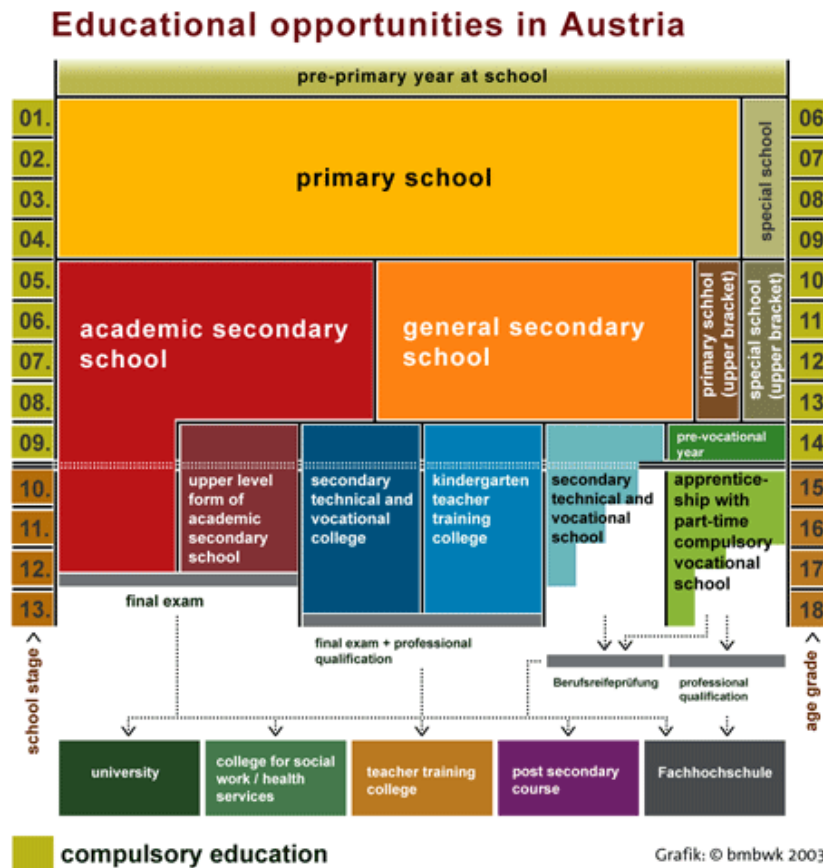


Workshop 3: Revisiting polytechnic and  
vocational education?  
Lisbon, October 2007

Austria: Policy targets in a fast  
changing higher education system

# The Austrian Education System



# Vocational Education in Austria

- Fragmented education system, early segmentation in academic and vocational track
- Long tradition of vocational education on upper secondary level (apprenticeship scheme, higher secondary schools of vocational education)
- „Latecomer“ in vocational higher education: Establishment of *Fachhochschulen* 1993

# Political targets of *Fachhochschulen* (Working Programme of government 1990)

- “to bring vocational education in tune with European standards (...) to supplement and relieve universities (...) and to train and retrain for different professional fields”
- “are to offer access both to graduates from upper secondary schools and to young skilled workers”

# Political targets translated into law

## § 3 FHStG

“*Fachhochschule* courses are higher education courses that serve to educate on a scientific basis for vocations. The main objectives are:

- (1) to ensure a practice oriented education and training at higher education level,
- (2) to impart skills that are necessary to fulfil the tasks of the pertinent vocational area in accordance with the scientific state of the art and practical demands,
- (3) to promote the permeability of the educational system and the vocational flexibility of the graduates.”

# Students at Universities and *Fachhochschulen*

## Winter term 2005/06

Institution	New Entrants	Students	Graduates 1st Degree
Universities	39,906 83%	217,651 89%	18,069 81%
Fachhoch- schulen	8,346 17%	25,727 11%	4,217 19%

# *Fachhochschule* Courses

Development 1994- 2007

- 1994/95 – 10 courses and approximately 600 students
- 2006/07 - 195 courses and approximately 30,000 students
- Small institutions: approx.12 with (on the average) 2,500 students and 16 courses

# Subject areas

of traditional *Diplomstudien* and BA /MA courses  
(FH Graduates may be admitted to doctoral studies at universities)

- Economics – Business studies – Management
- Tourism
- Engineering/Business combined
- Engineering, Technology
- Information Technology and Management
- Media and Design
- Health and Social work



# Public – Private

- Courses are developed and may be offered by private and public institutions.
- In most cases they are private limited companies, one is a foundation, two are run by Chambers, one by the Federal State.
- An accreditation council oversees the quality of the programmes.

# Funding

- Mixed funding:  
the Federal Government subsidizes the courses on the basis of a per capita formula  
additional funds are provided by regions/municipalities  
and – to a lesser extent – by business /industry
- The Federal Government states its criteria for and the amount of funding in development plans (Fachhochschul-Finanzierungs-und Entwicklungsplan)
- Fees (727 Euros) – since 2003 (2001/02)

# Research – an objective of the *Fachhochschule* sector ?

- FHStG 1993: staff members of Fachhochschule courses need to work in applied R&D in order to secure that teaching is based on the state of the art
- Courses became involved in regional R&D centres
- 1998 government made money available for cooperative projects with industry
- 2003 amendment of FHStG replace „teaching staff“ by „teaching and research staff“
- No exact data: Estimations 40 to 100 FTE staff in R&D

# Academic drift at *Fachhochschulen*?

- Tendency of vocational colleges to aspire university status and autonomy
- Tendency of vocational colleges to adjust their offerings to that of universities

## or Vocational drift at Universities?

- New Act on Universities 2002
  - > „outsourcing“ of universities, company like organisation, contract management
- Decentralisation of university study law, budget pressure, employability requirement
  - > increase in vocational oriented programmes

# Different assignments in Research: curiosity driven or applied?

- Blurring between pure and applied research
- Science the center of attention (competition policy)
- Emphasize on the interface science and the economy, with the state in the position of a facilitator
  - > Establishment of a center of excellence:  
Institute of Science and Technology Austria, 2006

# Hierachisation or Binary system?

- Difference in ownership and funding
- Share of students in engineering and business studies: approx. 90% at Fachhochschulen, approx. 40% at universities
- 40% of courses at *Fachhochschulen* are organised for persons in employment
- 42% of university programmes but 77% of *Fachhochschule* programmes follow BA/MA structure (2006)

# Policy target: Equity in access to HE

- Widening access policy of the 1970s (abolition of fees) > gender parities
- Little change in social composition of students
- Apprenticeship “cul de sac” education



# Change 1975-2005: New entrants by father profession

(Hochschulbericht 1993, Studierenden-Sozialerhebung 2006)

	1975/76	2005/06
Self-empl.	26,5%	24,7%
White c.	30,8%	41,3%
Civil ser.	30,9%	22,2%
Blue c.	11,8%	9,1%
Others	n.d.	1,5%
Total	100%	100%

# New entrants by father profession

Academic year 2005/06 (Studierenden-Sozialerhebung 2006)

	Unis	Art/Music	<i>FHs</i>	Employm.
Self-empl.	23,0%	27,6%	22,1%	17,1%
White c.	42,8%	38,1%	37,0%	33,2%
Civil ser.	22,2%	24,2%	21,9%	17,4%
Blue c.	9,9%	5,7%	12,4%	30,7%
Others	4,2%	4,4%	6,6%	1,5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

## To sum up

- Changes in social composition of study body due to *Fachhochschulen*:  
the creation of more occupational institutions, rather than the expansion of traditional universities seem to offer to socially disadvantaged groups a route to higher education\*

\*Gellert, Claudius (2006) Elite reproduction and the role of European universities in Meyer, Hansgünter (Hg) Der Dezentrierte Dissens. Die deutsche Hochschul-Reform-Kontroverse als Verlaufsform, p.282f

## Policy making by trusting to chance

- Low position of Austria in international rankings on share of students/graduates from socially disadvantaged families
- No measures to further permeability of the education system took place
- Early tracking as a hindrance for equity in HE still politically controversial

Thank you for your kind attention