

Editorial:

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Different National Contexts

Between Marginalisation, Ideology and Reforms

Dietmar Frommberger & Silke Lange

Internationally, the understanding and approaches to vocational education and training vary significantly. Vocational education and training (VET) encompass a wide range of informal, in-company training, non-formal vocational education and training programs in private schools, formal (dual) apprenticeships, and vocational education and training in public schools, among others. These programs and systems adhere to different principles and possess diverse characteristics, both within individual countries and in international comparison. The level of standardization of frameworks and qualifications, as well as the connections to general education and higher education, also vary greatly internationally.

Simultaneously, various reforms and innovations are underway to further develop and enhance VET. International trends include the orientation towards competencies in curricula and teaching, permeability, vocational teacher training, and the integration of school-based and work-based learning. Essentially, existing systemic approaches are being revised to enhance quality, with the goal of making VET a more appealing educational option. The involvement of companies, the development of skilled workers, and the reduction of youth unemployment also play pivotal roles in the advancement of VET in many countries.

With this new journal, we aim to promote academic exchange on current developments in vocational education and training and related studies worldwide. In our view, knowledge about the numerous international developments in vocational education and training has been insufficient thus far. However, given the increasing political importance of vocational education and training, the need for academic exchange is growing. There is a dearth of academic journals through which research findings can be systemat-

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ically disseminated. The journal acknowledges that VET in different countries is studied not only from an educational perspective but also from other disciplines, such as political science, sociology, or economics.

In this inaugural issue, we intentionally selected a broad topic for the thematic section, focusing on vocational education and training in various national contexts. We requested our authors to consider that VET reforms are often accompanied by ideologies and that, despite political recognition, VET frequently faces marginalization within an educational system. The primary objective is to gain a better understanding of the development of vocational education and training approaches in different countries. To this end, approaches to vocational education and training and selected issues from five different countries are discussed. The contributions illustrate the diversity of national VET systems, particularly concerning their alignment with general and higher education on one hand and the employment system on the other. Additionally, it becomes evident that significant variations exist within individual countries regarding VET approaches.

Raffaella Simona Esposito's article discusses at vocational middle schools in the German-speaking regions of Switzerland. Vocational middle schools are a relatively small area of vocational education and training in Switzerland that exists alongside the dominant dual system. This high-quality part of the VET system in Switzerland is followed by around 10 per cent of those who find their way into vocational education after completing compulsory full-time schooling. This article presents and discusses the results of a study on the vocational education and training policy discourse surrounding the significance of the vocational middle school for vocational education and training in Switzerland. It can be shown that the further development of this marginalised vocational education and training pathway meets with strong reservations and resistance in terms of vocational training policy.

In the discourse on vocational education and training in an international comparison, Japan is often seen as a country in which, alongside general and higher education, vocational education and training outside of internal and individual company qualifications and careers is not very important. However, **Peter-Jörg Alexander** shows in his article that this model-like view is very undifferentiated per se and, moreover, does not take into account the developments of recent years in particular. In Japan, there are increasing attempts to develop forms of vocational training that create a link between state standards and individual company requirements.

Daniel Láscarez-Smith's contribution focusses on vocational education and training in Costa Rica. Láscarez-Smith shows the role that employers' organisations and interests have played in the further development of vocational education and training in Costa Rica over the last four decades. During this time, dual approaches to vocational training have received a great deal of political attention in Costa Rica. However, their implementation has met with a great deal of resistance from the traditional school-based forms of vocational education and training, with the result that the dual system of vocational education and training has in fact played a subordinate role to date, despite its major political role.

Jan Peter Ganter de Otero takes up the modernisation process of the vocational training system in Brazil. Specifically, he presents the results of a discourse analysis relating to the role of vocational education and training in innovation processes. This also makes

it clear what social significance is attached to vocational education and training in Brazil, also in relation to academic education.

Malaka Samara impressively describes the development approaches of vocational education and training in Palestine, which has hardly been able to gain any established significance due to the extremely difficult political conditions. In addition, vocational education is relatively less attractive to young people than higher general education and higher education. The fragmentation of vocational education and training programs contributes to this low attractiveness. Malaka Samara's article was written before the events of October 7. The current events, which are accompanied by great suffering among the civilian population on both sides of the conflict, were not taken into account.

In the **general section**, an article by **Tim Migura** focuses on a typical professional activity (midwife practice) and analyses the different developments in the form of systematic preparation for this professional activity in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. He focuses on the question of what influence the instruments of the European Union, which aim to achieve comparability between the different countries in the European Union (EU), have on these different national developments in the three selected countries. Although Switzerland is not a member of the EU, the international comparative instruments also have an effect there.

