



## Editorial: Spring 2022

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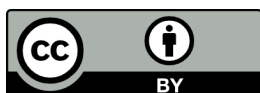
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Welcome to a new volume of the *Nordic Journal of Vocational Education and Training*! We continue to present current research in vocational education and training (VET), from the Nordic countries and beyond. All articles in our journal are published open access without charges, which is possible thanks to external funding, support from our institutions, and not least from our publisher Linköping University Electronic Press. The publishing of an academic journal is also dependent on reviewers, whose work with the anonymous peer-review process is crucial for publishing articles with high quality.

### The articles in this issue

In this first issue of 2022, the contributions are about central concerns in VET and in VET teacher training – the relationships between education and workplaces, and the competence of VET teachers. The issue includes four peer-reviewed research articles, two from Sweden, one from Norway, and one presenting a study from Uganda that is made in cooperation with Norway.

The first article, *Elevers formande av arbetsplatsförlagt lärande i svensk gymnasial lärlingsutbildning* (How students in Swedish upper secondary apprenticeship education contribute to form their education in relation to work-based learning) by **Ingela Andersson** and **Viveca Lindberg** treats apprenticeship education in the Swedish context. School-based upper secondary VET has dominated in Sweden since 1970 when the cohesive upper secondary school was introduced. Since the early 2000s, however, the form of apprenticeship, as an option in upper



secondary schools, has come to be increasingly emphasised. In this article the authors present a study of how students in VET at upper secondary level organised as apprenticeship education, through their choices and actions in relation to their work-based learning, contribute to the shaping of their education. To examine this the authors have accompanied students and made observations in school, as well as on site at workplaces, and they have interviewed 15 apprentices. The students are considered as active subjects and their actions are analysed using activity theory and the notion of interacting activity systems. The study has identified three potential objects (objectives) for students' actions: grades in vocational subjects, development of vocational skills, and inclusion in the workplace community. These could be held as superior or subordinate and lead to different outcomes. The authors conclude that to strengthen the students' possibility to achieve their desired educational outcome, the multiple expectations regarding work-based learning from students, school, and workplaces need to be continuously communicated among all participants.

In the second article, *Learning through collaboration between vocational teacher training institutions and workplaces: Barriers and contradictions*, **Dinavence Arinaitwe, Louise Mifsud, Habib Kato, and Arne Ronny Sannerud** from Norway and Uganda concerns institution and workplace collaboration in the Ugandan context. It aims to identify the challenges of learning in collaboration between a master of vocational pedagogy (MVP) programme, vocational teacher training institutions, and workplaces, and further discuss how these challenges influence the learning activities in the MVP programme. The empirical materials are collected by semi-structured, in-depth interviews. By applying cultural-historical activity theory, the article points out different discursive contradictions through planning and implementation of the collaboration. It shows that the aspects related to time, such as short time frames of collaborative activities, and an unsynchronised plan for activities, result in one of the central conflicts. Lack of a shared understanding of the supervisors' different roles and the objectives of the collaborative activities also appear as critical conflicts. Furthermore, the article points out different learning cultures as well as the lack of a government policy as factors that limit participation. The authors argue that the identified challenges need to be resolved for the quality of the learning of MVP students.

The third article, *Læring på toers: Hvordan kan yrkesfaglæreren legge til rette for boundary learning for elever i arbeidslivspraksis?* (Learning across contexts: How can vocational teachers facilitate boundary learning for students in work-based placements?), presents a study from Norway by **Hedvig Skonhoft Johannesen, Kari-Anne Kverneggen** and **Monika Øgård**. Looking at the Norwegian 2+2 model, the article deals with the well-known challenge of how to improve coherence between school and workplace learning in vocational education and training programmes. The article is based on a small-scale study consisting of a development work at the VET programme for Sales and Service and qualitative

interview with 4 involved teachers. Drawing on the work of Akkerman and Bakker focusing on boundary learning, the study points to the importance of development and use of boundary objects such as systematic reflection and subject-based assignments to connect work-based learning to school. Furthermore, a systematic vocational didactics is proposed in the form of a model of vocational didactics for boundary learning. In the conclusion it is discussed how a development approach in a vocational teacher group combined with theoretical concepts could enhance the student's workplace and boundary learning.

The last article presents a quantitative study of Swedish VET teachers' competence. In *Important and achieved competence for Swedish vocational teachers: A survey with teachers and principals*, **Sofia Antera**, **Marianne Teräs**, **Staffan Nilsson**, and **Helena Rehn** employ results from a questionnaire to discuss these two types of competence; competence that is important for VET teachers, and competence these teachers consider that they have already developed. On the one hand, the study indicates that competence concerning good communication with students, assessment of students' knowledge, skills, and abilities, and creating conditions for learning, are central in VET teachers' work. On the other hand, previous teaching experience, working experience with adults and migrants, and competence related to recruitment of students and marketing of the school, were seen as least important. These findings did not differ significantly between teachers' responses concerning their own competence and responses from principals concerning the teachers' competence. The authors conclude that future research on VET teacher competence should study the reasons behind the selection of specific competence as important, and also the processes of competence development.