

# Book Review: Internationalization in Vocational Education and Training

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## Book Review

*Internationalization in Vocational Education and Training: Transnational Perspectives*, edited by Ly Thi Tran and Kate Dempsey, Springer, Cham/Switzerland, 2017, 255 pp., ISBN 978-3-319-47857-9 (hardback) about 90 €, ISBN 978-3-319-47859-3 (eBook), about 70 €.

The book was published in the series *Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Issues, Concerns and Prospects*. Series Editor-in-Chief is Rupert MacLean. Editors of the volume are **Ly Thi Tran**, associate professor in the Faculty of Arts and Education of Deakin University in Australia), and **Kate Dempsey**, independent education consultant from Melbourne in Australia.

## Scope and Context

The book consists of 14 articles written by 24 authors. The studies cover 12 countries Australia, China, European Union, Korea, Kuwait, Laos, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, and Vietnam - and give insights into different institutional contexts. The aim of the book is to highlight the current phase of internationalization in the field of vocational education and training (VET) and how it is reflected in VET-related research.

The chapters are grouped in four parts that are presented as thematic blocks. **The first part** explores the changes that have occurred in the development of VET due to globalization and neo-liberal market policies. **The second part** analyzes processes

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of importing/exporting VET systems or practices and discusses the consequences for national VET reforms. **The third part** examines crossing the boundaries in the context of VET with exemplary studies that draw attention to internationalization, mobility and the language skills as challenges in vocational learning. **The fourth part** includes the concluding chapter in which the editors present their conclusions highlighting the key issues raised in the book. (*Below we will focus on the three first thematic blocks and then present our concluding remarks.*)

Whilst the book has been structured into the above-mentioned thematic blocks, there are also several transversal layers that bring different aspects of international VET research together. Altogether the chapters provide an overview of systemic structures, but at the same time give insights into the realm of local actors (e.g. VET managers, teachers etc.) and into the learners' points of view.

## Internationalization and its Impact on VET

In the first contribution to this part has been written by **John S. Levin, Ariadna I. López-Damián, Marie C. Martin, and Michael J. Hoggatt**. They highlight the impact that the free market ideology has had on policies practices of the US Community Colleges of three American states (Hawaii, California, Washington). For this purpose, the authors set forth a longitudinal study, which compared two periods of time (1989-1999 and 2000-2013) through discourse analysis on state policy documents and narrative analysis of interviews with US Community Colleges' administrators and teachers.

Subsequently, the next chapter examines the effects of the commercialisation of Australian VET sector and international students mobility, caused by the neoliberal educational policy reforms, on private VET providers. Through a social perspective, the author **Rinos Pasura** discusses the importance of these changes, such as the increasing number of full-paying international students. The chapter describes, how local actors have perceived such changes and what kind of impact they have had on work practices. These analyzes were based on in-depth interviews with VET schools' managers and quality assurance experts.

In the following chapter **Kathrin Kaleja** and **Regina Egetenmeyer** propose a well-structured synthesis of European policies for internationalization and mobility in VET. They explain, why the European Union (EU) is promoting internationalization, by referring to both social and economic points of view. They give insights into the development of credit transfer systems and into EU-funded projects for promoting mobility across Europe. Moreover, they highlight the critical points that slow down the internationalisation process in the field of VET.

The subsequent chapter studies the training needs of Australian VET teachers who have experiences pedagogical challenges when teaching international students. **Ly Thi Tran** and **Truc Thi Thanh Le** analyzed empirical data based on 30 interviews with teachers and staff involved in VET teacher training. They identified three possible areas of improvement regarding better responsiveness to the needs for pedagogic support when working with international students. Their approach also allowed them to link their

findings to a framework dealing with the internationalization of VET.

In the last contribution to the first part **Roy Fisher** and **Mike Saunders** provide an overview of the UK government policies for internationalization of VET. They highlight contradictions between the declared aims to increase the enrollment of international students and yet maintaining restrictive policies for giving visas. The article also presents a brief overview of good practices gathered from Further Education Colleges.

## VET Transfer and Appropriation

The first chapter of the second thematic block presents three case studies. **Mark Rahimi** and **Helen Smith** explore the effects caused by importing of Australian VET regulations and management systems into three different national contexts - Laos, Middle East and China. All of these receiving countries have had very different educational regulation from the Australian one. Through the analysis of the mechanisms, strategies and tools used to adapt the Australian VET practices to the new contexts, three models of transitional VET and six dimensions of transitional activities have been identified.

Following a similar approach, **Anne Reich** and **Tien Thi Hanh Ho** provide an overview of the current situation in the Vietnamese educational system. It summarises the main historical events that have influenced its development. Furthermore, it outlines the current government policies for the internationalisation of VET as means to upgrade the skills of the workforce. The analysis draws attention to the efforts of the Vietnamese institutions to adapt the imported Western models to their cultural background.

In the next chapter **Kate Dempsey** and **Xia Tao** present several good examples of cooperation and improvements based on mutual exchanges. This contribution shows how an Australian association of VET providers (the TAFE institutes) implements the Australian qualification system in China adapting it to local Chinese needs. These were not always taken into account by the Australian quality assurance approach. The authors also shared information on the main co-operation arrangements between Chinese vocational education institutes and their foreign counterparts.

The last two chapters of this part focus on Korean efforts to develop a VET system that is adjusted to the skills needs on the labor market as well as to the national educational culture. **Mihae Mary Nahm** describes the evolution of the Korean VET system. It has changed from a closed option within the upper secondary education to become an alternative career path to university education. According to the authors of the other article, **Antje Barabasch**, **Stefanie Petrick**, and **Cheonsoo Park**, the Korean governments have been examining foreign VET Systems, e.g. the German and the Swiss ones. In particular, there has been an interest to improve the vocational training programs with features of apprentice training. At the same time Korean experts have been supporting developing countries and sharing their examples of best practices in VET.

## Extending the VET Boundaries

The third part consists of two chapters. **Hilde Bastiaannet** focuses primarily on the internationalization in the Dutch upper secondary education. Her study is mainly based on analyses of national and international literature. She gives firstly an overview on policies and practices related to the upper secondary education context. Then she complements the national picture with an overview of the European policies starting from the Lifelong Learning Programme and continuing with the European framework processes (EQF, ECVET, RPL, Europass, EQAVET etc.). With this extension she draws brings forward the tensions between internationalization and mobility vs. the national jurisdiction, institutional settings and different cultural interpretations of similar concepts.

The second chapter of this part discusses lingual problems as a critical issue for internationalization process. **Linda Serra Hagedorn** and **Ran Li** acknowledge the fact that English is the vehicular language for internationalization processes. In their empirical analyses they report on their findings based on a sample of international community college students in the USA. Here they draw attention to the students' views on the need to develop their English language skills from the perspective of improving their career prospects.

## Concluding Remarks

All in all, the book tries to provide us a colorful picture of the state of the art in research on internationalization in VET. The authors have faced manifold challenges, but they been able to outline a framework that serves as a reference point for further research in this area. The descriptions of national VET systems and the analyses of national policies and practices provide already a valuable source of information. Here, it is of importance that the chapters discuss internationalization in VET as a process with many tensions between the driving forces and the cultural backgrounds.

In many chapters the authors shift the emphasis from the macro level to the micro level and vice versa. In this way they draw attention to different roles of the actors involved and to the influence they have on the processes that have been studied. This change of perspectives is also reflected in the research methodologies that have been used. The authors have moved from desk research on governmental policies to qualitative analyses of practitioners' perspectives and cross-cultural discourse analyses.

The chapters present a heterogeneous panorama of topics that are relevant for the research field. In this respect the concluding chapter is essential as it seeks to keep a red thread visible through the variety of chapters brought together. Moreover, book gives insights into *emerging issues* and to *new challenges* that need to be considered in the context of developing VET. Therefore, this book can be considered as an important milestone in the conceptual interpretation of processes contributing to *internationalization in VET*. Moreover, it is worthwhile to emphasize that the book is not only relevant for VET researchers, but it is also interesting to those who are engaged in the development

of international cooperation and exchanges between different educational cultures and VET systems.

## **Biographical Notes**

Marco Perini, PhD student, enrolled in the third year of the PhD program in the Human Sciences at Department of Human Sciences, University of Verona. His main area of interest and research include Vocational Education and Training, educational technologies, work based learning and teacher education. Prior to enrolling at University of Verona he worked for four years as freelance Moodle and IT teacher in VET centers and schools. He also worked as training manager and tutor in several projects funded by the European Union.

Pekka Kämäräinen is a Finnish researcher, who works since 2005 as a senior researcher at Institute Technik Bildung (ITB), University of Bremen. From 1994 - 2002 he worked as a project manager at Cedefop (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) in Berlin and in Thessaloniki. His research interests focus on European cooperation in the development of vocational education and training (VET), in particular concerning workplace-based learning, training of teachers/trainers as well as introduction of digital media/web tools into the field of VET.