

**Values in Vocational Education in Germany**  
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With a closer look at the German vocational education system you see that there are different stakeholders. On the one hand the *Federal states* (Länder) are responsible for vocational education in schools. On the other hand the *Federal Government* (Bund) gives the guidelines for the general training regulations and is responsible for the vocational training in the companies.

Because in Germany learning on the job or the Dual-System is appreciated most, the requirements of the *labour market* are important for the vocational education system.

Beside this the requirements of the main target group, the *learners*, should be involved, because vocational training in Germany is guided “by the need for individuals to acquire skills, knowledge and competences that enable them successfully to prove themselves on the labour market.” (CEDEFOP 2007, 1)

If we like to discuss values in vocational education in Germany we should have a look at the following stakeholders:

- a) Federal states (Länder)
- b) Federal Government (Bund)
- c) Labour market
- d) Teachers and Learners

a) In Germany the *federal states* are responsible for education. The STANDING CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS (KMK) coordinate the interests of the different federal states. And the KMK include in a report from 2011 amongst others as a goal to develop the moral concept and the identification with values. In most of the federal school laws the development of values are also pointed out. For example the school law of North-Rhine-Westphalia pointed out to convey a value system to the learner. There are similar aims in the school laws of the other federal states too. Furthermore you find a kind of statement of items in the different laws of the federal states. In North-Rhine-Westphalia for example you will find different items that could be values<sup>1</sup>:

- reference for god
- human dignity
- humanity
- democracy

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<sup>1</sup> Because the term value is not clear so far, we use a broad understanding at this point.

- freedom
- forbearance
- scope
- tolerance
- sense of responsibility

b) The FEDERAL INSTITUTE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (*Federal Government*) is a centre of excellence for vocational research and for the progressive development of vocational education and training in Germany (see: <http://www.bibb.de/en/26173.htm>). Helmut Pütz, the former president of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training said in 2004 that both enterprises and schools have to assume responsibility to promote values (PÜTZ 2004). With value he means not wisdom, bravery, prudence and justice. From his point of view important values for vocational education have to be a close relation to working life. Values for vocational education could be

- loyalty
- cooperativeness
- service incentive
- cooperation
- economy
- willingness to change

For the development of such values it is important that enterprises, schools and parents work together. On the governmental level values are also fixed in the GERMAN CONSTITUTION:

- dignity
- self-fulfilment
- freedom
- equality

c) For the *labour market* values are important too. For example the CONFEDERATION OF GERMAN EMPLOYERS (2002) said that values set standards for behaviour, gives orientation and support identity. Values also help to make decisions and are necessary for both individual and society. They stated out that particularly values out of the German Constitution are relevant for vocational education. Further more they name the following values and virtues as important:

- one`s own initiative / self-dependence
- motivation / willingness to learn

- responsibility
- cooperation
- ability to communicate
- reliability
- public spirit
- collegiality
- decision-making ability
- problem solving ability
- openness
- consideration

The CONFEDERATION OF GERMAN EMPLOYERS postulate that the parents and family, schools, society and enterprises in common are responsible for value education.

d) In the main teachers in Germany state the development of values to their field of responsibility. But teachers assess their influence on values as low and they are unsettled about teaching values. First results of a teacher questioning show that teachers at vocational schools find values important. But they have no common and clear understanding of what values are. That is one of the reasons why teachers often neglect teaching values.

Learners have to be aware of their own values and the requirements and the values of the world they live in. A binding value system provides them with the ability to act adequate in social situation in which they are involved each day. Values assume an orientation function. They are necessary and crucial in personal, educational and labour affairs. Furthermore values create standards and are significant for identity development. For that reasons values are relevant especially for teenagers and young adults, because they are in a stage of life that is characterized by uncertainty.

Values provide stability in this uncertain stage of life. They guide through difficult phases and support the young individuals in their decision process. The educational system with teachers, mentors, providers of vocational education in schools as well as in enterprises are multipliers. They provide this young target group with competencies in different fields (factual knowledge, process knowledge, social competences, communicative competences, personal competences etc.). Moreover it is their duty to provide them with the values they need to enter the world of work easily.

But in reality there is a uncertainty of the understanding of values. That leads to neglect values in vocational education. Therefore it is important to clarify the understanding(s) and meaning(s) of values in a first step.

With a closer look to literacy you will find a lot of different definitions of the term value. Furthermore the term value is often use in education identical with moral education or critical thinking. A discussion of different definitions makes no sense at this point.<sup>2</sup> But we want to compare the named values of the stakeholder with an European approach. The European Approach defines values as the fundament “our free, modern and democratic society [...]” (EUROPEANVALUES.INFO) They show how values develop over the years in six steps.

Above the following values were named:

Federal states	Federal government	Labour market	European Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reference for god</li> <li>• dignity</li> <li>• humanity</li> <li>• democracy</li> <li>• freedom</li> <li>• forbearance</li> <li>• scope</li> <li>• tolerance</li> <li>• sense of responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• loyalty,</li> <li>• service incentive,</li> <li>• cooperation,</li> <li>• economy,</li> <li>• willingness to change</li> <li>• dignity</li> <li>• freedom</li> <li>• self-fulfilment</li> <li>• equality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one`s own initiative / self-dependence</li> <li>• motivation / willingness to learn</li> <li>• responsibility</li> <li>• cooperation</li> <li>• ability to communicate</li> <li>• reliability</li> <li>• public spirit</li> <li>• collegiality</li> <li>• decision-making ability</li> <li>• problem solving ability</li> <li>• openness</li> <li>• consideration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• freedom</li> <li>• equality</li> <li>• solidarity</li> </ul>

With a closer look at the values you see that there are some common aspects and some differences. In general you see that the named values from federal state, federal government and the European Values are similar. Because European Values should be universal they are very broadly. These values we should find in the national and federal values too. But because the national and federal values

<sup>2</sup> To get an overview SCHWARTZ / BILSKY (1987) conceptualize basic human values in regard of the most popular approaches.



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have not be as general as the European ones you find there more values. These values could often be deduced by the European Values. You find the value democracy for example in the fifth step.

But with a look at the postulated values of the FEDERAL INSTITUTE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING and the values that are named by the labour market there are some differences:

These values refer more to a labour specific virtues like service incentive, economy, loyalty motivation and willingness to learn and so forth. These values are closer to abilities or competences like the other ones.

In summary you see that there are some popular and common values. But there are many differences specially by focussing the labour market. These differences are considerable because labour market is a very important actor in the German vocational Education system. There it is necessary to match the values of the labour market with the national, federal and European ones. Furthermore we have to identify and match the values of the European labour market.



## EVive VET and Education System in Germany

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