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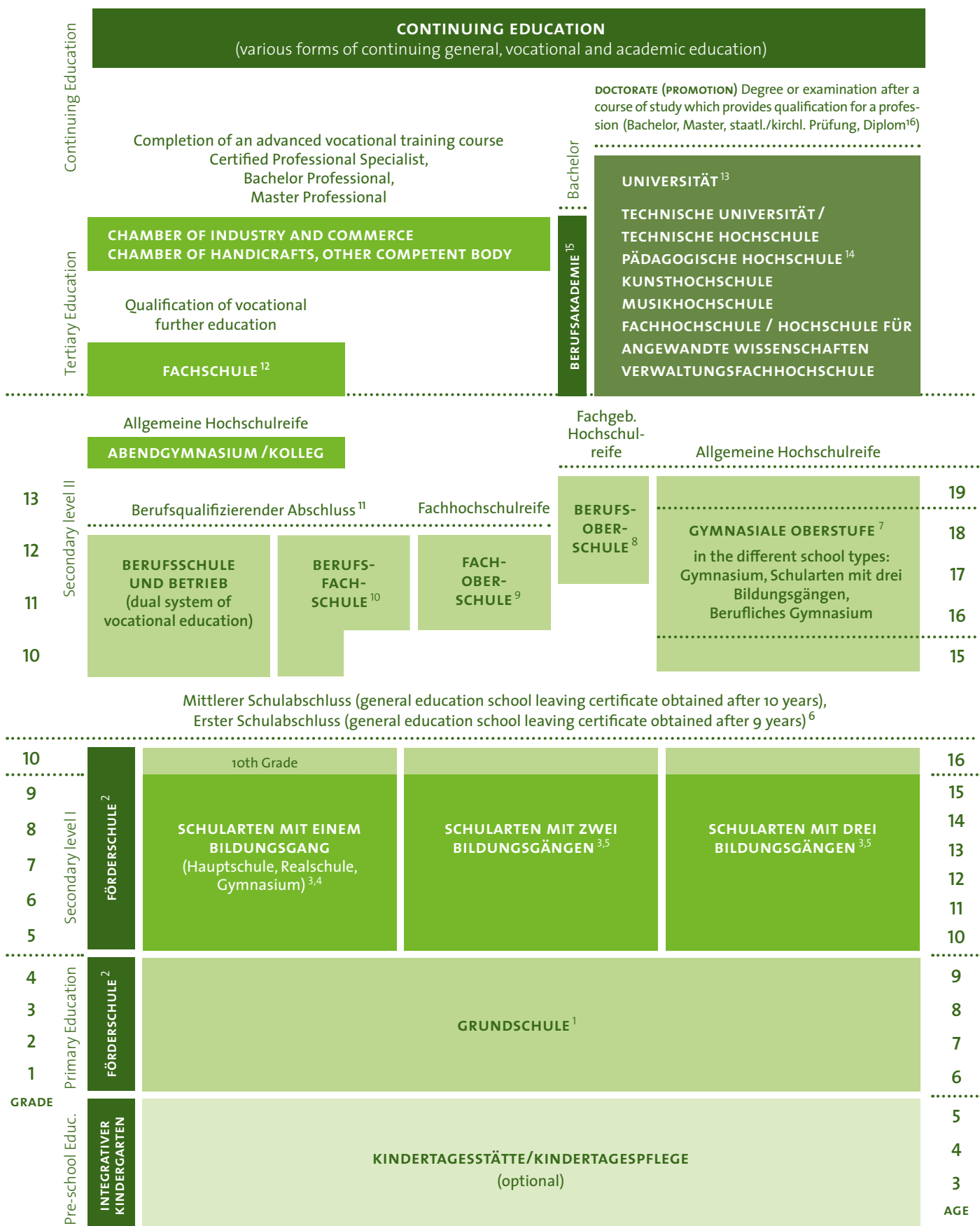
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Basic Structure of the Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany

Diagram



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Annotations

Diagram of the basic structure of the education system. The distribution of the school population in grade 8 as per 2021 taken as a national average is as follows: *Hauptschule* 8.1 per cent, *Realschule* 17.4 per cent, *Gymnasium* 37.2 per cent, *integrierte Gesamtschule* 20.2 per cent, types of school with several courses of education 12.3 per cent, special schools 3.8 per cent.

The ability of pupils to transfer between school types and the recognition of school-leaving qualifications is basically guaranteed if the preconditions agreed between the Länder are fulfilled. The duration of full-time compulsory education (compulsory general education) is nine years (10 years in five of the Länder) and the subsequent period of part-time compulsory education (compulsory vocational education) is three years.

- 1 In some Länder special types of transition from early childhood to primary education (*Vorklassen*, *Schulkindergärten*) exist. In Berlin and Brandenburg, the primary school comprises six grades.
- 2 Teaching pupils with special educational needs in inclusive classes at general education schools or special education institutions with corresponding special educational focuses. Designation of schools varies according to the law of each Land. *Sonderpädagogische Bildungseinrichtungen* with a focus on “learning” and *sonderpädagogische Bildungseinrichtungen* with a focus on “mental development” award school-specific qualifications.
- 3 Grades 5 and 6 constitute a phase of particular promotion, supervision and orientation with regard to the pupil’s future educational path and its particular direction.
- 4 *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* only exist in any appreciable numbers in some Länder. The *Hauptschule* course of education leads to a general education school-leaving certificate obtained after nine years of schooling (*Erster Schulabschluss*), the *Realschule* course of education leads to a general education school-leaving certificate obtained after ten years of schooling (*Mittlerer Schulabschluss*). These courses of education are also offered at schools with two or three courses of education, for which the names differ from one Land to another.
- 5 The following types of school with two courses of education bring the courses of education under one educational and organisational umbrella which lead to the *Erster Schulabschluss* or the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*: *Mittelschule* (Bayern), *Oberschule* (Brandenburg, Niedersachsen, Sachsen), *Verbundene Haupt- und Realschule* (Hessen), *Mittelstufenschule* (Hessen), *Regionale Schule* (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), *Realschule plus* (Rheinland-Pfalz), *Sekundarschule* (Sachsen-Anhalt), *Regelschule* (Thüringen). The course of education which leads to the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* is also offered at schools with three courses of education: *Integrierte Gesamtschule*, *Kooperative Gesamtschule*, *Gemeinschaftsschule* (Baden-Württemberg, Berlin, Saarland, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, Thüringen), *Integrierte Sekundarschule* (Berlin), *Gesamtschule* (Brandenburg, Nordrhein-Westfalen), *Oberschule* (Bremen), *Stadtteilschule* (Hamburg), *Sekundarschule* (Nordrhein-Westfalen).
- 6 In addition to the qualification designations *Erster Schulabschluss* and *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* which are uniform across the Länder, specific qualification designations of the Länder can also be shown as equivalent on the certificate.

- 7 Admission to the *gymnasiale Oberstufe* requires a formal entrance qualification which can be obtained after grade 9 or 10. The *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* can be obtained after the successful completion of 12 or 13 consecutive school years (eight or nine years at the *Gymnasium*). At schools with three courses of education the *Gymnasium* course of education is not, as a rule, reduced to eight years.
- 8 The *Berufsoberschule* does not exist in all Länder and offers school-leavers with the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* who have completed vocational education and training or five years' working experience the opportunity to obtain the *Fachgebundene Hochschulreife*. Pupils can obtain the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* by proving their proficiency in a second foreign language.
- 9 The *Fachoberschule* is a school type lasting for two years (grades 11 and 12) which admits pupils who have completed the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* and qualifies them to study at a *Fachhochschule*. In the majority of Länder, pupils who have successfully completed the *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* and have been through initial vocational training can also enter the *Fachoberschule* directly in grade 12. The Länder may also establish a grade 13. After successful completion of grade 13, pupils can obtain the *Fachgebundene Hochschulreife* and under certain conditions the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife*.
- 10 *Berufsfachschulen* are full-time vocational schools differing in terms of entrance requirements, duration and leaving certificates. Basic vocational training can be obtained during one- or two-year courses at *Berufsfachschulen* and a vocational qualification is available at the end of two- or three-year courses. Under certain conditions the *Fachhochschulreife* can be acquired on completion of a course lasting a minimum of two years.
- 11 Extension courses are offered to enable pupils to acquire qualifications equivalent to the *Erster Schulabschluss* and *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*. Under certain conditions the *Fachhochschulreife* can also be acquired.
- 12 *Fachschulen* cater for continuing vocational education (duration 1–3 years) and as a rule require a relevant vocational qualification and subsequent employment. In addition, the *Fachhochschulreife* can be acquired under certain conditions.
- 13 Including institutions of higher education offering courses in particular disciplines at university level (e.g. theology, philosophy, medicine, administrative sciences, sport).
- 14 *Pädagogische Hochschulen* (only in Baden-Württemberg) are higher education institutions for teacher training and the right to award doctoral and post-doctoral degrees. The six *Pädagogische Hochschulen* in the federal state offer courses of study in teacher training and study courses leading to professions in the area of education and pedagogy outside the school sector.
- 15 The *Berufsakademie* is a tertiary sector institution in some Länder offering academic training at a *Studienakademie* (study institution) combined with practical in-company professional training in keeping with the principle of the dual system.
- 16 The reform of the study structure with the conversion to Bachelor's and Master's degrees is to a large extent complete. Only a small number of study courses lead to a *Diplom* degree.

As at September 2023

GLOSSARY

Allgemeine Hochschulreife

General higher education entrance qualification. Entitles holder to admission to all subjects at all higher education institutions and is usually obtained at upper →Gymnasium level (→gymnasiale Oberstufe) by passing the *Abitur* examination.

Bachelor

The Bachelor's degree as a first higher education degree provides qualification for a profession. It can be obtained after a standard period of study (*Regelstudienzeit*) of six, seven or eight semesters at universities and equivalent institutions of higher education, at colleges of art and music and at →Fachhochschulen. Together with the →Master's degree, the Bachelor's degree is part of a graduation system of consecutive degrees which has replaced the traditional system of higher education qualifications (*Diplom* and *Magister*).

Berufliches Gymnasium

Type of school at upper secondary level offering a three-year course of education which includes both the general education subjects taught at upper →Gymnasium level (→gymnasiale Oberstufe) and career-oriented subjects, such as business and technology, but which also leads to the general higher education entrance qualification.

Berufsschule

Vocational school at upper secondary level generally providing part-time instruction in general and vocational subjects to trainees receiving vocational education and training within the dual system.

Erster Schulabschluss

General school-leaving certificate after grade 9 that can be obtained at lower secondary schools. In addition to the standardized cross-Länder qualification designation, the Land-specific qualification designation can also be recognised as equivalent.

Fachgebundene Hochschulreife

Qualification entitling holder to study particular subjects at a higher education institution. May be obtained through certain courses of vocational education at upper secondary level.

Fachhochschule/Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften

University of applied sciences. Type of higher education institution established in the 1970s, which has the particular function of providing application-oriented teaching and research, particularly in engineering, business, administration, social services and design.

Fachhochschulreife

Qualification entitling holder to study at a →Fachhochschule. May usually be obtained after 12 years of schooling at a *Fachoberschule* or – under certain conditions – at other vocational schools.

Förderschule

Special school – school establishment for pupils whose development cannot be adequately assisted at mainstream schools on account of disability. Also known as *Sonderschule*, *Förderzentrum* or *Schule für Behinderte*.

Grundschule

Compulsory school for all children of the age of six onwards. It comprises four grades, except in Berlin and Brandenburg where it covers six grades.

Gymnasiale Oberstufe

The upper level of the →Gymnasium, which can however be established at other types of school. It comprises grades 11–13 or 10–12, depending on the Land and the type of school. Course of general education concluded by the *Abitur* examination, which leads to the general higher education entrance qualification (→Allgemeine Hochschulreife).

Gymnasium

Type of school covering both lower and upper secondary level (grades 5–13 or 5–12) and providing an in-depth general education aimed at the general higher education entrance qualification. Since 2012, in the majority of Länder the →Allgemeine Hochschulreife can be obtained after the successful completion of 12 consecutive school years (eight years at the *Gymnasium*).

Integrativer Kindergarten

Pre-school establishment for children with disabilities – also known as a *Sonderkindergarten* or *Förderkindergarten*.

Kindertagesstätte

Pre-school establishment for children as part of child and youth welfare services – may be either publicly or privately maintained (not part of the school system).

Kolleg

Establishment of the so-called *Zweiter Bildungsweg* where adults attend full-time classes to obtain the general higher education entrance qualification.

Master

The Master's degree as a further higher education degree provides qualification for a profession and can be obtained after a standard period of study (*Regelstudienzeit*) of two, three or four semesters at universities and equivalent institutions of higher education, colleges of art and music and →Fachhochschulen. As a rule, the entry requirement for a Master's study course is a first higher education degree qualifying for a profession. Consecutive Master's study courses are part of a graduation system of consecutive degrees which has replaced the traditional system of higher education qualifications (*Diplom* and *Magister*). Master's qualifications provide the same rights as *Diplom* and *Magister* qualifications of universities and equivalent institutions of higher education.

Mittlerer Schulabschluss

General education school leaving certificate obtained on completion of grade 10 at lower secondary level school types. It can also be obtained at a later stage during vocational training at upper secondary level.

Promotion

Award of a doctoral degree on the basis of a doctoral thesis and either an oral examination or a defence of the student's thesis. As a rule, the doctorate is embarked on after completing a first course of study culminating in the *Magister*, *Diplom* or →Staatsprüfung, as well as after obtaining a Master's qualification, and the promotion serves as proof of ability to undertake in-depth academic work.

Staatsprüfung

State examination concluding a course of study in certain subjects (e.g. medical subjects, teaching, law). Also refers to examination taken by law students and teaching students at the end of their preparatory service (known as the Second State Examination). The examinations are administered by examination committees staffed not only by professors from the institutions of higher education but also by representatives of the state examination offices of the Länder. In Länder which have a consecutive study structure for teacher training, the Master's degree replaces the First State Examination as a rule. The (Second) State Examination must, however, be taken after the preparatory service.