



## Editorial: Online journal – online conference

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Welcome to the first issue of the *Nordic Journal of Vocational Education and Training* in 2021. Our journal is published online by Linköping University Electronic Press on behalf of NordYrk, the Nordic research network on vocational education and training (VET). VET researchers from the Nordic countries and beyond have just met at the annual NordYrk conference. Last year, the conference that was planned for Copenhagen had to be cancelled due to the pandemic situation, but this year the situation was well known, and the digital skills among conference organisers and researchers have increased during a year of home-based work. Therefore, we were very happy that not only our journal but also our conference could go online. We were able to organise and participate in the first online NordYrk conference, which was successful. However, we still want to meet person to person in future conferences, and we really hope that it will be possible to organise the 2022 NordYrk conference as planned at Linköping University in Sweden. Still, the number of participants at the 2021 conference was about 200, a new all-time-high, and a lot of studies of VET were presented. We hope that many of these studies will result in manuscripts that are submitted to and published in not only our journal, but also other international journals, to make the strong Nordic VET research visible for an even broader audience.

This issue includes five research articles on different topics such as workplace-based learning, digital tools and competence in VET and working life, and special needs education in VET. The first article, *Å utvikle yrkeskompetanse gjennom arbeidslivspraksis i helsesekretærutdanningen* (Developing vocational competence through working life practice in medical secretary education), is a study from Norway by **Kjersti Johnsen** and **Hilde Hiim** addressing the vocational



competence development among medical secretary students. The empirical contribution is a research and development project with focus on the student's learning venues that are a high school and a hospital. Qualitative data are supplied from observations of student's practice, student's presentations from hospital practice, as well as group interviews with students, teachers, and instructors, and analysis of student's reflection logs. The findings show that cooperation between hospital and school is key in defining the medical secretary's competences and in organising for the student's learning in order to strengthen the coherence between the two learning contexts.

In the second article, also from Norway, *Velferdsteknologi i helse- og oppvekststyrker: Digitalt kompetansebehov i yrkesfaglig utdanning* (Welfare technology in health care vocations: Digital competence needs in vocational education), **Solveig Dalehaug Havreberg** and **Ann Lisa Sylte** deal with the technological development in working life and its consequences for vocational education and training. Their case is the health care sector, where new welfare technology creates expectations and needs for competence development among VET teachers. Such competence development is necessary for them to be able to teach their students for the current and future work tasks in health care. One conclusion is that developed collaboration between schools and working life is needed to fulfil these expectations and competence needs.

The third article is a cooperation between Norway and Germany. It is written by **Lydia Schulze Heuling** and **Steffen Wild**. In *How student characteristics affect cooperative students' digital competences: A latent profile study*, the topic of the study is the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) in VET. The empirical focus in the article lies in latent profile analysis of the digital competence of first year students in cooperative studies programmes (CSP) at a business focused German university. CSP university programmes supply a hybrid coursework which at the same time is leading to a journeyman's certificate and an academic degree. The results from a latent profile analysis reveal four ICT-competence profiles among the students, however the further analysis shows that none of the students' characteristics are distinctive to these profiles. The authors conclude with discussing how VET institutions could develop tailored support of the digital competence of their students.

The fourth article is another Norwegian contribution written by **Sylvi Thun**, **Linn Thøring** and **Lisbeth Øyum**. In the article, *Et kvalifisert utdanningsvalg for dagens ungdom: Resultater fra et innovasjons-samarbeid mellom en ungdomsskole, en videregående skole og en bedrift* (A qualified education choice for today's youth: Results from an innovative collaboration between one lower secondary school, upper secondary school and industrial company), they investigate how collaboration between lower and upper secondary school and industrial companies can contribute to a more informed educational choice among youths. Based on interviews with pupils combined with self-determination and social-cognitive theory

they find that pupils in lower secondary school experienced more autonomous than controlled motivation, and more positive outcomes in terms of behavioural, cognitive and affective dimensions of learning at school due to this collaborative practice.

Finally, the fifth article is a cooperation between Finland and Sweden. Nordic research on special needs education in upper secondary vocational education and training: A review by **Camilla Björk-Åman, Robert Holmgren, Gerd Petersson** and **Kristina Ström**. The article investigates the studies focusing on special needs education (SNE) in the contexts of VET systems in the Nordic countries during the period 2010–2018 and analyses the state of the art of research in the field. The thematic analysis on 20 studies shows that much of the research (15 of them) concerns the practice level such as teachers' work and role, students' transition, and student dropout. The rest of the studies concern the organisation level such as changes to vocational policy documents, educational practices, and school organisation and its implementation. The article did not find any study that belongs to the policy level. The article also finds that there is a difference in terms of in which nation the articles are written. Finland has a strong position in the studies of SNE in VET. The authors state that there are few studies focusing on SNE in VET contexts and therefore call for further research in the area.