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shaping the futures of (vocational) education and work

commitment of vet and vet research

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Shaping the Futures of VET: Introduction

“Shaping the futures of vocational education and training (VET)” points to complex interrelations of research and practice in the field of work and education. While the self-understanding of VET both as a discipline and as pedagogical knowledge involves questions of upgrading professional knowledge, improving training and learning and democratising the educational system in the vocational sector, the futures of VET are open. Evidently, VET is directly related to work, working life, its culture and ideologies in different historical, national, socio-political, institutional and organisational contexts.

These complexities and the relations between working societies and dynamic changes of work and education both in regional and global labour markets are crucial in discussing possible futures of VET. Therefore the following three topics are embedded in this publication:

- Learning from history, changes of (vocational) education and work
- Practice and policies of VET, including the dynamics of gender, ethnicity, culture and globalisation
- Anticipation of future education, both in the perspective of policy making and in a cross-cultural perspective.

These issues are closely connected to programmatic respectively ideological, structural, organisational and political demands on improving VET which are to be thought of as occurring along a continuum of time. These subjects were also discussed during an international workshop on the futures of (vocational) education and work that took place at the University of Wuppertal in 2012. The workshop was embedded in the tradition of transnational conferences and workshops that have been conducted by the VET & Culture – Research Network since 1993.

Some of the papers presented at the workshop have not been included in this volume, others were taken in additionally. The task of

grouping the contributions has been truly stimulating. The chapters are grouped into three general categories that are identical to the topics mentioned above.

Thus, the first chapter focuses on changes of VET and work in a historical perspective. Looking back to specific historical aspects of VET and work in the context of this volume is based on the following premise: At all times social, economic, political and cultural as well as vocational training phenomena have also been historical phenomena. Today's society, its composition, its structures and institutions, its potentials and opportunities, as well as its problems and challenges are being handed down by history. Social structures both in present times and in future certainly do not originate from themselves. They are and will surely be influenced by specific historical interests of particular economic groups within the changing terms of contemporary history. They can also be altered by and through these same interests. Just as other tasks of society, VET is affected by history. Its function and its current condition as well as its prospects depend on the one hand on social-economic conditions, and on the other hand on configurations concerning economics, certain interests of different stakeholders, power and training policy, which have been developed through the historical process of constant changes.

In Germany for example, VET has attracted attention at the latest since the beginning of the 19th century. The social, economic and cultural climate of the 19th century enforced new concepts of VET, relatively to progressing industrialisation, the growth of the working class and of social mobility, and evidently according to national-idealistic tradition. In this context special attention was given to the interconnection of VET, demands from the labour-market sectors, models of state and citizenship. Finally, the dual structure of the vocational system has been consolidated since the latter 19th century. Till today, this structure is manifested as the combination of on-the-job-training in a company or at workplaces with theoretical vocational education in a part-time vocational school.

Against this background MANFRED WAHLE looks into local areas of vocational schooling from the 1880s to 1912. The example of developing and institutionalising vocational schooling in the German

neighbouring towns of Barmen and Elberfeld is used as a piece of evidence. While the question of VET in the dynamic process of industrialisation became increasingly important, it also pointed to contemporary normative demands both on social interaction and occupational skills. WAHLE points out that the role and function of the part-time vocational school was linked with socio-political and pedagogical responses on profound social changes in Germany during the period from the latter 19th century to the first decade of the 20th century. As a proof he reconstructs a local picture of vocational schooling. The contribution focuses on vocational schooling in local commercial and trade sectors, the contrast between private and governmental perspectives on the part-time vocational school, the matter of facultative and obligatory part-time vocational school, attendance at school, and social control of the working class-youth in Barmen and Elberfeld respectively in Wuppertal which was one of the biggest industrial regions of Continental Europe in the 18th and 19th century as well as one of the most advanced industrial regions in Germany in the 19th century.

The new model of plant-based VET that is the focus of ESTHER BERNER's contribution emerged at the turn to the 20th century, hence in the aftermath of growing industrialisation. The modernisation of production processes implicated a new model of the relationship between master and apprentice, employer and employee, and required a new principle of bringing human's individual aptitudes in accordance with the demands of labour as a challenging issue. In this respect, psycho-technical research and practice were promoted. BERNER tracks the programmes and activities of the Zurich Psycho-technical Institute and the Institute of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Geneva that was the second centre of psycho-technical research in Switzerland at that time. Despite the fact that these institutes were rivals, they offered aptitude tests for private and public schools as well as for companies, job analysis and career guidance. Based on the principles of rationality and efficiency, these activities were linked with the developing of the typical model of industrial VET. While job division was still increasing, systematisation and rationalisation of VET was shifting more and more into the centre of attention. In regard to this fact, BERNER points out the discrepancy between a training concept that suits skill needs of a company and the

lacking reference to the concept of democracy in the discourse on VET and work that was high lightened in psycho-technical perspectives during the 1920s.

Taking into account that analyses of historical incidents promote a better understanding and interpretation of current and future problems, the following chapter could make a compelling case for this thesis. Thus, the second chapter focuses on contemporary practice and policies of VET. In this context STEFFI ROBAK analyses learning and educational processes of German-speaking expatriates in transnational enterprises in China. She points out that no adequately developed concepts for an integrated learning culture framework exist for transnational businesses. Following, theoretic premises for accessing knowledge, culture and cultural differences are developed. As far as these premises form the input for an empirical analysis model, afterwards ROBAK tracks examples of empirical results based on the type of the classical expatriate. These examples are used to substantiate cultural hybrid forming processes that influence working and learning processes and require support by transnational learning cultures. This not at least is a task of further education. Although this kind of further education in German globally operating enterprises in the People's Republic of China is underdeveloped, the paper states that cultural education and learning are to be seen as part of the learning culture in a broader sense, and they cannot be reduced to the level of cultural differences.

MARION FLEIGE discusses another aspect of adult learning. She addresses the notion of benefits in adult and continuing vocational education (CVET) from a pedagogical perspective. The central argument is that this perspective requires a theoretical, heuristic definition of the term benefits which interrelates benefits, learning outcomes, learning interests, programme planning and the design of learning arrangements. Compatible with this requirement, the paper sustains and differentiates theoretical reflections by exemplary empirical insights into expected and actual benefits of long-term courses expressed by the participants. On this basis, FLEIGE provides a preliminary heuristic definition of the term 'benefits' from a pedagogical, adult educational point of view. According to her explorative empirical insights into benefits of a long-term course at the German Chamber of Handicrafts, she argues that the

benefits of continuing vocational education are complex and diverse. Furthermore, FLEIGE calls for cross-country comparative research helping to foster the understanding both of continuing vocational educational processes and needs behind them. As a result of research like this, CVET may be seen as a gateway to an educated person being able to find expedient ways through the present jungles of benefit-regimes and assumptions build around work, labour markets and sustainable life styles.

LIV MJELDE discusses the lessons learned from developing a Masters programme in vocational pedagogy in cooperation with colleagues and students from Uganda and Southern Sudan. This is in context with the Norwegian Masters programme (NOMA-SIU) that was financed by Norwegian development aid. The programme started in 2007 and was finished in December 2013. Concerning the development of this programme at Kyambogo University in Kampala, Uganda, MJELDE was the project leader from 2007 till 2011. She looks into the question of the complexity of VET in Europe, and relates it to the situation in Africa. Her central conclusion in this respect is that there are similarities between vocational traditions in Europe and indigenous knowledge traditions in Africa. On the basis of what is considered to be important and unimportant concerning vocational education and with it apprenticeship learning in Europe and Africa, MJELDE calls for more attention to be paid to the contradictions in educational science in Uganda as they are in Europe, Latin America and Asia. She calls for more reflection of European researchers and programme developers on handling the problem of mentoring vocational self-reliance in the South respectively in Africa, and in this respect she asks, if decolonising the mind was a useful concept for developing critical analytical minds in both North and South. Against this background the contribution looks into developing a Masters programme in vocational pedagogy at Kyambogo University, Uganda, the inherent contradictions of this project and the everyday life of the programme that started in February 2009 with 14 students from Uganda and 7 students from South Sudan.

Philipp Gonon questions all simplifying ways of conceptualizing learning. The learning societies and their so called alternative learning arrangements promise to shape the successful learner. However, Gonon

stresses, that success in learning always is founded on numerous pre-conditions. Nevertheless explorative learning could cope with the precarity of success as a goal.

In addition to these reflections on promoting research and development in VET in Africa, the contribution of BEATRIX NIEMEYER examines experiences in a research project that investigated transformations in educational work in a multinational team and a variety of fields in Australia and Europe. The paper focuses on the increasingly interconnected and interdependent challenges of globalisation and education and the challenges for VET-research arising from the global transformations in education. Against this background five case studies on educational boundary work around the globe are introduced: (I) flexible teacher recruitment in Finnish health care education, (II) the educational work of governesses on Australian cattle stations, (III) Malaysian migrant educational workers in Australia, (IV) the educational work of migration and (V) the impact of European social inclusion policy on educational work in Germany by the Lisbon commitment for an European knowledge society and the policy of lifelong learning and social inclusion. These examples give a deeper understanding of the problems concerning the value of teaching and learning in a global framework of acknowledgement. Not at least the cases illustrate differing modes and different stages of socialisation of this type of education and teach lessons in terms of gender relations and concepts of space-time.

ARNT VESTERGAARD LOUW examines challenges and potentials in doing anthropological fieldwork in VET. He reports on methodological experiences obtained in an anthropologically inspired qualitative study among students of carpentry in Denmark. The central argument in his contribution is that methodological challenges and difficulties can themselves be considered as a source of data. He looks into the current state of VET in Denmark and examines why students' perspectives are important to understand its principles and logic. In this respect, VESTERGAARD LOUW reflects his personal experiences as a researcher. Focussing on concepts of access and entry to VET in the occupational field of carpenters, he analyses and interprets different situations carpentry students had to face during their vocational training. The challenge, especially with the poor image of Danish VET students as unmotivated

and weak students, is to develop a research programme that includes the perspectives of VET students into theorising about VET, especially related to demands of teaching and (occupational) knowledge production.

ANNA ROSENDAHL discusses quality improvement and transparency in VET in the context of evaluation. She examines and draws a comparison between Germany and England. The starting point of her analysis is that the EU pursues a quality assurance strategy as based on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF) not solely cross border standardisation, but rather a quality developing strategy aiming at continuous improvement which integrates procedures of the internal and external evaluation as well as a generally accessible publication of evaluation results. ROSENDAHL points out the key elements of the EQARF in order to compare the mandatory accreditation process in the publicly funded further education sectors in Germany and England. She argues that there are multiple structural parallels of the English accreditation process to that one in Germany, despite significant differences between the particular further education landscapes. In conclusion, ROSENDAHL asks if the English approach to quality assurance was an example for reform perspectives on the German accreditation procedure. Against this background fundamental points to reform the German accreditation approach are discussed.

Generally, a debate on reforms points to future prospects for (vocational) education systems, for concepts of VET and work, for educational policies, for research and practice in the fields of VET and further education, et cetera. Exemplary, the contributions of LORENZ LASSNIGG and ANJA HEIKKINEN in the third chapter of this volume focus on questions that explicitly are concerned with shaping the futures of VET.

LORENZ LASSNIGG discusses how VET policy could and should take into account future challenges. Although the modernisation paradigm as a principle item of discourses on the future of the existing world is still fairly intact, it refers to new ideological, socio-economic, structural and institutional qualities. In any case education has to cope with these new phenomena. LASSNIGG argues that it is mostly rhetoric talking about future challenges, and that there are a lot of conceptual

difficulties in dealing with the future. Thus, he presents some conceptual considerations which contrast different approaches of dealing with future challenges in order to discuss some attempts towards the anticipation of future challenges in the area of Austrian (vocational) education. Here, the question in dispute is to what extent Austrian programmes and activities meeting different demands of educational innovation are pointing to bright solutions.

ANJA HEIKKINEN examines the cross-cultural perspective in shaping the future of VET. She points out that VET is a culturally varying phenomenon gaining its meaning in constitution of distinctive cultural entities as economy, industry and work, and that therefore any serious research on VET should include a cross-cultural element. As pieces of evidence HEIKKINEN uses the following matters: (I) the production of (euro-)‘busnocracy’ and (euro-)intelligentsia in VET, (II) best practices and evaluation tools according to the interest of the EU commission on VET, whereupon the question of gender and qualification is discussed, (III) professionalisation of adult and vocational education. As a conclusion, the contribution calls for sustaining both the cross-cultural and historicising approach for VET research.

This vote connects the legitimisation of the importance of VET research in a historical and cross-cultural perspective with requirements concerning a deep understanding of current complexities in the field of VET in order to shape its future.

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