actors into three main groups derived inductively on the basis of the primary motivation that appears to be driving their efforts. Remarkably, the three rationales correspond roughly to three differentiated poles within the German policy space—namely, the economic, development and education arenas.

As synthesized in Table 2, these three arenas differ not only in the rationales driving their efforts in the global promotion of dual training—rather, this heterogeneity of drivers translates into important differences in the nature and scope of the projects fostered by these organizations, the countries they cooperate with, the degree of alignment with international aid norms, and the assumptions about policy transfer. Thus, differences in the guiding rationales ultimately crystallize into different *implementation styles*.

As a final remark, it should be noted that the typology we present here is not an exhaustive one. Indeed, and in line with the exploratory nature of this study, the different rationales outlined below represent *ideal types*, in the sense that they are rarely found in a pure form—in practice, organizations and the individuals inhabiting them are inevitably driven by multiple or changing motivations.

The economic arena

A first group of German actors actively involved in the dissemination of dual training is the one made up of economic agents such as companies and business associations—among which the large network of German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs) features prominently. Found in more than 80 countries, AHKs represent the interests of German companies operating outside Germany and are coordinated by the Association of German Chambers of

⁹This process relied on a structural coding approach in which data are analysed according to the research questions used to frame the research and interviews (Saldaña, 2009). Thus, we relied on a series of theoretically informed codes that broadly echoed the key actors, concepts and research questions driving the investigation.

TABLE 2 Overview of rationales behind German cooperation efforts in the promotion and export of the dual training model.

Guiding rationale	Education arena		
	Economic arena	Development arena	Education arena
Guiding rationale	<i>Economic and commercial</i>	<i>Humanitarian and development-oriented</i>	<i>Political/reputational</i>
	- Creating and/or upskilling the labour force required by German industries operating abroad	- Improving the economic development and life standards of less well-resourced countries	- Reinforcing the internal coherence and appeal of the DA policy model within international circles - Fostering coordination within a fragmentary landscape—avoiding duplication, overlap or conflict
Key organizations	- German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs) - Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) - General Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi)	- Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) - German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)	- Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) - German Office for International Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (GOVET)
Targeted countries	Emerging economies and regions or countries in which German industries are already established	Low- and middle-income countries qualifying for ODA/aid assistance	OECD/EU countries
Scope and nature of TVET projects	- Priority given to small-scale, sector-specific projects - Bottom-up and incremental approach to the reform of TVET systems - Economic agents expected to assume a leading role - Limited concern for harmonization with national qualification framework	- Routine preference for pilot and sector-specific reforms - Explicitly concerned with country ownership and harmonization with domestic TVET systems - Limited concern for scalability	- Preference for comprehensive, top-down and system-wide reforms - Legislative change as the first step - Political cadres expected to assume a leading role - Limited attention to the implementation process
Approach to policy transfer	- Transfer of the dual training system as <i>not necessary</i> (but dual training schemes perceived as desirable). - Selective policy transfer	- Transfer of the dual training system as <i>not feasible</i> and misleading - Heterodox policy transfer	- Transfer of the dual training system as an <i>unattainable</i> but <i>useful aspiration</i> - Controlled deviation

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Industry and Commerce (DIHK). They are partially funded by the General Ministry of Economics and Technology and formally tasked with the promotion of foreign trade and the nurturing of bilateral economic relations with the countries in which they are established (Federal Foreign Office, 2014). While AHKs have long been involved in the promotion of dual training through international cooperation, they cooperate closely with other agents for whom the internationalization agenda is a more recent add-on to the institutional mandate. This is the case for the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH) and the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA).

For these organizations, international cooperation in the area of TVET is ultimately a means to support German industries established abroad by building a skilled labour force in these countries. The economic rationale guiding the agenda of these actors is aptly captured in the words of a DIHK official, who noted:

The first main [*reason behind international efforts*] for us is to train people for working later in our companies [...] If it's a German company like let's say Bosch or Siemens or Mercedes this is a real interest for our organization, and if they have a production line in Mexico and they need mechatronics because otherwise they can't produce cars this is a main goal, we need to focus on this (Interview 15—GPI).

To be sure, this self-interested narrative is not always so neatly expressed and coexists with more altruistic considerations—indeed, the idea that *helping others is helping ourselves* appears routinely in the discourses of business associations involved in some capacity in the internationalization of dual training. For instance, the DIHK does not rule out the possibility of cooperating with foreign, non-German companies—but sees support for such companies as a way of creating a business environment aligned to the needs of German companies.

The strategies put forward by German economic agents in the pursuit of this agenda differ considerably across countries. In some contexts, AHKs encourage the adoption of dual programmes in an indirect way—for example, by operating as a liaison between local actors and German development organizations. In other countries, they provide consultancy services on the basis of which new training programmes are established, or they coordinate consortia of companies willing to join efforts to create a TVET programme aligned with their own needs (Federal Foreign Office, 2014). The success of these strategies needs to be understood in relation to the fact that, frequently, AHKs are organically embedded within the business community of recipient countries—an element that greatly facilitates and accelerates the establishment of international TVET cooperation projects. Also, AHKs' formal and informal connections allow them to further refine their projects to accommodate the agendas of domestic companies and business associations.

While AHKs play a key role in the establishment of dual training initiatives, these organizations rarely implement cooperation projects themselves. For such purposes, they rely mainly on *sequa*—an implementing agency set up by the German private sector¹⁰ to

¹⁰*Sequa* was founded by DIHK (then DIHT) and ZDH, with BDA and BDI subsequently joining the initiative as shareholders. GIZ joined *sequa* in 2010 as a minority stakeholder to remedy or compensate for some of the economic and institutional difficulties faced by the organization.

run their own cooperation programmes. Sequa's organization and bureaucratic routines are thus explicitly designed to serve the needs of Germany's private sector.

The economic rationale driving the international agenda of these organizations directly shapes the nature of their cooperation projects. Thus, interviewees from industrial and commercial associations express a preference for supporting economically strong countries and emerging economies—that is, ones in which cooperation efforts can ultimately *pay off*. The centrality of the economic rationale also translates into a certain inattention to the scalability of dual training schemes implemented by German companies. Whereas, as discussed below, German education stakeholders explicitly pursue a structural transformation of the TVET system, such concerns are far less prominent within economic circles. Rather, the working assumption is that dual training projects *might* operate as a first step towards a broader transformation of the training system. The reform of TVET arrangements would thus be a consequence (or a by-product) of an incremental process of policy change triggered by the success of company-led initiatives. Accordingly, AHKs and sequa take pride in prioritizing the micro rather than the macro level and note that their activity is less subject to the whims and changing political inclinations of the government in power.

Overall, most German economic agents do not perceive policy transfer of the German dual model as a particularly desirable or crucial outcome—rather, they are comfortable with a selective adoption of those elements of the dual system judged conducive to the commercial and economic success of German industries operating abroad. As put it by a BDA senior adviser; ‘We tried to give advice or to discuss possibilities to implement some structures of the German system. But the result was always, as with other countries, that you can’t do a copy and paste, this will not work. [*What we need is*] to see what are the main blocks of the system and where are possible points to anchor there’ (Interview 24—GPI).

This line of reasoning is particularly apparent in the fact that, while German chambers abroad pay only limited attention to the integration of dual training initiatives into the national TVET system or qualifications framework, AHKs appear to be particularly concerned with the harmonization of dual training programmes with German training standards. This preoccupation with ensuring that the credentials acquired by dual graduates can be compared against German standards is coherent with the ultimate goal pursued by these actors, relative to the articulation of a workforce aligned to the needs of German industries. However, this approach does not necessarily sit well with other actors driven by a development- or education-related rationale. Senior figures within the Ministry of Education observed somewhat critically that supporting the export economy should not be the sole or overarching interest in TVET cooperation, whereas a GIZ project leader noted:

So therefore they [*AHK operating in an Asian country*] are looking at reaching German levels of qualification which is beyond the reach of our clientele, so to speak. Our target groups are different. That’s also the same with the projects funded by the Ministry of Industry, that they are looking to create labour for the German labour market, skilled labour. Whereas that’s not with the German BMZ funds. We are not funding to create employment opportunities for people in Germany. We want to promote and help Indian development (Interview 4—GPU).

The development arena

A very different picture emerges when one looks at the development arena—that is, the ensemble formed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and public and private implementing agencies in charge of the design, administration and execution of cooperation projects in developing countries. Among these implementing agencies, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) features prominently as one of the organizations with a broader and more diverse portfolio. A public company, GIZ implements development projects commissioned by the BMZ and other partners, with the European Union being the second biggest donor (GIZ, 2021).

In line with their institutional mission, these organizations typically adopt an explicitly humanitarian and development-oriented approach when asked about their priorities or agendas in the area of TVET. Indeed, the BMZ is the only Federal Ministry formally allowed to promote dual training in developing countries where there is no evidence that such projects will eventually have a positive impact on Germany's commercial/industrial agenda. In line with their development mandate, BMZ and BMZ-adjacent organizations such as GIZ frame dual training as a strategy expected to serve the needs of the recipient countries—by encouraging economic progress while ensuring an equitable distribution of education and labour opportunities.

The narrative articulated by interviewees from these organizations typically echoes broader development agendas and concerns. GIZ, for instance, frames TVET as a 'central pillar of sustainable and viable economic development [*which*] contributes to the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and thus promotes a lifestyle that is economically, socially and ecologically sustainable'.¹¹ This preoccupation with domestic needs, and the conceptualization of TVET as a development tool (i.e., a means towards economic and social progress) is captured in the *Strategy of the Federal Government on international cooperation in vocational education and training* (Federal Government, 2019), which notes:

The BMZ provides future-oriented, practice-related and inclusive vocational education and training *in line with requirements in all partner countries*. German development policy cooperation within the area of vocational education and training helps to foster the employability of people in developing countries, supports sustainable economic growth and social development, and creates future prospects (Federal Government, 2019; p. 6; emphasis added).

One of the most direct consequences of this articulation of dual training as a development tool is the fact that, while the promotion of this model has long been an area that fell within the remit of the BMZ/GIZ, these organizations are frequently willing to support other forms of TVET, and to rely on a somewhat *unorthodox approach* to dual training. In other words, GIZ officials do not necessarily focus on ensuring that dual training programmes adhere fully to the principles of the German dual model. Rather, in some contexts, GIZ simply aims at instilling some degree of collaboration between the public and business spheres in the organization or design of TVET. Thus, while GIZ makes an effort to mainstream the principles of dual training into any education-related project, only a handful of GIZ projects

¹¹<https://www.giz.de/expertise/html/60014.html>

are explicitly or exclusively oriented at the articulation of dual training programmes. As noted by one of the GIZ staffers:

We have some projects where we really go in and we really pilot dual training with two, three, scores, selected sectors, and the entire project is focused on that [...] but we also have a lot of projects where we are not doing that, but [*in which*] we still are sort of working towards a cooperative or dual training [...] We start building the foundations, I would say, for what might later become a dual training pilot that we support. I couldn't tell you in how many countries we really pilot dual training, but the core is of course behind, I would say, all the projects (Interview 3—GPU).

Also in accordance with the humanitarian agenda driving the action of these organizations, BMZ's (and by extension, GIZ's) work in the area of TVET typically takes the form of small scale, sector-specific and short-term projects that do not necessarily entail a reorganization of the education and training system—even if, in the midterm, they could *inspire* more structural changes. A GIZ staffer working in an African country thus noted; 'Our project is mandated, so to speak, to *pilot* in certain institutions a kind of dual training approach, and then derive lessons learned, and processes to actually formulate or help the ministry to formulate a cooperative training regulation' (Interview 9—GPU, emphasis added).

Thus, and despite the above-noted preoccupation with country ownership exhibited by these organizations, BMZ and GIZ appear to be less explicitly concerned with the scalability and sustainability of their projects, and more eager to experiment with pilot initiatives. To put it differently, even if these actors put a premium on *scalable* projects, scalability is not an overriding concern. Some interviewees noted critically that the logics of project-cycle management, intrinsic to development and international cooperation, tend to impose a short-term vision that is sometimes at odds with the principles of sustainability or scalability. This line of reasoning is captured in the words of a BIBB expert, who noted:

The GIZ is obviously an institution with long-standing experience on how to conduct projects, how to roll them out [...] But obviously the GIZ has its own agenda which is naturally to sustain themselves, and they think in project cycles. And, I mean, the BMZ, obviously it runs very well providing one project after the other and pushing money to GIZ, but it doesn't mean that on the ground the work they do will really be sustainable (Interview 2—GPU).

In this sense, the policy transfer of the German dual model does not appear to be a primary concern for BMZ, nor for GIZ. In fact, these organizations feature among those more explicitly sceptical of the very idea that the German system can or should be adopted elsewhere and appear to have reflected extensively on the diversity of political, economic and administrative challenges that render such transfer an impossible endeavour. The unease caused by the policy transfer goal is well-captured in the words of a GIZ project leader who argued:

We're using the word transfer, which is a word that... raises hackles. It raises my hackles. *I object to that word* because we don't transfer that one-to-one. It's not cut and paste. It is much more the idea of conception elements of what makes the German system effective being adapted to a different context [...] You will never

have a one-to-one transfer and all the attempts to do that, I dare say they have failed for a billion different reasons. So, anyway, that's my little rant on that word transfer. I think *adapt* is much better (Interview 4—GPU, emphasis added).

The education arena

Both economic and development circles in Germany have long been actively involved in the international promotion of dual training. Conversely, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is something of a late-comer to the internationalization of dual training. The incorporation of BMBF into such efforts dates back to the late 2000s and responds essentially to a *political* mandate. Specifically, the involvement of BMBF in the internationalization of dual training can be traced back to the Vocational Training Act adopted in 2005. This act redefined the tasks and mandate of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB)—a research institution launched in 1970 and charged with monitoring the German TVET system. The 2005 Act required BIBB to 'take part in international cooperation in the field of vocational education and training' (Section 90, §3). In so doing, the act institutionalized internationalization efforts as a legal duty of the BIBB.

In 2013, the adoption of a Strategy Paper on international cooperation in TVET by the Federal Government¹² reinforced and consolidated BIBB's and BMBF's internationalization mandate. This Strategy Paper needs to be understood as a response to the growing demand and interest in the German TVET system in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and was thus oriented both at clarifying the objectives of international TVET cooperation, and at devising a functional division of labour among the many agents already involved in such efforts (Federal Parliament, 2013). The Strategy Paper thus asserted that 'the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is responsible for coordinating international TVET cooperation with OECD, BRICS and emerging countries, whilst the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is responsible for VET cooperation with developing countries' (BMBF, 2015, p. 3).

In this way, TVET cooperation (and the internationalization of the dual model in particular) became part of BMBF and BIBB's mission. In line with this political mandate, these organizations approach TVET cooperation as a means to strengthen the reputation and visibility of the German dual model within international circles. Much effort is thus placed on properly addressing and channelling countries' demands in relation to dual training—and some even suggest that an effort is made to *incentivize* this demand by promoting the German system as a successful, tried-and-tested model. An informant experienced in the implementation of TVET cooperation projects critically noted:

BIBB is a sales organization. BIBB is there on the system level, when a country comes and says, "hi, we want to do vocational training", then they consult, this is governmental level, so this is meta, meta, meta level. But, the tail is the organization GOVET and they are selling German companies and products (Interview 13—GPI).

¹²Sometimes referred to as the Federal Cabinet.

To do so, the BMBF relies mainly on a policy advice and policy dialogue strategy, tapping into its main asset—policy expertise. As a consequence, most of the BMBF's international projects focus on the governance and institutional design of TVET systems, and there is a consistent preoccupation with the scalability and comprehensiveness of TVET projects. This translates into a sustained preference for top-down, system-wide approaches to reform. In consonance with such concern with the macro-level, the BMBF focuses on supporting or advancing legislative and institutional changes oriented at a structural reorganization of the TVET system. Likewise, BIBB officials primarily liaise with political cadres and education policy-makers and express a preference for collaborating with research-oriented partners. A BIBB senior official noted 'We like to cooperate with institutes worldwide that really have a good reputation and where we have good possibilities to run joint projects, where we have a situation where the other institute is also experienced in research and development...' (Interview 1—GPU).

Also, and when compared with BMZ and adjacent circles, the BMBF and the BIBB appear to be less willing to experiment with 'heterodox' approaches to dual training. Even if such organizations are well aware of the impossibility of reproducing the German model elsewhere and frequently support small-scale projects rather than a substantial transformation of the TVET architecture, the German system continues to operate as the reference point against which other experiences are evaluated. This cannot be disconnected from the fact that both BIBB and BMBF are actors primarily concerned with the monitoring, regulation and analysis of the German TVET system (cf. BIBB, 2020). As a consequence, these are agencies that bear responsibility for preserving the coherence and singularity of the German dual model of training. The specificity of the BMBF approach vis-à-vis the piecemeal, heterodox approach to policy transfer exhibited by development agencies is well-captured in the words of a GOVET official, who observed:

The Ministry of Economic Cooperation also works in an African country that will not change its system, but rather implements short term courses, so as to get people into employment, to improve economic conditions. And for the Ministry of Education in Germany, they say, *well we only work together with countries that really try to reform their system or part of their system* (Interview 7—GPU).

Remarkably, neither BMBF nor BIBB have the resources or institutional incentives to support countries in the *implementation* of dual training arrangements. In fact, these actors explicitly refrain from participating in implementation and insist upon the idea that their competitive advantage lies in their role as consultants, experts and standard-setters. A GOVET official noted emphatically; 'We are not a training institution [...] what we can deliver is consultancy, using the specialty, very special, specific expertise of the various parts of the Federal Institute' (Interview 5—GPU).

It should finally be noted that, whereas BIBB is primarily concerned with the internationalization of the German dual model, its mandate also entails supporting German training providers. Thus, BIBB is expected to support these companies by facilitating their access to foreign markets and in their process of internationalization. In response to this mandate, in 2001 BIBB established iMove, an umbrella organization bringing together a wide range of German providers of training and education services. iMove essentially operates as a shopfront organization through which these organizations make themselves available to implementing agencies and business organizations operating abroad. Of course,

the main motivation of the iMove organizations is also an economic one—these providers approach international cooperation in the area of TVET as a market-making strategy, that is, a strategy to carve or maintain a market niche. However, BIBB's rationale for the creation of iMove is not exclusively commercial but also political—in that the reliance on German training providers is ultimately conducive to a more 'faithful' replication of the German system and the platform bolsters BIBB's significance within the German economic arena.

SPEAKING WITH A SINGLE VOICE: INCENTIVES AND OBSTACLES TO COOPERATION

This heterogeneity of mandates, instruments and actors involved in TVET cooperation efforts has not gone unnoticed by German actors—in fact, over the last decade, it has progressively become a focus of concern. The above-mentioned 2013 Strategy Paper was partially an attempt to address this state of disarray. Thus, one of the main outcomes of the 2013 Strategy Paper was the creation of the Central Office for International Vocational Training Cooperation (GOVET), to be hosted by BIBB. GOVET was devised as a 'one-stop shop of the Federal Government for international cooperation in vocational education and training and contact for stakeholders at home and abroad' (BMBF, 2017; p. 8) and was expected to operate as a central point of contact for TVET cooperation, as well as to foster cooperation across different government and nongovernment agencies. The GOVET Round Table operates thus as a coordination mechanism, bringing together representatives from different ministries, industry organizations (BDA and DGB) and chamber organizations (DIHK and ZDH), i.a. The collaboration and cooperation rationale behind the creation of this agency is summarized in the words of a GOVET official:

The Round Table was introduced, and that was actually a response to...well, as I said, the increased demand. And of course, the multitude of instruments actually, that the German Government Ministry has had at their hands. So, the development cooperation took initiatives and the Ministry of Economics, BMBF, etcetera. And the idea was actually to bring all the strengths together and, yeah, foster coherence, and bring those threads together, to build...to form a joint portfolio and recognisable international policy actually, in that collaboration (Interview 5—GPU).

However, the success of these coordination efforts appears to be quite limited in practice, and the steering power of the GOVET space has been fading for some time now—as expressed by one interviewee; 'The round table idea was great, but the execution wasn't' (Interview 12—GPI). This is the result of different factors—most notably, the *primus inter pares* role enjoyed by the BMBF. Thus, although the 2013 Strategy Paper confined BMBF's remit to the Global North, this Ministry was de facto charged with responsibility for coordinating TVET cooperation worldwide, and thus it became responsible for hosting and leading GOVET. This means that, while the BMBF has a powerful incentive (and obligation) to invest in GOVET, other government agencies such as the BMZ can easily disengage or walk away from this platform if they do not perceive it as aligned to or serving their own interests. These dynamics considerably limit the potential of the Round Table as a coordination space. The process

through which the BMBF ended up taking the driving seat is captured in the words of a DIHK official, who noted:

BMZ has way more money in this field than BMBF. But BMBF in Germany is a so-called “Federführer”, a very German word, they are kind of the head. When it comes to this field, the ministries don’t know who’s in charge because the Ministry of Education, BMZ and the economy ministry are in the field too. So, if they fight and don’t know who’s responsibility it is, it’s always BMBF being the lead. Although they have I think the least money in the field, so it doesn’t really make sense (Interview 15—GPI).

Thus, only limited progress has been made in terms of operational coherence. The wide array of organizations involved in the promotion and export of the dual training model continue to differ substantially in the scope and scale of their projects, their preferred political interlocutors and their programmatic priorities. Even if, at the country level, these organizations rarely operate as silos,¹³ cooperation mechanisms are frequently superficial, fragile and subject to the good will of the partaking individuals. As put by a GOVET official; ‘There’s a limit to what the Round Table can achieve. Each ministry has its own logic, and the people sitting, representing the ministries at the Round Table don’t know everything that’s happening in the ministries and they cannot make decisions on everything that the ministry does’ (Interview 7—GPU).

Conversely, efforts in terms of rhetorical coordination appear to be more fruitful. Certainly, one of the original goals of GOVET was to bring a sense of unity to the German dual model. The theorization labour conducted within the GOVET context has entailed a significant advance in terms of discursive coherence regarding the core elements of dual training, the advantages of this TVET modality, and the conditions for its effective implementation. One of the most successful contributions in this regard has been the definition of a list of five core principles of the dual system.¹⁴ Thus, a number of interviewees alluded to the fact that, increasingly, German organizations rally around a set of shared norms and selling points. As captured in the excerpt below, this coherence owes much to the theorization labour and knowledge mobilization work conducted by GOVET:

There was a need to define how we speak about the dual system abroad. So... that was worked out, we defined five core elements of dual VET and these were agreed upon at the Round Table and we used them internationally. They are of course not the whole story of the dual VET system, but they...I would say, they cover, maybe 80 per cent of what’s important in the dual VET system and I think in the meantime, everybody who works in this field knows about them and uses this. So, we speak a similar language at least now when we go abroad (Interview 5— GPU).

¹³For instance, in 2012, GIZ and DIHK signed ‘a declaration of intent to promote links in countries where both organizations are present’ (Oberheidt et al., 2015), and both AHK and ZDH can operate as subcontractors for GIZ-managed projects. Also, German embassies have launched TVET round tables in a number of countries.

¹⁴Namely, (1) joint responsibility of the state, trade and industry and social partners; (2) learning within the work process; (3) acceptance of national occupational, training and examination standards; (4), qualified vocational education and training staff at companies and vocational schools; and (5) institutionalized VET and labor market research and VET consultancy (Federal Government, 2019).

DISCUSSION

The heterogeneity of rationales driving Germany's cooperation efforts in the area of TVET is a testament to the intricate and pluri-dimensional nature of the aid motivation theme. By unpacking the intensive cooperation activity of German actors around the transfer of its dual training model, our study shows that not only is development labour driven by multiple rationales, but it can even be guided by contradictory motivations that translate into highly distinct implementation styles (i.e., assumptions about the desirable scope and scalability of cooperation projects, targeted partners and countries, preferred timeframes, etc.).

Our results suggest that such heterogeneity of agendas and logics of action operates as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the existence of a large network of interdependent but highly autonomous organizations, each of them guided by distinct (and sometimes irreconcilable) rationales, appears to be at the root of Germany's success in the dissemination of dual training, reinforcing its centrality as a top donor in TVET. This is so as such diversity makes it possible to cater to the needs of different audiences (in terms of countries but also of political, education and economic stakeholders) and to accommodate different agendas. It also allows German actors to experiment with different entry points and approaches to policy transfer. The (de facto) reliance on a multi-pronged strategy makes it possible for Germany to 'hedge its bets' when it comes to TVET cooperation, and to experiment with different courses of action. Even if this is not a deliberate strategy (but rather a by-product of the multi-layered and decentralized nature of the German political and cooperation landscape), such dynamics ultimately translate into greater outreach, a broader and more diverse portfolio, and increased chances of success in terms of resonance with local agendas.

On the other hand, such diversity comes at a price. Not only does this diversity impose important transaction costs—the heterogeneity of rationales and agendas is also likely to take a toll in terms of the distinctiveness, clarity and appeal of the German model of dual training. This is likely to be the case if different actors emphasize different features of such a policy idea, thus blurring its conceptual boundaries. In a globalized context in which a wide array of multilateral and bilateral development partners vie for influence through the articulation of well-elaborated and recognizable policy proposals (Orenstein, 2008), the absence of a shared understanding of the principles of dual training can jeopardize Germany's efforts in TVET cooperation.

Coordination efforts recently launched in the context of GOVET partially mitigate or compensate for such risks—by securing some degree of rhetorical consistency in the definition of the dual training model. However, our results show that discursive coordination is a necessary but insufficient condition—in that it does not effectively transform the organizational logics of the partaking organizations and, as a consequence, leaves unaltered existing duplications, institutional overlaps and operational discrepancies.

The results of the study thus contribute to our understanding of the transfer and cooperation dynamics in the area of TVET. At the same time, our results also have important implications for the study of aid motivation. First, the findings are indicative of the growing importance of soft drivers as determinants of aid allocation patterns and cooperation dynamics. Thus, our paper shows that reputational concerns crucially shape the priorities and behaviour of a range of German actors—and of BMBF in particular. Such findings echo Wojciuk et al. (2015) observation that education is increasingly recognized as one of the factors contributing to a given country's soft power. It follows from this that development assistance cannot be

understood solely by reference to the political, humanitarian, commercial and economic considerations that have been the focus of much of the empirical work on aid flows.

Closely connected to this, our research is also indicative of the need to take into consideration the role, incentives and action of actors other than those with a development or cooperation mandate. As the case of German TVET cooperation shows, aid decisions are the result of the interplay of a wide array of public and private agencies, some of which may have an incentive to keep a low profile. Finally, our study sheds light on the importance of sector-specific rationales and logics of action. The study of dual-training policy transfer illustrates clearly that development decisions are informed by norms and assumptions that are highly specific to the education/TVET realm. Yet the bulk of literature on aid motivation continues to rely on aggregate analysis of ODA flows. Ultimately, our results call for more fine-grained empirical approaches with the potential to capture and make sense of the complexity of causal and normative beliefs shaping development decisions.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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