



Editorial: 15 years of Nordic VET research

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With this issue, we are closing the 15th volume of our journal. Since 2011, the *Nordic Journal of Vocational Education and Training* has developed as a forum for publication and dissemination of research on vocational education and training (VET), mainly from the Nordic countries but also from other parts of the world. In 2025, we have reached an all-time high in terms of the number of articles but also the number of issues published. We have five issues in this volume, and this has become possible because of all researchers who choose to submit their interesting articles to our journal, and not the least the guest editors who have supported us in the work with two new special issues.

In this issue, we present six peer-reviewed research articles, three from Sweden, two from Norway, and one from Switzerland. Finally, the issue includes a magazine article that builds upon one of the keynotes from the NordYrk conference in Aarhus in June, on the conference theme with focus on sustainable futures and VET.



Six peer-reviewed research articles

The first article, *Utvikling av yrkesetisk kompetanse i ambulansefag: Fra klasserom til pasientmøter* (Developing professional ethical competence in ambulance services: From classroom to patient encounters) is written by **Birgitte Bjørngaard** and **Britt Karin Utvær** from Norway. Based on interviews with ten young ambulance worker apprentices conducted between 2021 and 2023, this study explores how apprentices experience and manage highly demanding emergency situations in which ethical judgement and communication are central. Ambulance work requires medical care, patient transport, clear and emphatic communication, stress management, and ethically sound decision-making under challenging conditions and time pressure. The findings demonstrate that, despite their young age, apprentices are capable of handling these complex professional demands. Furthermore, the study highlights that ethical competence is primarily developed through communication in challenging situations, participation in authentic scenarios followed by structured reflection, and being required to act and make decisions in demanding training contexts. By offering insight into the perspectives of young ambulance worker apprentices, the study contributes knowledge that may support vocational teachers and instructors in facilitating the development of professional ethical competence in ambulance care.

In the second article, *Between school and work: Vocational students' experiences of using digital multimodal logbooks as boundary objects*, **Ann-Britt Enochsson** and **Nina Kilbrink** from Sweden write about how students' learning across workplaces and the school takes place and is shaped. They do this by analysing students' experiences of their teachers' efforts to engage with subject-specific vocational knowledge in an upper secondary school's vocational programme. The theoretical framework used for this is 'boundary crossing', rooted in cultural-historical theory. In their study, vocational students use a digital multimodal logbook to document their experiences. The logbook is portrayed as a 'boundary object'. The boundary object is a concept referring to focal objects that are considered attributed with shared meaning across practices. Here, it relates to a shared meaning-making tool connecting the two learning environments: the school and the workplace. Enochsson and Kilbrink ask what vocational subject teachers are expected to achieve when using multimodal logbooks at school and workplaces, and how students experience the connection between these contexts through the logbooks. The data collected and analysed include interviews with four teachers and fourteen students from the vocational programme. The results indicate that while teachers see the logbook as a record of learning outcomes, students do not. Students do not associate the logbook with their learning or the learning outcomes they achieve. The main issue is interpreted as a lack of communication, leading to the assumption that the equal meaning of the boundary object is conveyed to students as well as to teachers, without

confirmation. Even though teachers organise talks and explanations about the work placements, it appears they do not follow up to ensure students have truly understood. Meaning varies, hence. One highlighted issue is that teachers claim there is insufficient time to explain this, which is an institutional concern. Still, it is important to investigate further how to utilise any extra time allocated. In conclusion, the study suggests that differences in perspective between students and teachers can cause difficulties for students, potentially leading to discontinuity in understanding the meaning of vocational knowledge. As a concept, boundary objects can support teaching and learning in vocational education across different settings. Still, fundamental discussions between teachers and students about the purpose and meaning of them are necessary if their potential is to be realised.

"Man är där, men du är osynlig kan man säga": Vuxna utrikesfödda vårdelevers möten med äldreomsorgens olika normer och värderingar ('You are there, but you are invisible, one might say': Adult foreign-born care providers' encounters with the different norms and values in elderly care settings), the third article in this issue, is written by **Åsa Kindevåg** from Sweden. This article examines the norms and values encountered by adult foreign-born students during their placements in elderly care settings. Empirical material was collected through seven focus group interviews with a total of 29 students. The situated learning perspective is applied for the analysis. Kindevåg emphasises the importance of supervisors, since students learn norms and values of the practice by observing their actions. By observing supervisors and other participants, abstract concepts are clarified and made applicable to students. Students sometimes encounter norms and values in the elderly care communities that differ from their own, which can cause conflict. For example, a student's willingness to help care recipients may conflict with a practice norm that emphasises promoting and maintaining independence of care recipients. Furthermore, the article shows that students experience xenophobia in practice because they are foreign-born and Kindevåg states that in such moments, the staffs' own personal values emerge, which do not align with the norm of the equal value of all individuals. However, the result shows that the students do not use terms such as racism or discrimination; rather, they excuse it as being caused by their lack of language skills. The article demonstrates that students recognise the importance of education and language skills for acceptance in the community of practice.

The fourth article concerns the historical development of VET. In *Vocational competence demands and organisation of vocational education and training in times of rapid change: Automotive education in Sweden 1950–1960*, **Åsa Broberg** from Sweden writes about the tensions between the contents of vocational education and training and industry competence requirements in a case study of the automotive industry in the 1950's. In this historical epoch with vast developments and fast changes in the production of cars, the study examines the

connection between the contents and curriculum of school-based VET as a response to the increased industry requirements. The study sample draws on data from three municipalities from the period 1950–1960 and the study utilises curriculum theory in the analysis of how local market demands also were met with local adaptations at schools displaying autonomy. Findings show that the school-based VET was tailored to the properties and scale of the local automotive industry. The article concludes that both the curriculum and the training in schools adapted to industry requirements in the automotive industry and displayed adaptation and regulation facilitating for coherence between education and work life competences.

The fifth article is a contribution from Switzerland. In *Unlocking hidden resources: The role of gaming skills in fostering career adaptability for resilience in the career planning of young people*, **Christine Hoffelner, Albert Düggeli, and Christof Nägele** present a study of how video games can become informal learning spaces and a resource for the development of career adaptability, effective career planning skills, and resilience. The study is based on career construction theory, and the researchers examine how skills developed through playing video games align with career adaptability resources and how these resources in turn influence the ability among adolescents to recognise and apply such skills. The analysis employs structural equation modelling based on data from 265 students in the age group 13–15 years. The results of this analysis show that video gaming supports articulation of adaptability-related skills, and this is particularly true among adolescents who seek social support in their career planning. The study also identifies significant gender differences, where the male students were more likely than female students to identify the career adaptability resources in gaming, something that in turn facilitated their transfer of the gaming-related skills and insights to career planning. The study concludes that game-based career counselling therefore could be a promising approach to reveal latent adaptability resources, strengthen digital competences, and enhance resilience. Furthermore, the Swiss researchers argue that these findings would be particularly relevant in contexts such as Switzerland or the Nordic countries, with VET systems characterised by gendered participation patterns, high dropout rates, and an increasing demand for transversal as well as digital skills.

In the sixth and last research article in the issue, **Irmelin Kjelaas, Anette L. Brekke, Hanne Theodorsen, Kjersti S. Price, and Unni S. Andreassen** from Norway write about *Transspråking på yrkesfag: En nøkkel til elevens kompetanse* (Translanguaging in vocational programmes: A key to the student's competence). They present a case study from a vocational programme in skin therapy. They use the concept of translanguaging to describe a communicative practice and pedagogical approach that enables students to utilise a range of linguistic resources to comprehend and communicate. Using a self-designed model, gestures and multiple languages structure and support the students'

communication, memory, and language, and have an important interactional function. As such, they provide cognitive, communicative, and interactional scaffolding. This is particularly suitable for recently arrived minority language learners who are still learning the language of instruction. Based on their findings, the authors discuss the potential of using translanguaging in vocational education.

A NordYrk keynote

Finally, as mentioned, this issue includes a magazine article based on one of the keynotes from this year's NordYrk conference in Aarhus, Denmark. In the article, based on her keynote, **Diana Holmqvist** from Sweden writes about *Carving space for sustainable futures through vocational education and training: Why and how organisational choices and teaching practices matter*. Holmqvist highlights the importance of non-economic purposes and values of VET, particularly the contribution towards community well-being and care for the living world. The article introduces three alternative 'conventions of worth' that could be central for the future of VET – the civic (community and care), the ecocentric (ecological embeddedness and sufficiency), and the dialectical (critique, plurality, reflective judgement) convention. These concern community and care; ecological embeddedness and sufficiency; and critique, plurality, and reflective judgement. Furthermore, Holmqvist argues that the dimensions of time, place, and relationships are particularly important in teaching for sustainability and that the choices we make in research and teaching also play a central role in shaping sustainable futures.

End of the year

Now, at the end of the year, we have been looking back at 2025 and the development of Nordic VET research and of our journal, but we are also looking forward to 2026. New articles are on their way, and the journey of the journal will continue. Likewise, the journey of the NordYrk network will continue, and in June we will meet again at the annual conference. The conference will be held in Jyväskylä, Finland, 10–12 June, with a pre-conference for emerging researchers on 9 June. See you there!