

Possible Challenges in Educational and Vocational Guidance in Schools for Students with a Migration Background

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To begin with

Who of you has ever lived in a country where the national language was not
your first language/mother tongue?





- English/Politics-Economics/German M.Ed.
- German as a Foreign Language M.A.
- Scientific Assistant at the Institute for Economic Education (teacher training for Economic subjects for general education schools)
- Research area: Career Guidance, Language in Economics Education, Language-sensitive subject teaching with a focus on economics, heterogeneity
- Experience from practice: more and more students struggle to decide for a career (especially students with a migration background) → teachers, career counselors and parents are overwhelmed and blame each other

Mission statement: Improve Career Guidance in Schools for every student!



On the project

- Data taken from Masterthesis (2022): Young people with a migration background and Career Guidance: An empirical study
- Cross-departmental project: Economic Education/German as a foreign language
- Finding: Pupils (with a migration background) need support in terms of content **and** language
- Basis for the doctoral project: *(Subject-specific) Language requirements in Career Guidance in general education schools* (working title)



Goal of this presentation



(Brief) overview of current research findings in the context of career guidance for students with a migration background
+ research gap



Insight into interviews conducted with the target group

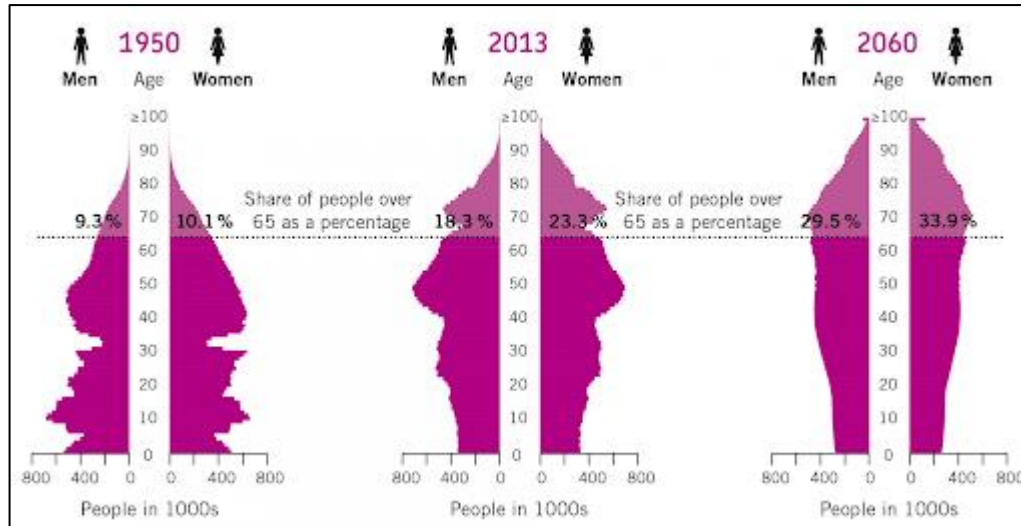


Idea on how to improve career guidance through the inclusion of language



Discussion

Status Quo (not only) in Germany: On the one hand ...



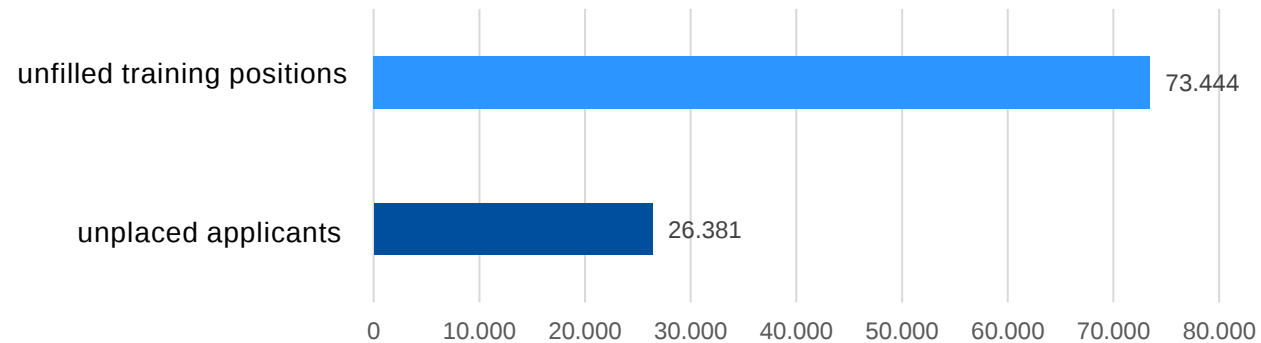
[e.g. https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Population/Population-change/_inhalt.html](https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Population/Population-change/_inhalt.html)

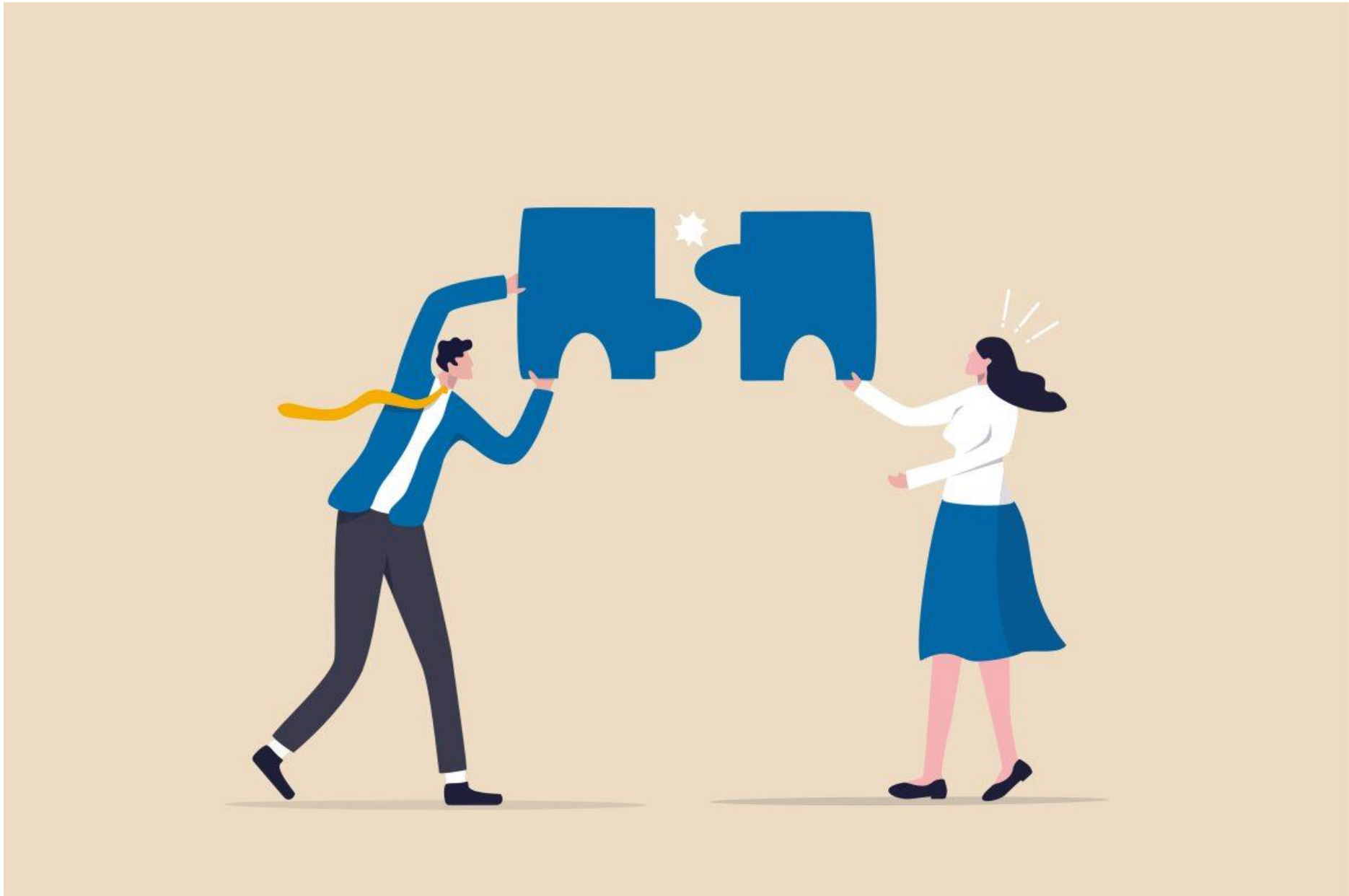


On the other hand ...

- More and more students struggling at the transition from school to work
- Cannot find an after school alternative: young adults aged 20-34 without a vocational qualification in 2022: 2.86 million (19.1 percent) **(highest value for over 20 years!)**
- They make the “wrong” decision: 29,5% contract termination rate in 2022

„Mismatch“ between available training places and young people seeking training







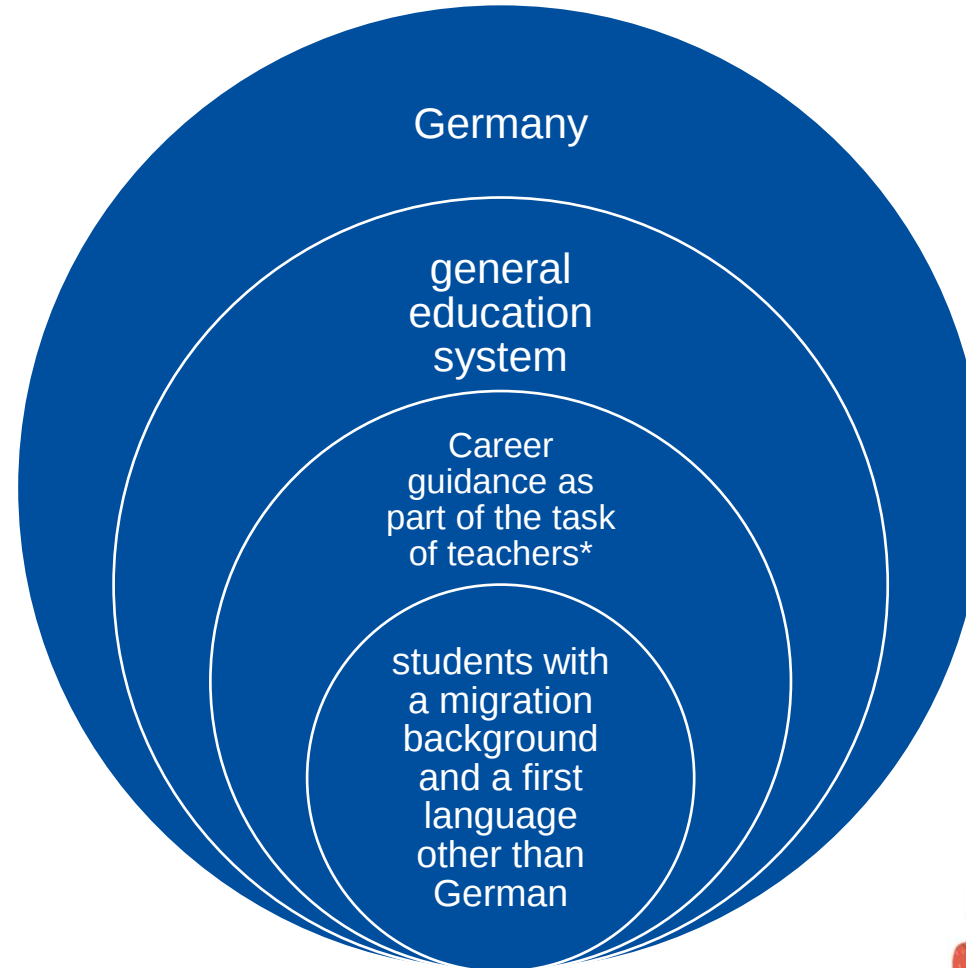
Special focus: Students with a migration background

- are less likely to enter directly into a fully qualifying initial vocational training programme (non-formally qualified aged 20 to 34: migrants with own migration experience amounted to 39.1% (in comparison: Germans without migration background: 11.6%))
- increased proportion of training programmes and qualification measures ("transition system")
- do **drop-out** from the first training programme more often than non-migrant peers (even when controlling for school performance and socio-economic status)
- remain **without a vocational qualification** in the long term
- Occupation as an accelerator of integration

„students with a migration background“ are no homogeneous group

**Different definitions of „students with a migration background“!
(e.g. own immigration experience, citizenship, ...)**

Target group of my research



*Career guidance as a cross-curricular task



Students with a migration background and career guidance

How must an inclusive career guidance and vocational orientation (in schools) be designed in order to provide the best possible support for students (with a migration background)?

State of research on career guidance and migration

- International: Focus on grown-up migrants, refugees or asylum seekers outside the general education system (e.g. Abkhezr et al. 2022; Magnano 2022; Sultana 2022; Career Guidance for Refugees Programme (Federal Ministry of Education and Research))
- Possible challenges: educational and occupational background, recognition of prior learning, language proficiency (cf. Fejes/Chamberland/Sultana 2022, 348)
- discrimination based on ethnic and linguistic grounds may affect individuals' opportunities (cf. Hooley et al. 2018, 2019)

Current programs for vocational guidance in schools for students with a migration background (in Germany):

- Programs outside of the classroom
- Mostly in the local language (e.g. German)

The interview study

- Research Question: *How did the young people with a migration background surveyed perceive the vocational orientation process during their time at school?*
- Retrospective semi-structured interviews (N= 6)
- What can we learn from it in order to improve career guidance for this target group?

Criteria for the selection of interview participants

- The interviewees have a migration background (at least one parent born abroad)
- The interviewees had (at least for the most part) spent their school years in Germany.
- German is not their first language.
- The interviewees graduated from a grammar school or a general education school with a grammar school upper level in Lower Saxony or are at the end of their schooling.

Description of the interviewees

- 6 qualitative interviews
- 4 female, 2 male
- Average age: 23,5 (20 – 28 years)
- 2 were born in Germany, 4 outside of Germany
- Both parents of all interviewees were born outside Germany
- 2 that were born in Germany spent their entire school career in Germany,
3 came to Germany in their early teens (13-14)
1 at the age of 17
- Different (grammar) schools in Lower Saxony



Categories

- Individual experiences with vocational orientation during their own school years
- **Consideration of cultural differences**
- **Information on the German training and study system**
- **Parents and social environment**
- External support services
- Language sensitivity
- **Consideration of migration-specific skills**
- **Ideal structure of vocational orientation**

Central findings: Consideration of cultural differences I

Was there a difference in the treatment of students with and without a migration background?

- ***Unequal treatment*** of young people with and without a migration background
“Germans’ were not asked this question [vocational training or university]. Most of them were assumed to be studying anyway” [I1, 92f.]
- Advice in the ***direction of vocational training*** and blanket advice against studying solely on the basis of migration background [I4, 200f.; I1, 126]
- Missing: “Knowledge or the clarification of how the system in Germany works” [I3, 127]

Central findings: Consideration of cultural differences II

Should there be a difference between students with and without a migration background?

- *fundamentally positive, as long as it is not deficit-oriented but competence-oriented: “I think you should definitely differentiate between the two, **but not by emphasizing the weaknesses, but by simply looking at what this student offers or what this student simply brings to the table**” [14, 265ff].*
- *“I want to live normally, I practically grew up here, I came here when I was 14, so I don't always want to have the feeling that I'm a foreigner here” [13, 219f].*

Central findings: Information on the German training and study system

Was information on the German education and training system provided or was this knowledge taken for granted?

- *No information, „it was **assumed that this was known**“ [I4, 284]*
- *If information was given at all, “it was usually because even Germans didn't know” [I3, 134f.]*
- ***Focus on universities:*** *“I missed the fact that if you do an apprenticeship, that's not a bad thing. Because when we were at grammar school, we should definitely do the Abitur [A-levels], we had teachers like that” [I3,149ff.]*

Central findings: Parents and social environment

What role did your parents and your social environment play in your career choice?

- *The **influence of parents** and the **pressure** exerted by them is stronger than in families without a history of migration [cf. I6, 254f.].*
- *An apprenticeship is not as highly regarded as a [university] degree [cf. I4, 375].*
- ***monetary aspects** and **social status** or **recognition by other people** also played a role for the parents and the social environment [I1, I6]*
- *justifying desire to get a good school-leaving certificate and to choose a profession that their parents agreed with by saying that “they wanted to do something for them in return, i.e. as a sign of gratitude” [I6, 148] “because they had come to Germany especially for us” [I6, 132]*

Central findings: Consideration of migration-specific skills

What skills do you have that young people without a migration background do not have? Were your migration-specific skills included in the career guidance process?

- well aware of their migration-specific skills → do **not want to “brag”** about their skills [I3, 303; I4, 118; I5, 124].
- **not taken into account** in the vocational orientation at school: “At school the teachers were not interested in this” [I1, 304].
- only “*what was Western was seen as a resource. English, French, Spanish, Latin*” [I1, 258f.] → unequal treatment of languages
- “*That my Turkish language could somehow be valuable as a resource, I was also not told that I should write this in my applications, for example*” [I4, 253f.]
- No reference to professions in which multilingualism could be important [cf. I4, 263f.]

Central findings: Ideal structure of vocational orientation

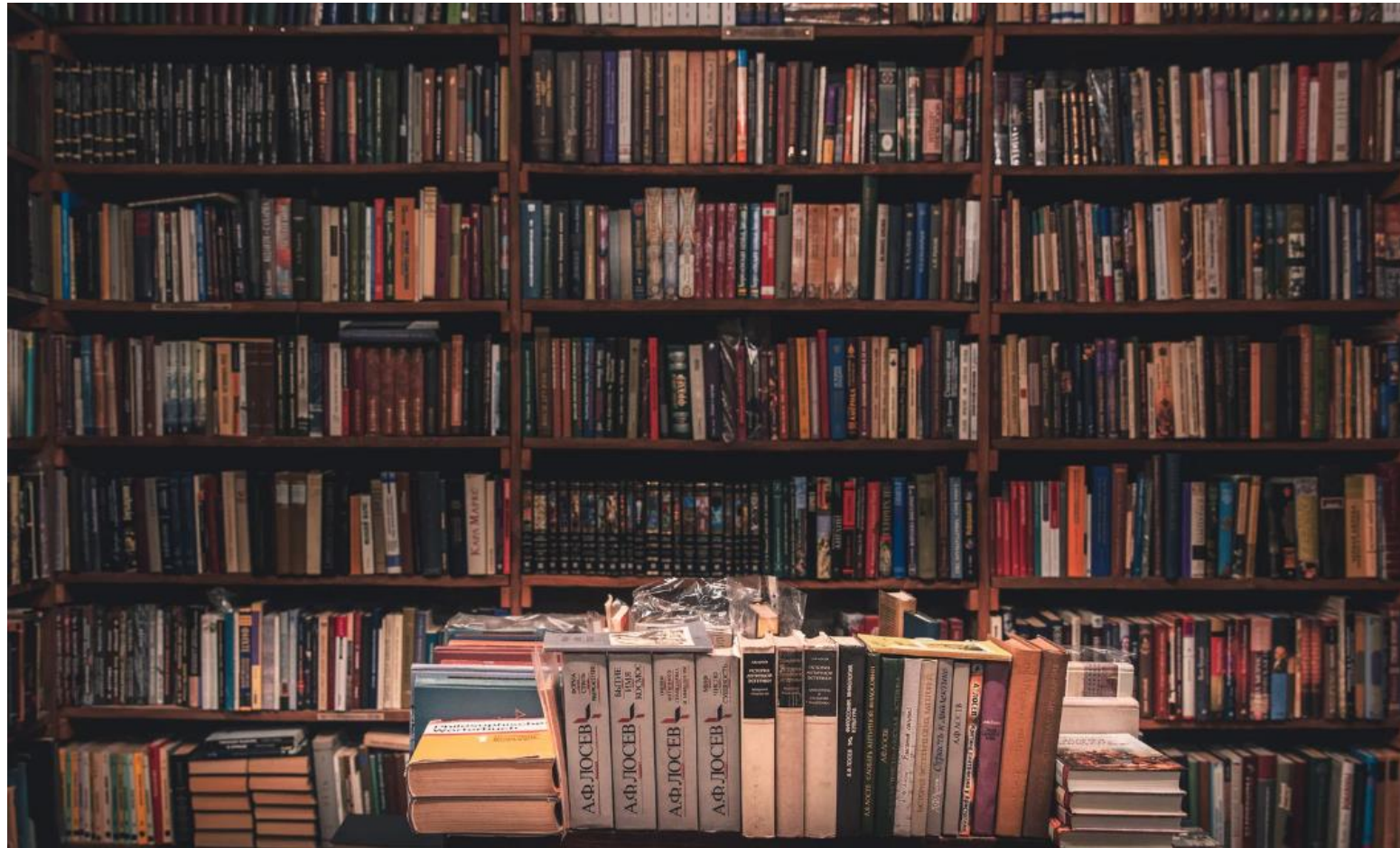
In your opinion, what does an ideal career orientation structure look like?

- **More information**
- More individuality and individual advice
- More practical contacts
- Less focus on A-levels and a stronger integration of training and different professional fields
- Reduction of prejudices
- Development of intercultural competence of teachers and guidance practitioners

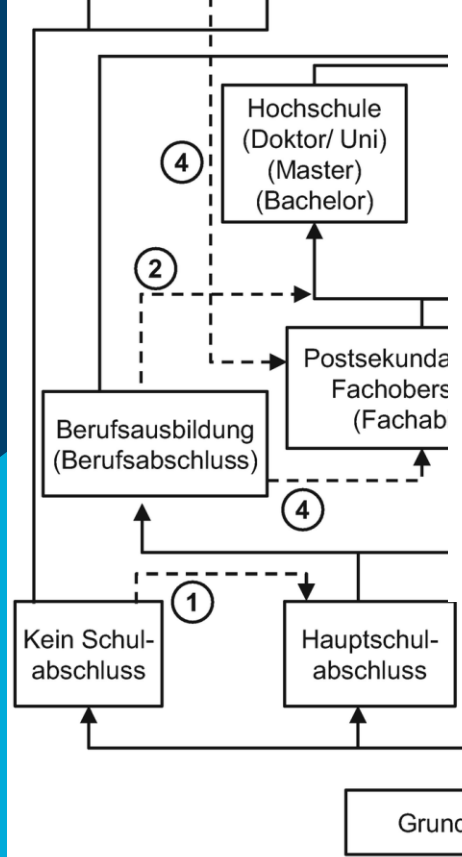
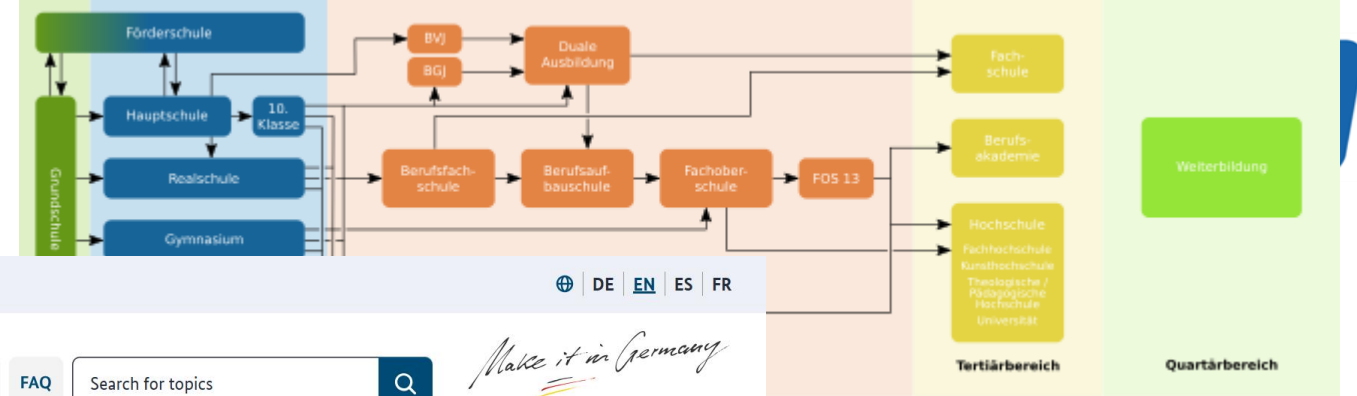
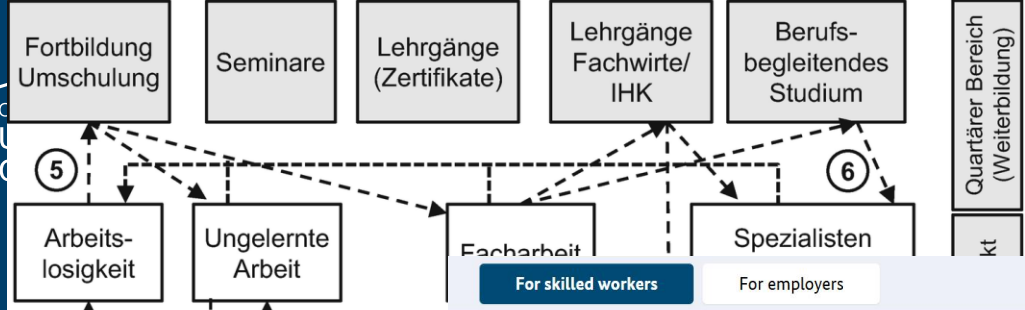


The role of language for career guidance

- How to bring information to the students?



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The Federal Government

Working in Germany

Study & vocational training

Visa & residence

Living in Germany

Service

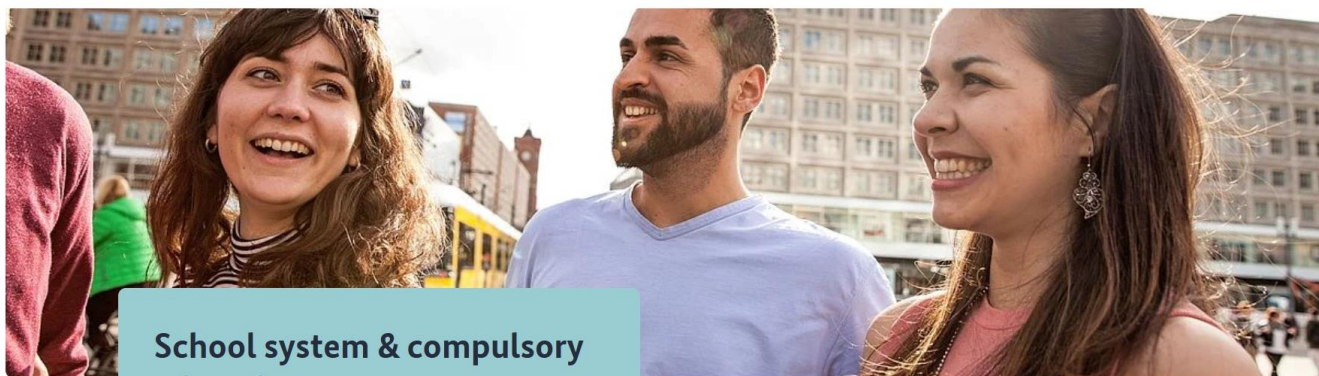
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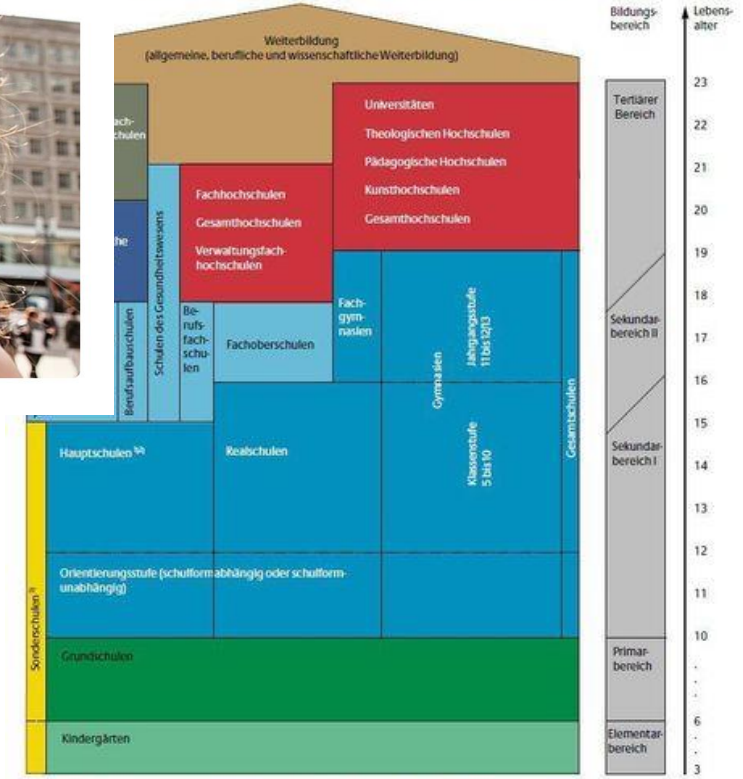
School system & compulsory education

„easy language“
„plain English“/Easy Read
→ good starting point

- 1 Nachholen des Hauptschulabschlusses in Berufsorientierung/ Berufsvorbereitung (z. B. im schulischen Berufsvorbereitungsjahr)
 - 2 Hochschulzugang mit Berufsabschluss und Berufspraxis
 - 3 Teilanerkennung von Fachwirte-Abschluss (Credits) für Hochschulstudium
 - 4 Weg zur Fachhochschulreife über mittleren Schulabschluss, Beruf und/oder Praxis
 - 5 Durch Fortbildung und Umschulung Wiedereinstieg ins Arbeitsleben
 - 6 Karriere durch berufsbegleitende Weiterbildung (Verbindungen exemplarisch)
- in Schools for Students with a Migration Background

Bildung in Deutschland

Struktur des Bildungswesens der Bundesrepublik Deutschland



¹⁾ Rund 20 Prozent der Hauptschüler/-innen besuchen über das 9. Schuljahr hinaus auch ein 10. Schuljahr an der Hauptschule.

²⁾ Die Mittelschule in Sachsen, die Sekundarschule in Sachsen-Anhalt und die Regelschule in Thüringen vermitteln den Haupt- und Realschulabschluss.

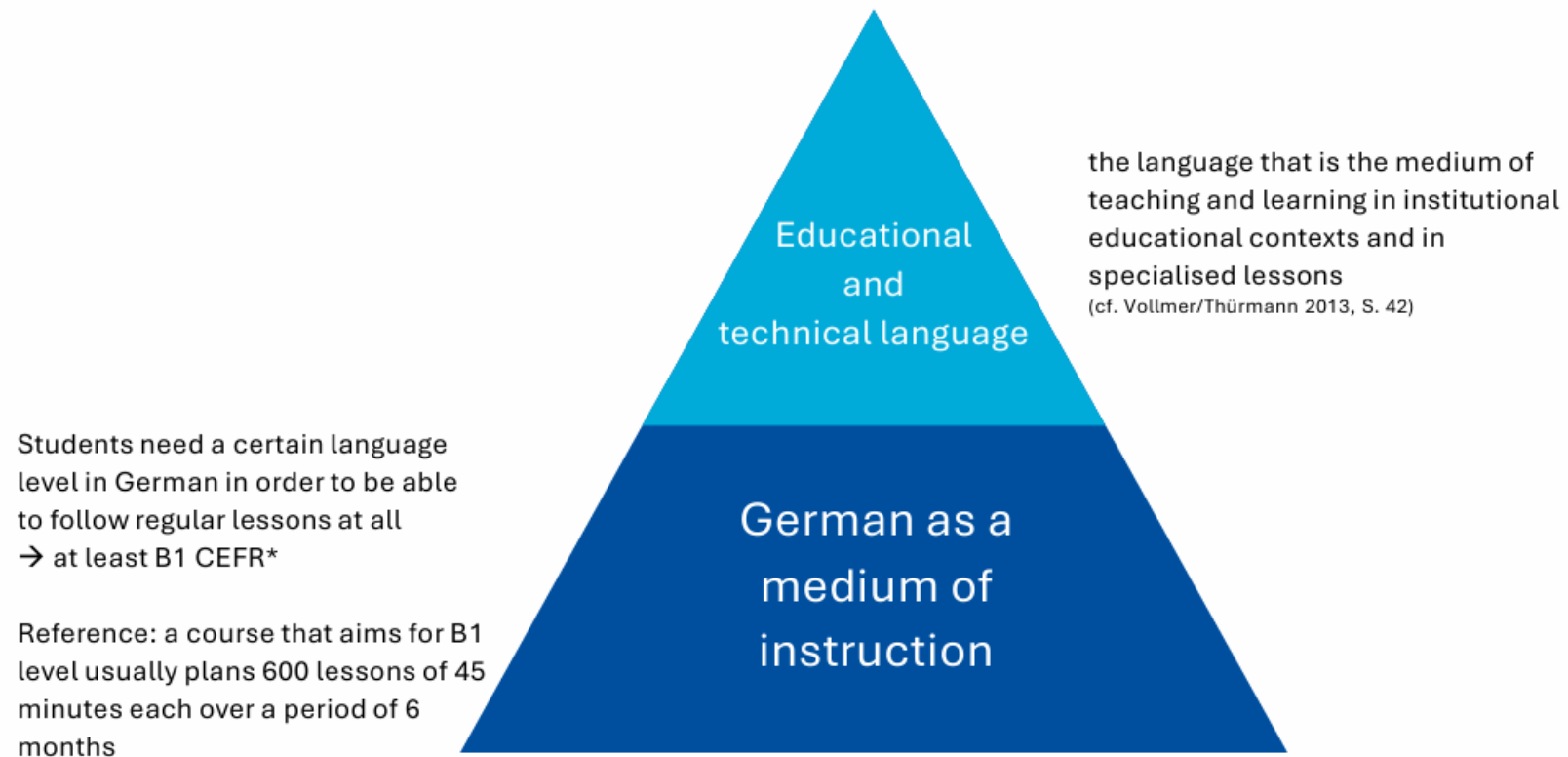
³⁾ Entsprechende Einrichtungen bestehen auch im Bereich von Realschulen und Gymnasien sowie bei den beruflichen Schulen.

• Schematisierte Darstellung der typischen Struktur des Bildungssystems der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. In den einzelnen Bundesländern bestehen Abweichungen.

• Die Zerschneidung des Lebensalters zu den Bildungseinrichtungen gilt für den jeweils frühestmöglichen typischen Eintritt und bei ununterbrochenem Gang durch das Bildungssystem.

• Die Größe der Rechtecke ist nicht proportional zu den Besucherzahlen.

Two levels of challenge: German language itself and subject-specific language



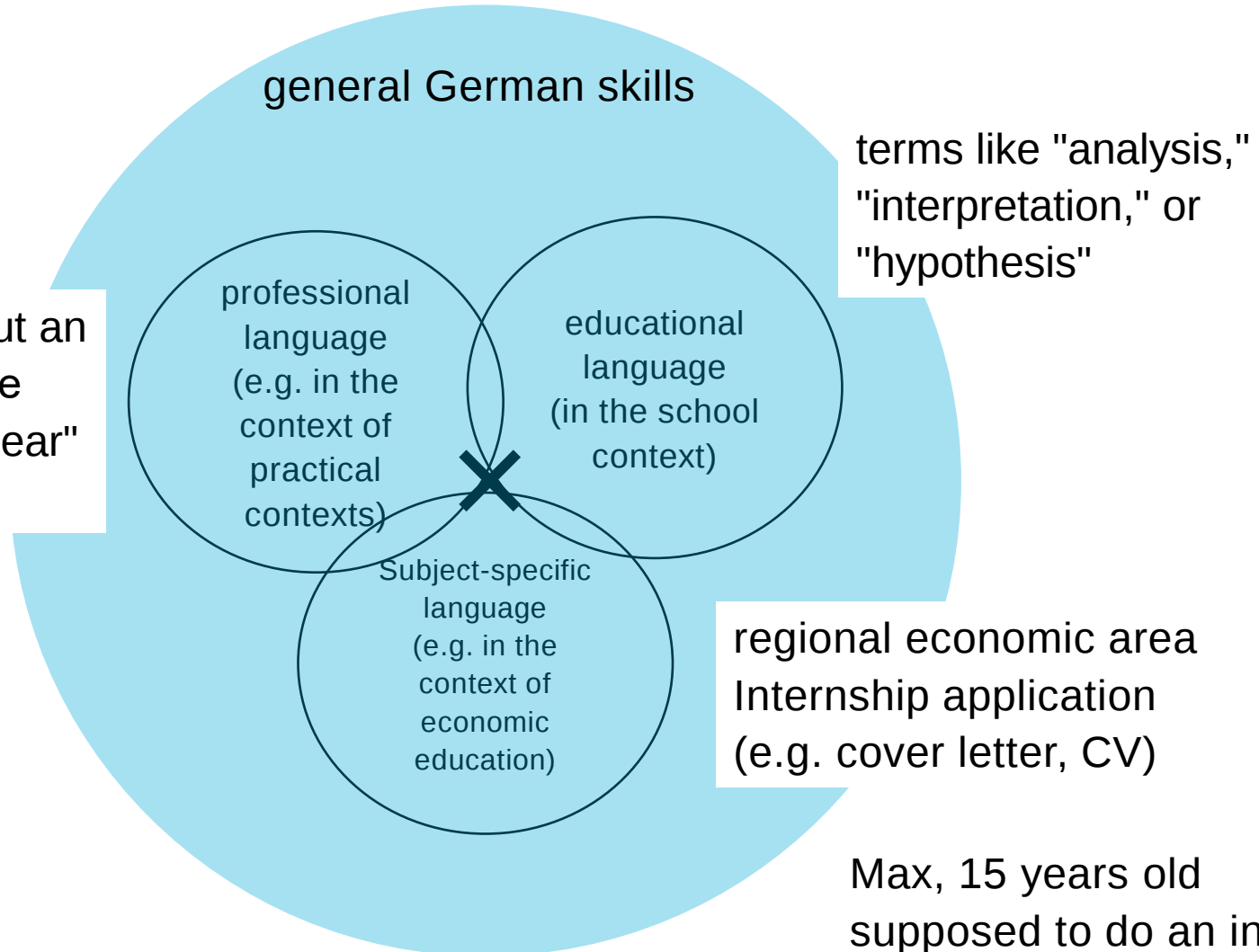
*CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2)

Subject-specific language in career guidance in schools



Subject-specific language in career guidance in schools

mechanics often talk about an "oil change", "checking the brake fluid", "differential gear" or "torque"



Max, 15 years old
supposed to do an internship in a
car repair shop soon



Who is responsible for language teaching and learning in the context of career guidance?

- Teaching German as a foreign language: Focuses on the language but not the content (vocational orientation)
 - Vocational orientation (e.g. as part of business lessons): Focuses on the content but not the language
- If too much time is “wasted” on pure language learning, this time is not available for vocational orientation
- Necessary: Joint teaching of language and content in career guidance

LANGUAGE



CONTENT

Closing statements

*“not by emphasizing the weaknesses,
but by simply looking at what this student offers” [14, 265ff].*

*The student will later build their professional career on their strengths,
not on remedied weaknesses* (Fabian Grolimund)

- There is a lot of potential in every student,
they also have special competencies which can be of great added value for
employers and society as a whole and that must be taken into account!
- A lack of language skills can mask this potential





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