



Editorial: Autumn 2023

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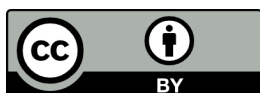
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Welcome to a new issue of the *Nordic Journal of Vocational Education and Training* (NJVET), which completes volume 13 of our journal. We want to create an active forum for critical research on vocational and professional education and training, and we are proud that so many researchers in this area choose to submit and publish their work in this journal. We are also thankful for the work completed by all our anonymous reviewers, whose efforts are invaluable for the quality of the research articles that are published.

This issue includes five research articles from four Nordic countries: two articles from Norway, one from Finland, one from Sweden, and one written in cooperation between Finland and Denmark – an example of the broad interest in disseminating research findings through NJVET.

The five articles

In the first article, *Opplevelse av sammenheng i fag- og yrkesopplæring: Et longitudinelt perspektiv* (Sense of coherence in vocational education and training: A longitudinal perspective), **Grete Hanssen** from Norway utilises the framework of Antonovsky of salutogenic theory in a longitudinal study of how vocational students simultaneously balance stress and develop vocational competence while learning in school and at work. Core concepts are a sense of coherence (SOC) and general resistance resources (GRR). The data consist of interviews with



vocational students at two stages: The end of school-based learning and at the finish of their apprenticeship, and the data are analysed comparatively from the two groups to see the development of the participant's GRR. The study results show that the integration of theory and practice dimensions in vocational education improves the student's comprehensibility during apprenticeship. Meaningfulness in the GRR appears unchanged over time and seems important for the development of vocational competence in the study participants.

The second article from Norway is written by **Jan Viggo Iversen** and **Wenche Hammer Johannessen**. In *Utvikling av profesjonskompetanse: Estetiske læreprosesser i yrkesfaglærerutdanning* (Developing professional competence: Aesthetic learning processes in vocational teacher education), they put focus on how aesthetic learning processes can contribute to exploratory and critical thinking, and holistic and emotional learning. The data was generated in focus groups with vocational teacher students, and three main categories emerged in the analysis: 'Encounter and courage', 'Creativity and images', and 'Digital competence and multimodality'. The aesthetic learning process is described as an encounter between the student's inner and outer worlds, an encounter in which they need to mobilise their courage. The creative process develops, and inner images could emerge here, on the way to a final multimodal product, which requires digital competence.

The next article is a cooperation between Finland and Denmark. **Timo Halttunen**, **Christian Dragin-Jensen**, **Céline Kylänpää**, and **Anders Karkov** write about *Collaborative problem solving: A pedagogy for workplace relevance*. This article is based on a multi-case qualitative study carried out in hotel service sector locations in Finland and Denmark. It seeks to investigate involvement of a business professional as a source for scaffolding on site collaborative problem solving (CPS) in a hotel business environment and examine the contextual characteristics that shape students' and teachers' experiences in situated learning. Among other things, the study shows that use of multiple business professionals as experts and interactions between students, teachers, and business professionals lead to increased audience awareness in students. Furthermore, it shows that contextual characteristics increased problem awareness and complexity in each case setting. Thus, the article adds to existing knowledge about use of CPS as a pedagogical approach in real-world contexts.

The fourth article is the outcome of a cooperation between researchers from three departments in Finland. **Jonna Hurskainen**, **Sanna Wenström**, and **Satu Uusiautti** have written about *A PRIDE-theory-based analysis of a positive learning environment in a Finnish vocational education and training (VET) institution*. Drawn upon PRIDE theory, the article approaches the positive learning environment from a number of different aspects: positive practices, relationship, enhancement, individual attributes, dynamic leadership, and emotional well-being. Empirical material was collected by semi-structured interviews with 12 VET students. The result shows how the different elements contribute to the positive learning

environment from the students' perspectives. Especially, the result stresses that the importance of relationships with their teachers and peers is evident in different elements of PRIDE and that the different elements are interrelated for the students' perception of a positive learning environment.

The fifth article, and also the last one in the volume of 2023, shines light on an important aspect in VET and contributes to a hopefully growing research field concerning VET students with special education needs. In *The vocational teacher, an inventor in special needs education: A study on Swedish vocational programmes*, **Robert Holmgren** and **Gerd Pettersson** from Sweden highlight the role of teachers in vocational subjects in upper secondary school teaching students aged 16–19. In their study they have interviewed 15 teachers from eight different VET programmes to gain knowledge about VET teachers' conditions for, and work with, special needs education. Their study reveals a dichotomy in the VET teachers' conditions for, and work with, special needs education. Their article describes how a bureaucratic approach is applied in the schools, where overriding goals are attributed high value, while the VET teachers strive for an adhocratic approach where the teaching is based on their students' specific needs. Holmgren's and Pettersson's analysis shows that the VET teachers take an interactive learning environment-related approach, which means that, based on their understanding of their students' difficulties, they develop adaptations to stimulate their students' learning and development.

Looking forward

We are now looking forward to 2024 with expectations both for the journal and for activities in the NordYrk network. In June 2024, the NordYrk conference will for the first time take place in Iceland, where the University of Iceland is hosting us in Reykjavik. During 2024, there will also of course be new issues of this journal, both open and special issues. We are currently working together with guest editors to prepare two different special issues where the review process is in progress – one on vocational classroom research with a focus on teaching and learning in vocational education subjects, and one on the cooperation between research, teaching and learning in VET. And there is more to come!