



## Editorial: Autumn 2024

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Welcome to the last issue in volume 14 of our journal. This is the first volume with as many as four issues, and we have published 25 research articles, which is more than ever before in one year. This has been possible primarily thanks to all researchers in the field of vocational education and training (VET) who have chosen to submit and publish their research in the *Nordic Journal of Vocational Education and Training*. We also want to thank all anonymous reviewers who make invaluable efforts to help the authors improve their texts. And not the least we are grateful to the guest editors who have made it possible to publish two special issues in 2024. As mentioned in the editorial of the first issue this year, the editorial group now consists of editors from four of the Nordic countries, and we look forward to continued cooperation in our group as well as with all of you who are involved in the journal in other ways.

This issue includes five research articles from authors in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. It should be noted that two of these articles build on cooperation between researchers in different Nordic countries, which means an added value of the journal – not only articles from different countries are published, but also articles from research projects which are international, at least in a Nordic sense.



## The five research articles

The first article, *Evaluating labour market–educational programme fit: A case study on aligning supply and demand for competences using a generic approach*, is written by **Laura Felby, Jacob Nielsen, Anna Roesen, Morten Mathiasen, and Sune Müller**, and is based on a cooperation between authors from Denmark and Norway.

In recent years the labour market is rapidly changing and there is an ongoing debate over the alignment between graduate skills and employability. In this article, the alignment between the supply of competences of the multimedia design programme and the corresponding labour market demand in Denmark is examined empirically by looking into 300 representative advertisements. A generic method for evaluating labour market-educational programme fit, based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT), is presented. Areas of misalignment are identified, and it is being discussed how the educational programme can use the information to align the supply with the demand for competences.

The second article, *Boundary objects as a starting point for reflective learning in vocational education and training classrooms*, is a contribution by **Monika Øgård** from Norway. The Norwegian VET system combines learning at school and at work. The aim of the article is to explore how students' experiences in the workplace can be brought back to school context through thematic assignments. The thematic assignments are regarded as boundary objects.

Empirical material is collected through semi-structured classroom observations and student diaries during their work placements. The author argues that if VET teachers pedagogically organise the use of thematic assignments to facilitate students' learning and reflection, they can serve as boundary objects. Under the guidance of teachers, the use of thematic assignments enables students to integrate their work experience with their school learning, develop their understanding of vocational concepts, and develop reflection. The articles also emphasise that for thematic tasks to function as boundary objects, teachers need to plan and guide the students' reflection process.

The next article, *Vocational students' citizenship education as a conditioned practice: School leaders' and teachers' perspectives of history, religious education, science studies, and social studies* written by **Katarina Kärnebro, Kristina Ledman, Torbjörn Lindmark, Eva Knekta, and Christina Ottander** from Sweden reports on a study of teaching and learning conditions in key subjects for citizenship formation in Swedish VET programmes. As these programmes have become more market oriented, they risk marginalising citizenship education. Four subjects that traditionally have played important roles in this – history, religious education, science, and social studies – are now only taught as very minor parts of the programmes. The authors report results where there are clear differences in the school leaders' and teachers' views of the conditions. School leaders articulated problems related to internal frame factors, such as the teachers' engagement and students'

attitudes to the subjects, while teachers referred to external frame factors, such as the organisation of teaching.

The fourth article is the other one that builds upon Nordic cooperation. It is called *Vad är väsentligt för att lyckas i arbetet som yrkeslärare? En studie av yrkeslärarstudenters berättelser* (What is essential for success in vocational teachers' work? A study of vocational teacher students' stories) and is written by **Petri Salo, Mattias Nylund, and Ingrid Henning Loeb** from Finland and Sweden. The authors argue that understanding the qualitative aspects of vocational teachers' professional development is crucial for surpassing conditioned themes such as competence, identity, and structure. The article examines how success and failure are perceived in VET teacher-student empirical narratives produced in Sweden and Finland, highlighting empathy and socially diverse practices. The article employs the 'theory of practice' to analyse the VET teacher-student narratives, emphasising the interconnected actions involved in specific practices and the material-economic, cultural-discursive, and social-political aspects that shape and influence these practices. The article suggests that VET teachers' work has central conditions and factors, and these aspects are interrelated. Interrelatedness extends beyond viewing the VET teacher as an actor with personal-professional competence, interests, and intentions within a given structural context. A complex and interconnected understanding transcends that. The article's findings show that social, collegial, relational, cultural, and organisational aspects are essential and intricate. Successful practices depend on didactically and pedagogically reflective actions closely linked to their relational spheres. Furthermore, the narratives illustrate that an inclusive work environment supports successful teaching. Favourable cultural-discursive arrangements are characterised by trustworthy affirmation, collaboration, and support.

The fifth article, and the last in this volume, is *Hvordan kan videregående skole forberede elever – som planlegger å bruke lærekandidatordning – for varig arbeidslivsdeltakelse?* (How to prepare vocational students – aiming to utilise the training candidate scheme – for lasting employment) by **Eva Martinsen Dyrnes, Torunn Lien, Dan Roger Sträng, and Simen Tutvedt** from Norway. This article concerns the school's role in the inclusion of learners following a training candidate system in Norwegian VET into the labour market. The training candidate system leads to partial and not full vocational competence, and the research question addresses the school's contribution to how pupils succeed in the training candidate scheme. The data consists of qualitative interviews with former participants in the training candidate scheme, and with staff at schools who provide special needs education for training candidates. The study results show that particularly important factors for these students' completion of the training candidate scheme comprise the pupil's social competence and endurance at work as important properties for the candidates' empowerment to maintain lasting employment. Further importance for the training candidates' participation at work is

attributed to the quality of the teacher–pupil relation as essential, and the quality of the school’s networks in local businesses leading to work opportunities for the candidates.

### Looking forward

We are now looking forward to 2025, and we already know that many new articles will be published in volume 15, which will begin with a special issue on academisation and academic drift of VET. There will also be a new NordYrk Conference in June, this time at VIA University College in Aarhus, Denmark, where we look forward to meeting you in person and take part of new research that will result in future publications in this journal.