

VET trends 2018



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Dear readers

Welcome to the international edition of our journal "Berufsbildung in Wissenschaft und Praxis/BWP" (Vocational Training in Research and Practice), which brings together research findings and practical experiences in the field of vocational education and training and is published by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) in Germany. This special edition is a compilation of articles of relevance to an international community that have been translated into English. It addresses two topics that are of permanent concern in international cooperation and two further issues that have become highly pertinent over recent years.

One topic high on the VET agenda worldwide is the promotion of work-based learning (WBL). This seems to represent a silver bullet for quite a number of educational and economic challenges, such as the transition of young people from school to the world of work. Although the idea of providing high quality apprenticeships is intrinsic to the dual system, this constitutes only one conception of WBL. Notwithstanding this, BIBB takes an active part in the international debate. In June 2017, we joined forces with UNESCO-UNEVOC to invite scholars to deliberate on WBL as a pathway to competence-based education. The papers and the main findings from this international workshop will be available in a forthcoming publication.

Whenever BIBB hosts international delegations, the issue of vocational education and training as an investment and the question as to how VET can be financed in a sustainable way are extremely relevant. Research outcomes regarding the cost-benefit ratios of company-based training are an area of particular interest. Within the German context, these provide a good explanation of why companies are motivated to offer apprenticeships. In other national contexts, these tried-and-tested models and instruments need further adaptation.

Digitalisation, epitomised in terms such as Industry 4.0 or Smart Factory, is changing the world of work and the qualification requirements of skilled labour. IT competence plays

a key role in virtually all areas of employment. The deployment of digital glasses in design and construction and the use of drones for performing topographical surveys are examples of technologies that make work easier. Therefore, it may be the right moment to question whether it is still appropriate to differentiate between "blue collar" and "white collar" workers. As technical requirements become more demanding, a considerable degree of significance is being attached to further vocational training within the scope of lifelong learning. Learning will be increasingly IT-supported, and new didactic concepts and pedagogical approaches are possible. However, there is also a demand for teachers and company-based trainers who have the necessary expertise to instigate successful digitalised learning environments at schools and firms. Furthermore, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will need additional support in developing and implementing their own strategies towards digitalisation.

One final topic that has grown in relevance is migration and the integration of refugees into the labour market. This has particularly been the case since the year 2015, when Germany began to receive large numbers of refugees from countries such as Syria. Over recent months, several programmes and initiatives have been assisting young refugees in gaining access to vocational education and training. Many refugees will already have acquired a professional or vocational qualification in their home countries. The German Recognition Act helps them to secure recognition of these qualifications in order to enter the German labour market.

We are confident that this special edition offers plenty of interesting material and we hope you enjoy reading it.

Yours,
B. Thomann