

CALL FOR PAPERS

# The Future Potential of Vocational Education and Training

## Strengthening VET for the next generation

**7<sup>th</sup> Congress on Research  
in Vocational Education and Training**

**Swiss Federal Institute for  
Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)  
Bern/Zollikofen, Switzerland**

**2-4 February 2022**

### **ABOUT THE CONGRESS**

For the seventh time, the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) invites researchers to engage in an exchange of ideas and research findings and to reflect on VET issues. We encourage contributions related to the leading topic of the congress and also welcome all other areas and topics of VET research.

The theme, “The future potential of vocational education and training: Strengthening VET for the next generation”, alludes to the divergent developments that vocational education and training has been facing in recent years. The proportion of young people entering VET has declined in many countries, and academic education has expanded. Yet VET, and particularly firm-based VET, has been put forward as a remedy for youth unemployment. Consequently, numerous countries have attempted to strengthen VET in order to integrate young people more swiftly into the labour market after completion of upper-secondary education. At the macro level, VET has been recognized as a factor that influences economic prosperity and contributes to an adaptable and multiskilled workforce. However, VET has also been held responsible for hampering workers’ ability to adapt to changing skill demands because its teaching of general skills may be too limited.

These divergent developments are linked to the economic and social transformations of recent decades, which pose short- and long-term challenges for all national education systems. The triggers include sudden events, such as the real estate crisis and global Corona pandemic, which have led to economic downturns. Consequently, VET systems, particularly those relying heavily on firm-based training, are forced to adapt to firms’ declining training activity. Long-term challenges are driven in particular by the all-encompassing trends of digitalization and globalization. In Western countries, both trends have led to an increasing demand for and supply of skilled and adaptable workers in general and workers with higher education in particular. In parallel, the demand for unskilled labour has declined. Consequently, the composition of VET learners has changed in many countries. Furthermore, individual skills and knowledge gained in formal education and on-the-job training depreciate or become obsolete. Individual workers, firms, and educational systems are confronted with the constant need for further education and training.

Educational systems face the tasks of preparing learners and students for the labour market and of empowering them to participate in society and become active citizens. This requires rapid action in times of economic crises as well as prospective adaptability to long-term changes in the labour market. To improve educational participation and avoid growing numbers of obsolete workers, educational systems are under pressure to increase their permeability and inclusiveness and reduce the number of young people leaving school with neither vocational qualifications nor sufficient potential for continuing education. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this pressure considerably. VET governance faces the challenge of renegotiating the role of stakeholders and of adapting curricula and didactic approaches to increasing and continuously changing requirements. Firms may have to reconceptualize the relationship between formal education, on-the-job training, and further training. Trainers and teachers are required to develop new methods of teaching and find new ways of interacting with learners and imparting knowledge—a trend that has been accelerated by the need for distance teaching during the pandemic. Students and parents have to negotiate their way through increasingly permeable and complex educational systems promoting the acquisition of multiple credentials and in some countries blurring the traditional boundaries between educational sectors. An example is the new trend towards hybrid qualifications captured by the terms academic and vocational drift: Vocational programmes and institutions include more general knowledge within their curricula, whereas academic programmes strengthen their work and practice orientations.

These developments raise two questions: **How does vocational education and training adapt to the new challenges and diverging trends? Which factors contribute to strengthening or weakening vocational education and training at the level of national economies, educational systems, schools, firms, and individual learners?** Against these overarching questions, a large number of specific issues are to be addressed at the macro, meso and micro levels:

- How do different countries meet the challenges described in governance, institutions, and policy and what role is played by the country-specific structures of the educational system and the labour market?
- Which national policies are employed to strengthen or weaken the vocational orientation within educational systems?
- How permeable are educational systems, and how can the switch between types of education be improved?
- In light of the increasing trend of upskilling, what strategies are useful for upholding and even improving the inclusion of academically weaker students while making VET attractive for academically strong students?
- What role does higher vocational training play in the future development and future status of VET?
- How are educational pathways and labour market outcomes affected by the increasing demand for further education and the growing permeability of educational systems?
- What skills, competences, and qualifications are needed, and how will they affect individuals' short- and long-term labour market outcomes?
- How are new skills and competences taught, and how do they affect teaching and learning processes and the interaction between students, teachers, and trainers in companies? Can examples of best practice be identified?
- Has the need for distance teaching and use of digital methods during the pandemic influenced the competence development of learners and students and their learning processes? Has it led to lasting changes in teaching methods and outcomes?

Devoted to the theme “The future potential of VET: Strengthening VET for the next generation”, the Congress aims to contribute to these questions and provide an overview of national and international VET research activities. **However, the list of questions and topics is not exhaustive. We welcome all areas of VET research.** The Congress also aims to facilitate academic exchange between leading institutions and to present the latest international research findings from various academic disciplines.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Congress on Research in Vocational Education and Training is open to participants from all over the world. All presentations will be given in English. A best paper award will be announced during the Congress.

We hope that the pandemic situation will allow an onsite conference. If not, the conference will be held either online or in a hybrid format.

We are looking forward to receiving many interesting and inspiring submissions!

#### **KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**

- Prof Dr Lukas Graf, Hertie School, Berlin
- Prof Dr Raija Hämäläinen, University of Jyväskylä
- Prof Dr Lorna Unwin, University College London
- Prof Dr Stefan Wolter, University of Bern

#### **SUBMISSION: INDIVIDUAL PAPER PRESENTATION**

Please submit via ConfTool (<https://www.conftool.net/vet-congress-2022/>)

- a short abstract of 100-300 words (for the programme and if you submit a symposium summary); **and**
- an extended summary of 1000-1200 words. The extended summary should include information on the theoretical and methodological approach used as well as the findings obtained;
- instead of submitting an extended summary, you may submit a full paper.

#### **SUBMISSION: SYMPOSIUM**

Symposia examine a single topic in depth from a range of perspectives, providing a coherent set of papers for discussion. Symposia sessions consist of three or four presentations and a contribution by a discussant. In each symposium, the participants come from at least two countries.

The organizer of the symposium will need to submit the abstract for the symposium topic as well as the names of all contributors, the title of their presentations, and their short abstracts. The organizer does not need to upload extended summaries or papers for each individual contribution. This will be done by the presenters.

The presenters of a symposium proceed with their individual paper in the same way as presenters of an "Individual Paper Presentation" (see above): They need to submit a short abstract and either an extended summary or a full paper for their individual contribution (please choose the option “Individual paper within a symposium” for your submission). In addition, please mark your upload with “SY” before the title.

Please submit your proposal via ConfTool (<https://www.conftool.net/vet-congress-2022/>). A symposium proposal will either be accepted or declined as a whole. If the symposium is rejected as a whole but an individual paper within the symposium receives a high rating in the review process, it may be included in the programme as an individual paper presentation. In this case, the authors will be contacted by the organizers.

#### **SUBMISSION: POSTER PRESENTATION**

Please submit via ConfTool (<https://www.conftool.net/vet-congress-2022/>)

- a short abstract of approximately 300 words. It should describe the research question, the theoretical and methodological approach used, and the findings obtained.

#### **REVIEW CRITERIA**

Submissions will be assessed on the basis of these review criteria:

- Significance for theory, practice, or policy in VET
- Theoretical framework
- Clarity of research questions
- Research design and method(s)
- Presentation of (preliminary) results
- Overall quality
- Additionally for symposia: organization and internal logic of the whole symposium

Please ensure that you can at least refer to preliminary results in your submission.

Deadline for submission is **15 August 2021**.

## **SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE**

Dr. Sonja Engelage

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Maastricht University and German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, (BIBB), Germany

Prof. Dr. Peter Schlögl

Professor of Educational Sciences

University of Klagenfurt, Austria

Prof. Dr. Barbara Stalder

Head of Educational and Social Sciences; Institute for Upper Secondary Education

University of Teacher Education Bern, Switzerland

## **CONGRESS VENUE**

The congress will be hosted by the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) in Zollikofen/Bern. SFIVET is located in Lausanne, Lugano, Zollikofen, and Zurich and is the Swiss governmental competence centre for the provision of tertiary-level basic and continuing training to VET actors, for the development of occupations, and for VET research.

