

# The Accreditation of Prior Learning in Germany A Federal Project Initiative

**financed by BMBF & ESF**



## Accreditation of Prior Learning for Higher Education



Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research



**ANKOM-**

Accreditation of prior learning  
for higher education

Regional development projects  
for the accreditation of prior learning  
for higher education

Accompanying Research



Programme Agency



**Board**  
(BiBB, BMBF, DGB, HRK, IGM, KWB)



## Background & Challenges (I)

- **Regarding vocational education graduates:**  
Despite the relatively high level of education, graduates of the vocational training system may find themselves in 'dead ends' regarding their careers since most VET-programmes don't include higher education entrance qualification
- VET seems not build up a "longing for" lifelong learning.
- **Regarding companies/employers:** Especially in areas requiring high levels of knowledge, and facing rapid changes in knowledge development (e.g. 'High-tech' domains) encounter difficulties in personnel development
  - Traditional suppliers of higher-level and continuing vocational training are sometimes not able to provide the education required, while academic institutions do not offer these educational services



## **Background & Challenges (II)**

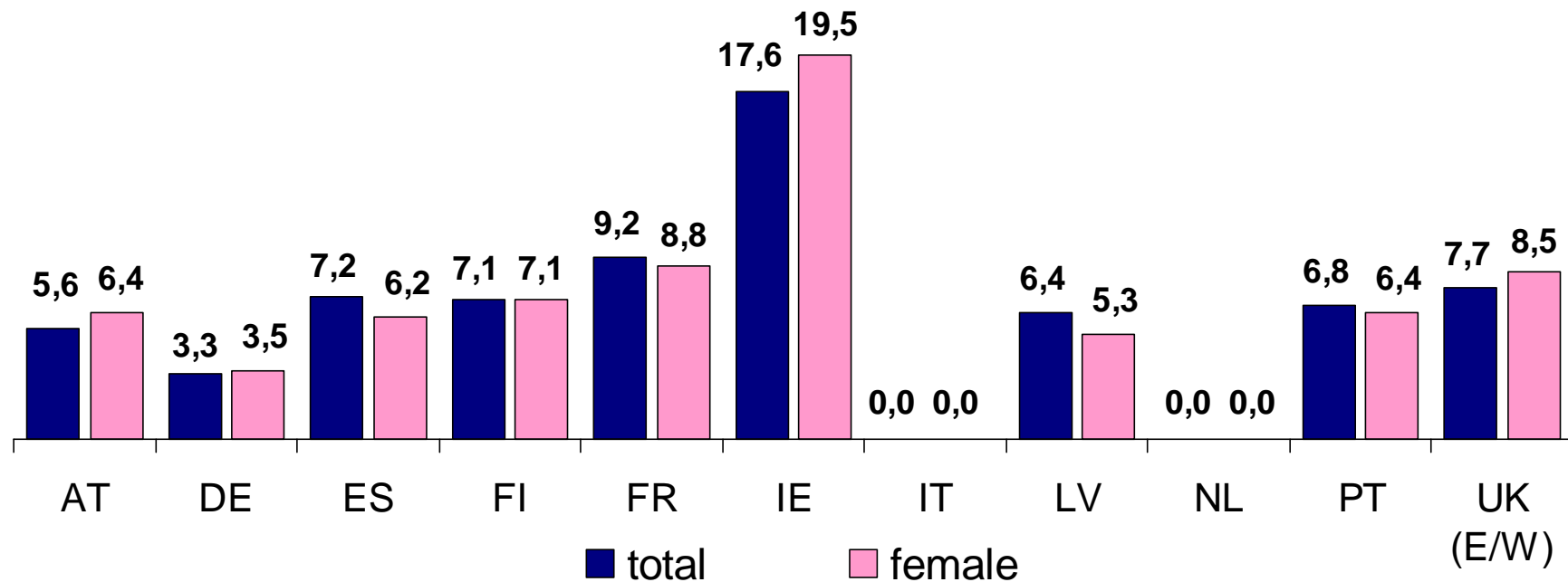
- **Regarding universities:**

- High numbers of students (25% of beginner in 2005/06) with HE-entrance qualification and VET-qualification. Regulations by the HEI to accredit for internships and work experience; but: no assessments or evaluation data available
- The existing “third chance” to HE via “accreditation of prior learning for access” is ruled by the Länder, is very divers, unknown and not popular.
- Holder of @ 80 state-wide recognized further education certificates have access to Universities of applied sciences.
- For the others: at present access has to be combined with accreditation for advanced standing. No high-priority to implement AP(E)L to set an incentive and contribute to permeability for non-traditional students.
- The (commercial) provision of educational services is not a strong part of German academic culture – HEI contributes with only 2,5% to further education in Germany.

## **Background & Challenges (III)**

- **Regarding society:**
  - The evident lack of permeability for graduates of the vocational education system into academic education is in conflict with objectives of educational policy
  - This non-permeability also hinders pathways to develop the educational standard – knowledge and skills – of working people in Germany.

## Non-traditional Students (in % of all new students)

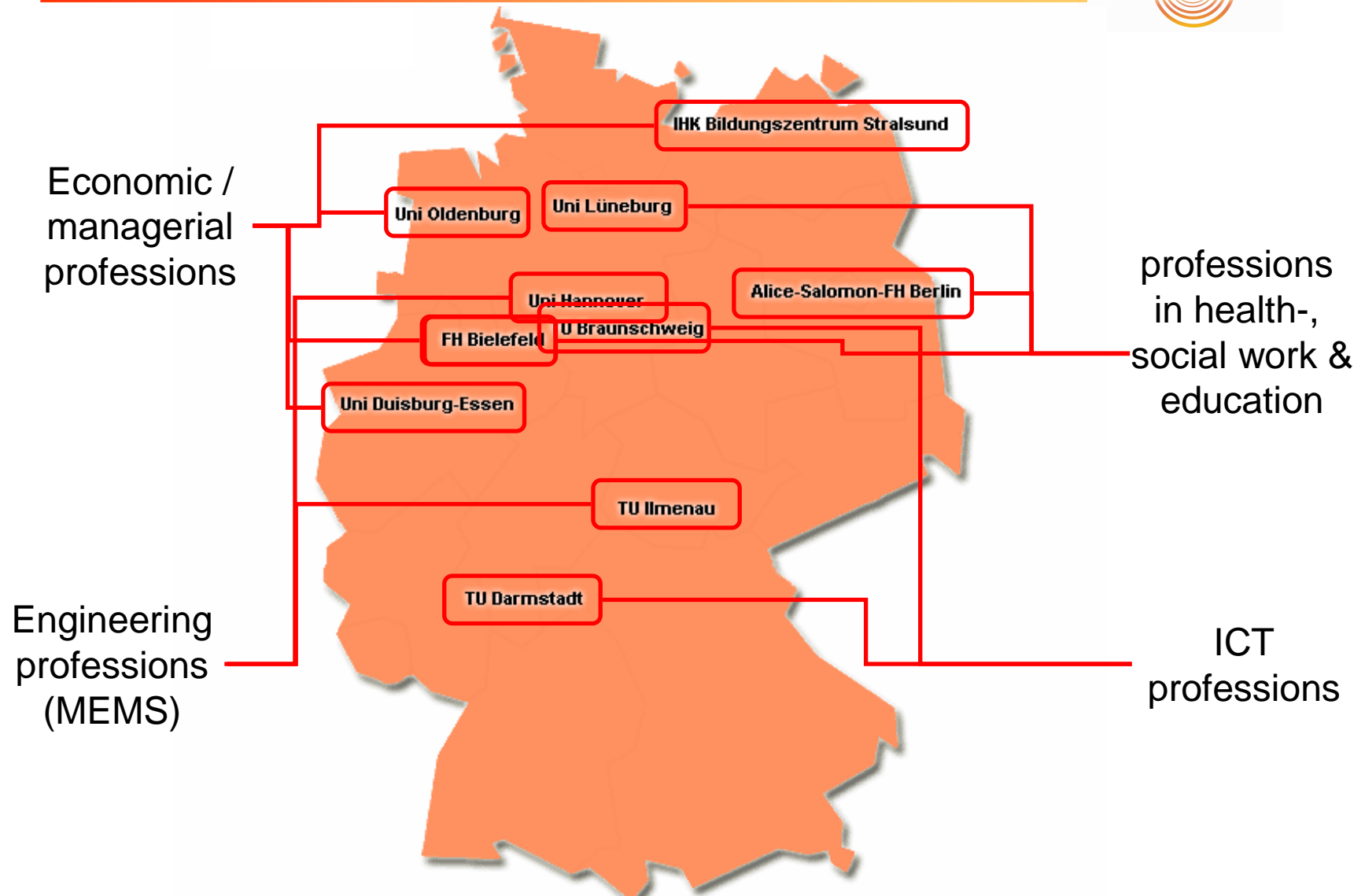


Source: Eurostudent 2005



## Governance of AP(E)L

- Resolution by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education & Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) (2002)- starting point for accreditation of prior learning in higher education (Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences) in Germany. “Learning outcomes from prior learning can be accepted as equivalent up to 50% of the higher education programme”.
- In 2003 the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK) and KMK jointly signed a set of recommendations for HE institutions related to the KMK resolution with a strong focus on the accreditation of prior *certificated* learning and qualification linkages between FE and HE. The accreditation of prior certificated learning, especially state-wide recognized further education certificates, should be considered as partly equivalent.
- Since education lies in the responsibility of the Länder, the realisation is governed by the higher education laws of the Länder. The Länder law delegates to the HEI and very often the HEI to the study programme coordinator.







## **ANKOM – the basic approaches**

- **Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning**

- Background: well developed „dual system“ in VET, @ 80 state-wide recognized further education certificates.
- Process: the learning outcomes of state-wide recognized further education certificates are the basis for accreditation.
- Focus: development of APCL and more precise on credit awarding with articulation agreements and advanced standing.
- Result: structured procedure – quality assured - with the curriculum as having been assessed, which has to be accepted by the accreditation agency for HE-programmes

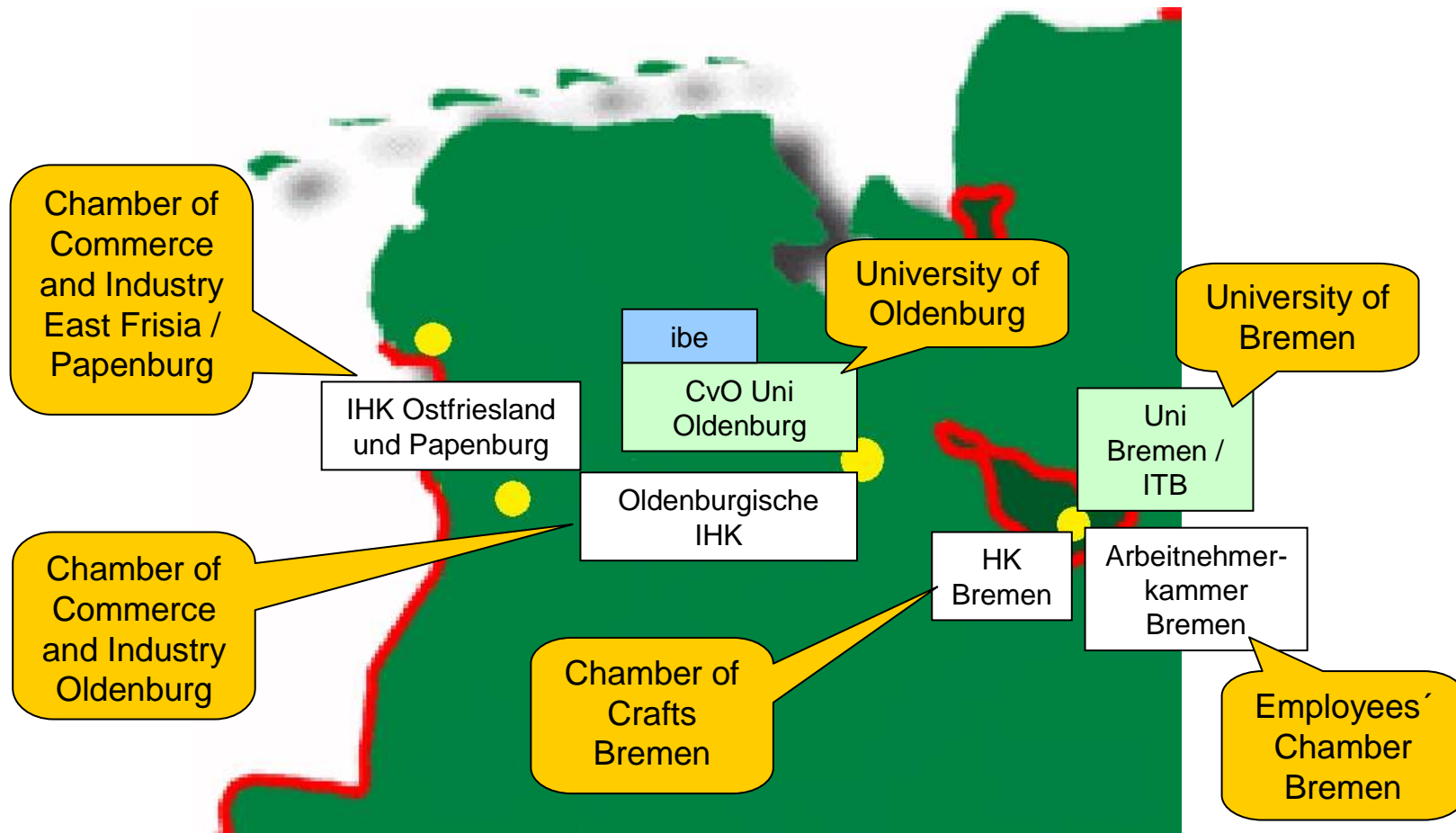
- **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning**

- five projects are developing approaches for the accreditation of non-formal und informal learning - portfolio
- **But:** A qualification is the precondition for the assessment of non-formal and informal learning

## Assessment methods – award of advanced standing

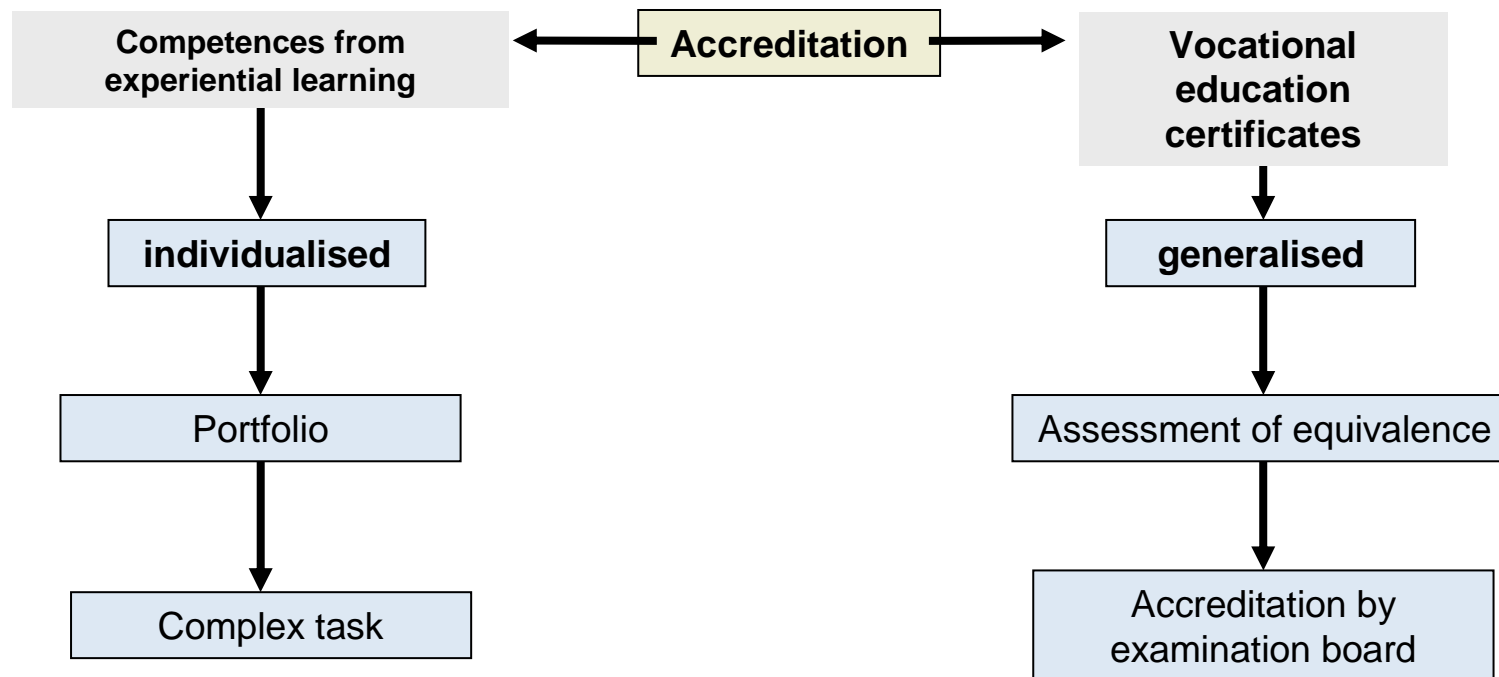
A Learning Outcomes	B Assessment of Equivalence	C Accreditation Procedure
<b>Conception / Design</b>		
Description of learning outcomes from academic studies, vocational education, and practical experience	Methodology to assess equivalence of outcomes across these learning environments	Design of concrete accreditation procedure at university/polytechnic & quality insurance strategies
<b>Implementation of processes</b>  Which strategies and specific steps are necessary/probably successful for the implementation of these three ‘building blocks’ in practice?		

## Case study: North-Western Project Consortium



## Ways of Accreditation

*generalised vs. individualised*



seit 3/2006 möglich

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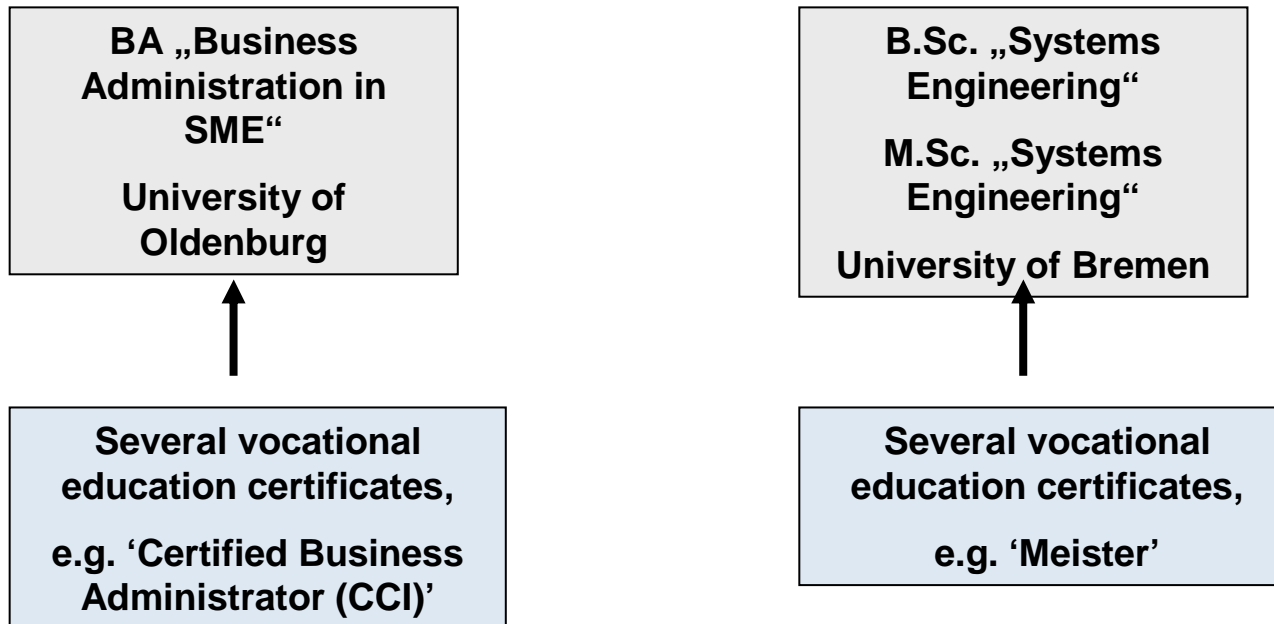


## **Structured Accreditation** (block credit transfer)

- University and vocational education institution assess equivalence of learning outcomes once
- Everyone holding a specific certificate gets accreditation of modules without any further examination.
- Accreditation is guaranteed by university

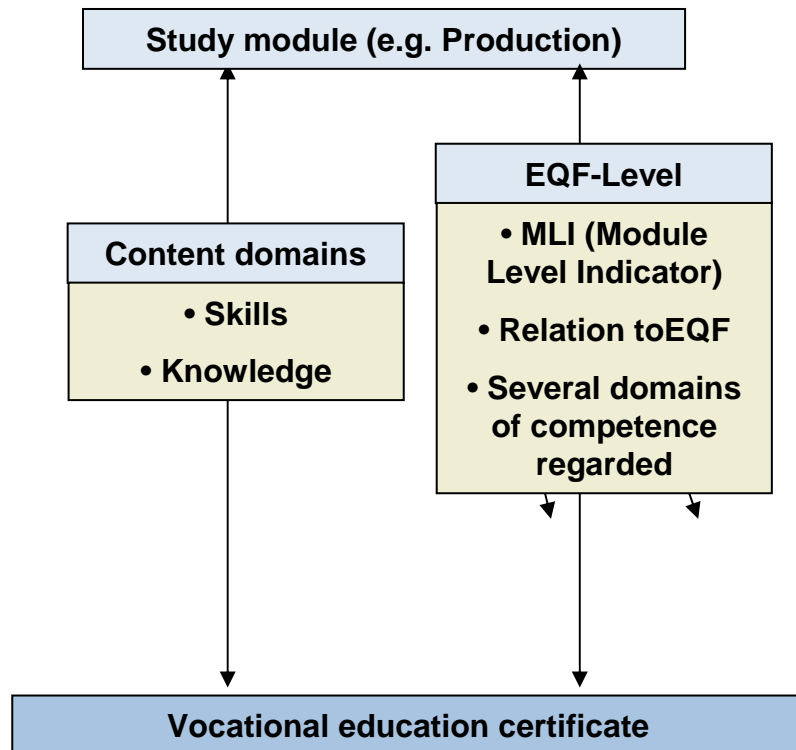
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## Study Courses and Certificates



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## Structured Accreditation (method)



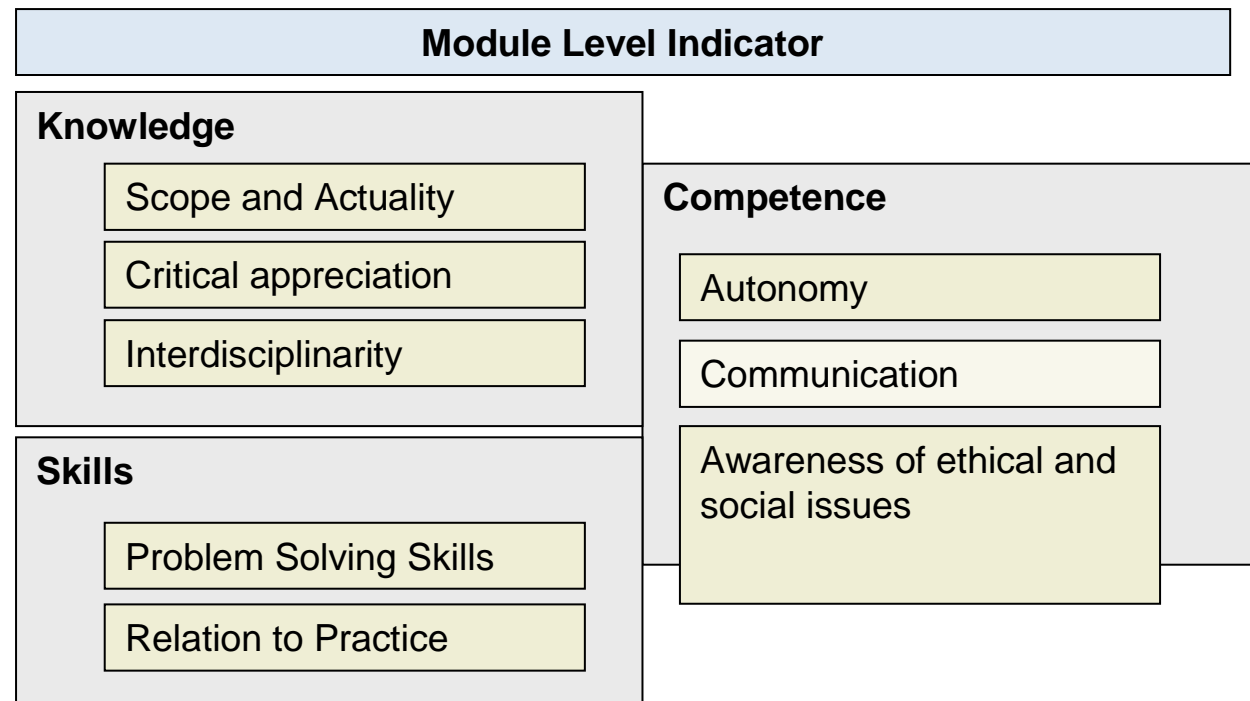
### Assessment of equivalence

Experts assess,

- the content overlap between study module and certificate, and
- assess the EQF levels of the competences acquired in the study module and in the vocational education programme, respectively

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## Scales of the MLI



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## Scales of the MLI - Examples of Items

Module Level Indicator	
<b>Knowledge</b>	
Scope and Actuality	„The module contains at least some in-depth knowledge on the actual state of research within the domain.“
Critical appreciation	„The module provides an awareness for the limits of the knowledge acquired.“
Interdisciplinarity	„The module contains interdisciplinary topics, requiring knowledge from different domains.“
<b>Skills</b>	
Problem Solving Skills	„The learning objectives or examination questions require comprehensive cognitive of practical skills.“
Relation to Practice	„The module provides knowledge with immediate practical usability.“

## Scales of the MLI - Examples of Items

Module Level Indicator	
<b>Competence</b>	
Autonomy	„The module contains learning objectives implying non-predictable changes.“
Communication	„The Learners have demonstrated their ability to communicate their understanding of the domain to other learners.“
Awareness of ethical and social issues	„When solving problems, the learners take into account interests of others and show solidarity with people affected by the solutions.“

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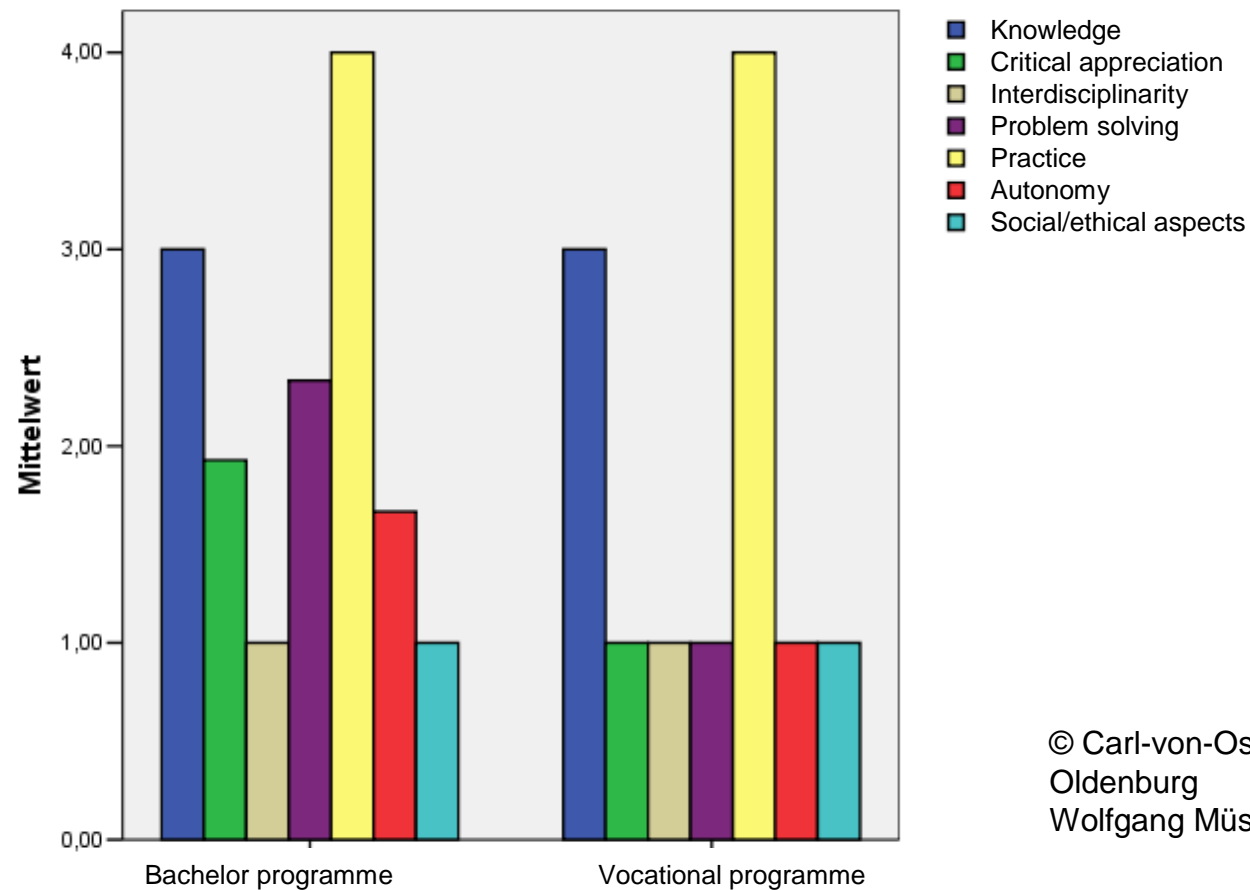


## **Comparison Certified Business Administrator (CCI) / - BA „Business Administration“**

- There are differences regarding the EQF levels between both educational programmes
- These differences – when comparing content-similar modules – are minimal, always less than half a level-step
- There is no reason to deny accreditation based on these findings

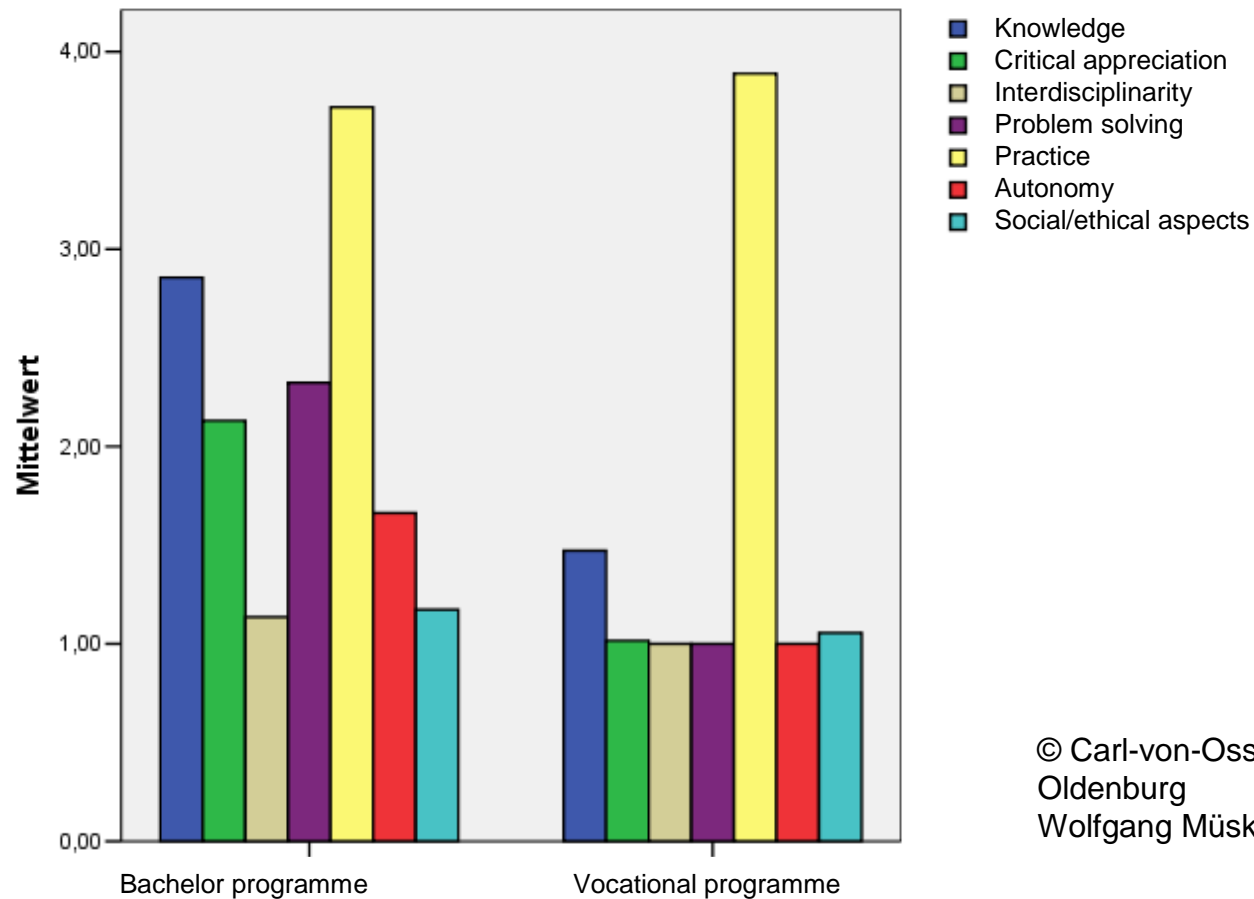
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## MLI-based Comparison of Competences (cost accounting)



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## MLI-based Comparison of Competences (all modules / subjects)



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## **Analysis of arrangements so far**

- **Credit transfer** between 35 and 90 credits with an average of 40 credits; no structured transfer in study programmes for ICT and Engineering
- **Costs & finance:** Pilot projects were financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), partly the Länder take over; problems to take fee for AP(E)L
- Link to **qualifications frameworks:** assessment of applicability of the EQF; development of discipline-specific QF
- **Credit system:** Problem to talk about credit transfer since it is a credit award; it is unclear – even if a CTS would exist - how credits from LLL or from one level to the next can be transferred (HE: no credit transfer from Bachelor to Master).
- **Link to labour market:** employer involved in articulation arrangements; emerging concept of work-based learning

## **“Problems (1)”**

### **Political hurdles:**

- Federalism: Responsibilities for vocational and academic education divided between federal level and ‘Länder’

### **Historically developed structural hurdles between academic and vocational education:**

- Lack of mutual understanding and interest
- Language barriers
- Lack of knowledge about the other sector

### **VET-System (mainly Chambers and Ministries for Commerce)**

- Preference for Bachelor Professional

## **“Problems (2)”**

### **Hurdles on the university side:**

- Fear of losing ,monopoly‘ in academic education
- Lack of interest because of presently high number of students
- Education – especially continuing education – is not regarded as crucial for universities` reputation / ‘excellence’
- High absorption of resources for study programme re-design (from Diploma to Bachelor/Master)
- Low acceptance for credit transfer by accreditation agencies



## **Sustainability**

- **Developing projects network for distribution and transfer**
- **“Transferability of APL-methods” as main question for the scientific monitoring project in 2008/09**
- **Networking with other APL-Initiatives in Germany**
  - **Two network conferences in 2007 and 2008**
- **Homepage with all results and materials developed by the developing projects and scientific monitoring project**
- **Open source library on APL (based on Wikindx) with free access for every citizen (German and English language)**
- **(Self-)Evaluation of implementation**



Thanks!

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