

# Still not Loving Apprenticeships?

## Attitudes Towards Vocational Education and Training Systems in related Political Debates

by Isabelle Huning

### Background and Theory

- To create inclusive institutions we need to understand existing institutions and their past. It is regularly highlighted that Vocational Education and Training systems develop over time. They are dependent on unique paths, which explain variation.
- Political, economic, education, and social research provide insight into how Vocational Education and Training systems evolve. They highlight different market structures, actor constellations, and bargaining processes between these actors as reasons why different countries have different apprenticeship systems.
- It is often a “taken for granted” assumption that Vocational Education and Training systems are woven into each country’s culture, e.g. seen in people’s attitudes towards apprenticeships. But attitudes of policy makers and state officials can have crucial effects on the nature of policies and decisions. They need to be explored if we want to understand Vocational Education and Training systems, their past, and their future potential.

### Methodology

- Comparative Historical Analysis:** Comparing the history of two countries (cases) that developed into different directions can provide insights into driving mechanisms.
- Method:** Quantitative text analysis focuses on frequency, word correlations, composition, sentiment, slant of political debates surrounding apprenticeships, youth, and education. This aims to gain insight into the longitudinal development of respective attitudes and associated language.
- Cases:** The study focusses on Germany and England as their apprenticeship systems are organised and institutionalised very differently
- Data:** Transcripts of German and English parliamentary debates 1870-2000
- Analysis:** Descriptive and sentiment analysis of documents, within case and cross case comparison.



Pathways	Germany	England
	Continuous implantation of an apprenticeship system that is today	Marginalisation of apprenticeships until recent years.
System Design	Dual apprenticeship system. Government takes coordinating and role.	Skill formation is private with recent attempts from government to organise and centralise VET.
Attitudes towards apprenticeships	System deeply embedded into society, political economy, and education system.	Strong public bias towards university education, and ubiquitous misinformation about what VET is and what it does

### Preliminary Findings

#### Frequency:

Issues related to Vocational Education and Training are a regular subject to debate in the German Bundestag. In the English House of Commons related issues are less frequently debated.

#### Sentiment Analysis (Fig. 1 & 2)

- Overall sentiment in German parliamentary debates is rising, debates around Vocational Education and Training more positive?
- Overall sentiment in English parliamentary debates less positive with debates around Vocational Education and Training less positive than other debates?

### Next Steps

- Extend data set to capture all years between 1870 and 2017.
- Explore data in more detail, e.g., on section level rather than document level.
- Add other data sources to complete picture to analysis, such as party manifestos and policy scripts.
- Establish link between sentiment and policy outcomes?

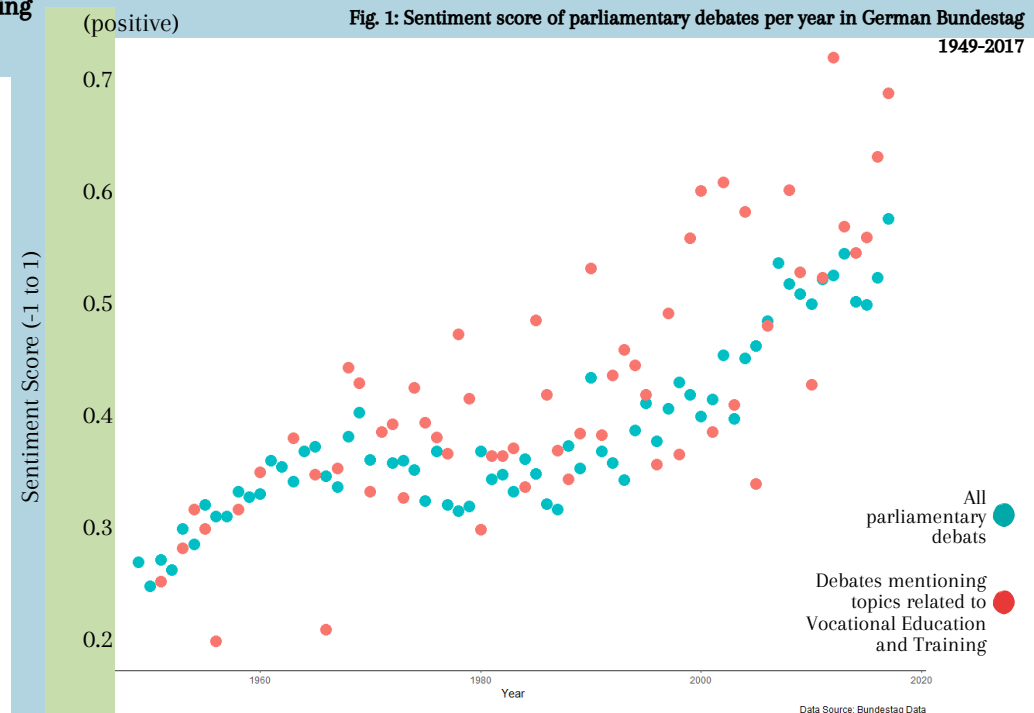


Fig. 1: Sentiment score of parliamentary debates per year in German Bundestag 1949-2017

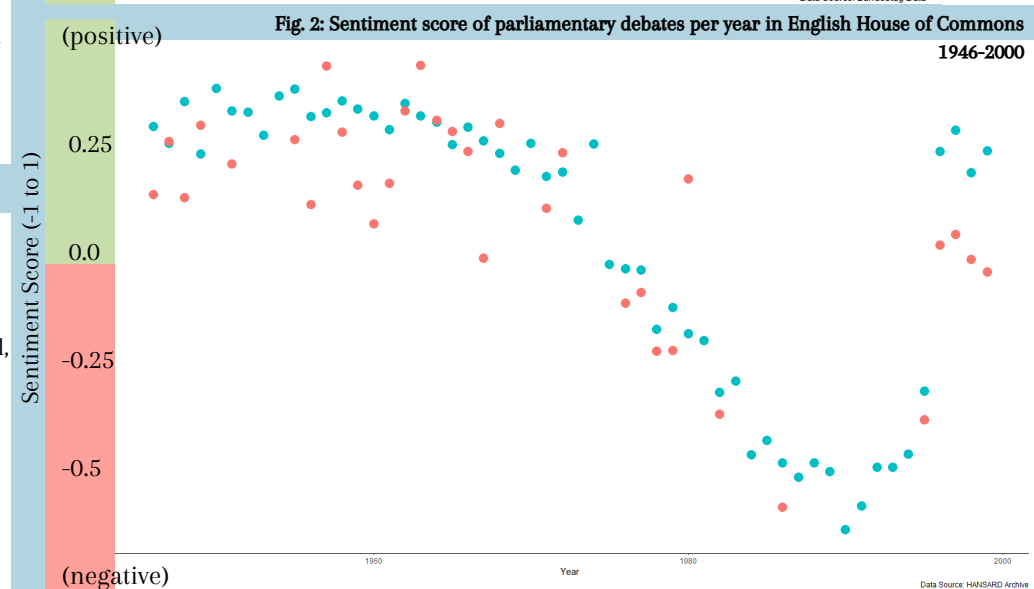


Fig. 2: Sentiment score of parliamentary debates per year in English House of Commons 1946-2000

### References

Busemeyer, M. and Trampusch, C. (2012). *The Political Economy of Collective Skill Formation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press  
 Pilz, M (2016). Typologies in Comparative Vocational Education: Existing Models and a New Approach. *Vocations and Learning*, 9(3), p. 295-314  
 Thelen, K. (2004). *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skill Formation in Germany, Britain, the United States and Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press