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VET research and international cooperation: Unlocking the potential of VET research and cross-national partnerships for the development of VET systems



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► **VET research and international cooperation: Unlocking the potential of VET research and cross-national partnerships for the development of VET systems**

1 VET research as a field of development in international VET cooperation

The pivotal role of vocational education and training (VET) research for the design of VET policies and the development of VET systems is generally undisputed. Despite this, the establishment of efficient research capacities and the implementation of Vocational Education as an autonomous academic discipline along with adequate capacity building of researchers and research institutions mostly remain under-appreciated. Institutionalised VET research at universities or research institutes and being an indispensable basis for adapting VET to technical and socio-economic developments (cf. DEUTSCHER BUNDESTAG 2013, p. 3) is rarely perceived as an integral part of international VET cooperation. This is a problem because it means that not only are data and research findings missing in countries but also the scientists and scholars who can exchange knowledge with the international community and support the transfer into VET practice and the development of VET systems in their national context and culture.

As part of their mandates, the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) as a centre of competence for VET in Germany and an active UNEVOC Network member, and the UNESCO Chair on TVET and Competence Development for the Future of Work at TU Dortmund University in Germany are involved on an international level in the development of VET systems and VET research. Drawing on this experience, the article will underline the relevance of VET research in reforming VET systems and highlight two flagship initiatives geared towards strengthening the interaction between VET research, VET policy, and transfer into VET practice through policy dialogue and peer learning at both the regional and global level.

2 The importance of fostering VET research in international VET cooperation

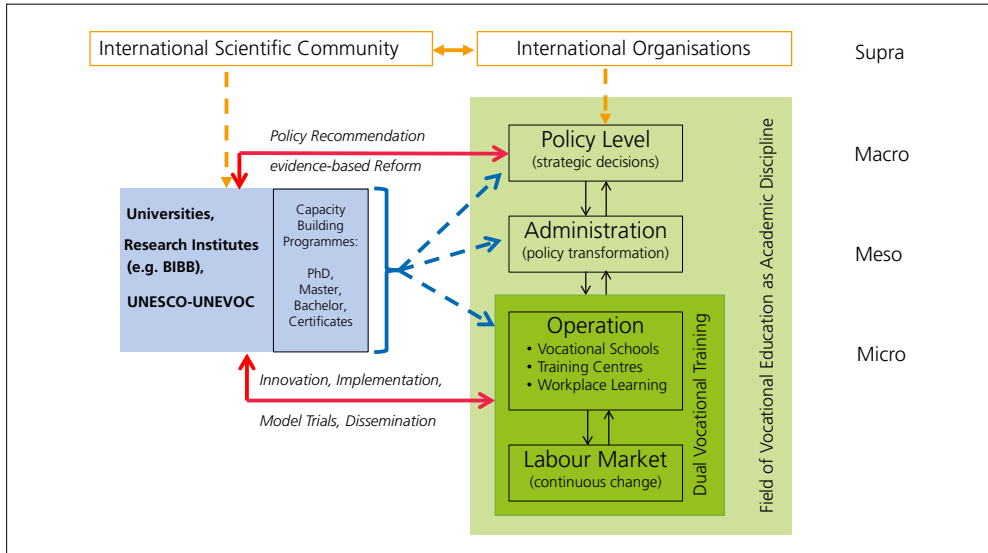
Multiple transitions and major disruptions in the fields of digitalisation, de-carbonisation and demographic change are taking place worldwide. As VET is closely linked to economic development, changes in the labour market and major trends in society, it is all the more necessary to analyse these dynamic developments and their impact, also by conducting comparative studies. The analysis of systematically collected data and evaluation results provide a solid foundation for decisions and can lead to reflections on the design of VET programmes or other measures in order to keep the VET systems responsive, flexible and resilient (cf. EULER 2023, p. 51). In this respect, the social demand on VET graduates is to make contributions to the further development of civil society and to solving urgent problems, e.g. climate change. Thus, VET research lays the foundation for the governance of VET systems, identifies priorities for investment in VET at all levels (programmes, development of curricula, learning and assessment), and promotes innovations in education and training of VET personnel.

For stakeholders and decision makers in a VET system, monitoring of developments, systematic data collection, and attempting to anticipate future trends are crucial. Research results offer insights into current VET issues and information concerning the need for new qualifications or for skills to be in demand in the future. VET research provides evidence that every government needs to make informed decisions for VET policy and practice (cf. WEISS/SEVERING 2018). And it enables governments to develop customised tools and to track how successfully their political strategies are implemented.

Comparative VET research brings about a deeper understanding of different national VET systems, their approaches and elements, e.g. training regulations, curricula, learning and assessment materials. By analysing and comparing policies, structures and key elements in a VET system, VET research helps to identify best practices that can be shared in international networks, such as the UNEVOC Network, and as a stimulus for further development in any respective domestic VET system (cf. GROLLMANN et al. 2022).

Other research approaches go beyond informing decision makers and directly facilitate development processes which include professional capacity building and social and systemic innovation directly on the operational level of the VET system and its various learning venues, such as action-oriented or design-based approaches (cf. SCHEMME/NOVAK 2017; SCHRÖDER 2017).

Figure 1: Systemic innovation cycle through VET research



Source: own representation based on SCHRÖDER 2021, p. 152

Transferring research results into policy or new technological innovations into practice is always a challenge. Such a transfer is impossible if VET research is not available due to a lack of capacities, so that own solutions cannot be developed and international networks cannot be tapped. For this reason, UNESCO is committed in its current Strategy for TVET (2022-2029) to “conduct research and support Member States in collecting and analysing data on TVET programmes and their outcomes” and to host the Teacher Task Force as a platform to “mobilize governments and other stakeholders for the advancement of teachers and quality teaching” (UNESCO 2022, p. 9f.).

In Germany, institutionalised VET and labour market research is seen as one of five main principles of the dual VET system and part of international VET cooperation (cf. DEUTSCHER BUNDESTAG 2019, p. 2). VET research takes place at universities and at institutes like the BIBB with a mandated task to conduct research in VET. The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training provides research-based policy consultancy as it equips decision makers and VET stakeholders with data, findings, assessments and recommendations. According to the German Vocational Training Act from 2020, vocational training research must clarify the fundamentals of VET, monitor domestic, European and international developments, identify standards for the contents and objectives of VET, pave the way for further developments in VET to meet changing economic, societal and technical requirements, support the development of instruments and procedures for the provision of VET, and promote the transfer of knowledge and technology (cf. BMBF 2020, section 84).

But this is by no means the global standard. Many countries still regard VET research as “nice to have” when it comes to prioritising scarce resources. Furthermore, there is a lack of qualified staff at universities and national research institutes to network with the interna-

tional community and to train young scientists in how to do research in VET. Hence, to improve the quality of VET research and to build up its capacities is an important lever and yet a persisting challenge in international VET cooperation. International, regional and national networks can provide support, disseminate knowledge and increase exchange in a very efficient manner and thus contribute to the development of VET systems (cf. SCHRÖDER/CARTON/PARYONO 2015; ESSER 2018) if capacities on the national level are in place.

Even though the impression might arise that an international network for VET that interlocks VET research and the development of international VET cooperation does not yet exist (cf. BOHLINGER et al. 2024, p. 45), there are international platforms of cooperation and collaboration that are committed to the transfer between research, policy and practice in the field of VET. Hence, we will take a closer look at a global platform comprising all groups of stakeholders in VET and a regionally-oriented network focussing mainly on universities in Southeast Asia.

3 UNESCO-UNEVOC and the UNEVOC Network: international collaboration in VET

The UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET is the term preferred by UNESCO in its activities and documents on vocational education and training) plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of VET worldwide and serves as a global platform for collaboration in VET. Established in 2002 in Bonn, Germany, its mission is to support UNESCO Member States in improving the quality, relevance, attractiveness and accessibility of their national VET systems. UNESCO-UNEVOC raises awareness of the importance of VET for social and economic development, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and mobilises policy-makers and other VET stakeholders around a common agenda.

A desire to strengthen VET research and international collaboration in VET was among the primary motivations for the creation of UNESCO-UNEVOC. The First International Congress on TVET, held by UNESCO in Berlin in 1987, concluded with a recommendation to establish an international centre for research and development in technical and vocational education.

In 1993, the UNESCO-UNEVOC Implementation Unit was set up in Berlin, and in 1999, the UNESCO General Conference passed a resolution to create an international centre for TVET, which led to the establishment of UNESCO-UNEVOC in 2002. The centre's original objectives included, among others, functioning as an international information clearing-house and serving as a reference centre and resource base for UNESCO's activities in VET (cf. UNESCO 1999; UNESCO 2000).

One of the primary responsibilities of UNESCO-UNEVOC is to manage the UNEVOC Network, a global network of VET institutions that includes ministries responsible for VET, national coordinating bodies, universities and research institutions, and VET providers (see Figure 2). The network's key objectives are to facilitate cooperation and mutual assistance

for institutional capacity development and to provide peer learning and knowledge sharing opportunities for its members (cf. UNESCO-UNEVOC 2022b).

The UNEVOC Network – the only global network of VET institutions – plays a vital role in the implementation of the activities of UNESCO-UNEVOC, both as a platform for collaboration and peer learning, and as a source of expertise in VET. The Shanghai Consensus, adopted at the Third International Congress on TVET in Shanghai in 2012, directed UNESCO to enhance the UNEVOC Network “to play a key role in developing the capacities of decision-makers and practitioners, and facilitate the involvement of all [VET] stakeholders” (UNESCO 2012, p. 13).

Since it was founded, the UNEVOC Network has grown into a network of over 230 VET institutions in more than 150 countries, including 53 universities and research institutions. Combined, these institutions, also known as UNEVOC Centres, represent more than 66 million students and apprentices and more than 2 million teachers and trainers.

The current priorities of UNESCO-UNEVOC are outlined in its Medium-Term Strategy for the period 2024–2026 (UNESCO-UNEVOC 2024), which defines two strategic objectives. First, UNESCO-UNEVOC supports VET institutions in UNESCO Member States to strengthen their capacities for a successful and just transformation of their VET systems, as well as their ability to serve the needs of individuals, economies, and societies. Second, UNESCO-UNEVOC contributes to well-informed VET policies and practices by providing the global VET community with an active multilateral cooperation platform and a comprehensive evidence base on VET.

The Medium-Term Strategy also identifies eight thematic focus areas for the period 2024–2026: lifelong learning, equity and inclusion, multi-stakeholder engagement with the private sector, green and digital transformation, artificial intelligence, innovation and excellence, career guidance, and global citizenship education. UNESCO-UNEVOC uses research in these and other areas to advance evidence-based practices and to improve VET worldwide.

Role of research at UNESCO-UNEVOC

Strengthening research and development in VET was one of the key motives for the establishment of UNESCO-UNEVOC in 2002. Since then, UNESCO-UNEVOC has been committed to VET research, facilitating original research, disseminating findings through publications and conferences, and promoting collaboration via the UNEVOC Network.

The diverse nature of the UNEVOC Network, with member institutions from all geographic regions and countries at different levels of social and economic development, offers several advantages for research collaboration. It facilitates the identification and understanding of challenges in VET that reflect local and national institutional environments, and it fosters creativity, innovation, and sharing of unique approaches. Collaboration across borders leads to stronger partnerships that can result in more comprehensive and impactful initiatives that are relevant in different contexts. Perhaps most important, because the UNEVOC Network is the only global network of its kind, UNESCO and its partner institutions can have a stronger voice in influencing global VET policies that cater to the needs of all learners.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the diversity of the UNEVOC Network also presents some challenges. UNEVOC Centres vary considerably in their access to funding, technology and other resources, and they operate in different regulatory environments. This can create imbalances in their contributions to and participation in collaborative research projects. However, one of the aims of the UNEVOC Network is precisely to overcome this imbalance by pooling the resources, knowledge and expertise from all UNEVOC Centres.

The final evaluation of UNESCO's previous TVET Strategy (2012–2016) confirmed the need to strengthen the institutional capacities of UNEVOC Centres, including their capacity for research (cf. UNESCO 2021). The evaluation also recommended the development of flagship research projects that focus on the future of VET and prepare for the period after 2030, the target year of the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the evaluation suggested making VET future-proof by making it “adjustable to changing demographics (mobility, migration), technological and environmental changes and serving people in life-long learning” (UNESCO 2021, p. 53).

As a consequence, the importance of research was reinforced in the UNESCO Strategy for TVET for 2022–2029, which positions UNESCO-UNEVOC as “the hub of the UNESCO-UNEVOC Network and as a resource centre for research and innovation, knowledge-sharing and capacity development” (UNESCO 2022, p. 25).

Similarly, the UNESCO-UNEVOC Medium-Term Strategy for 2024–2026 emphasises the significance of research for the global VET community. UNESCO-UNEVOC aims to compile and disseminate reliable data on VET and the labour market, promote innovative research and analysis, and engage in skills foresight on emerging VET issues, so that VET stakeholders and institutions are empowered to make informed decisions. According to the Medium-Term Strategy, “the aim is to strengthen the link between TVET research and evidence-based policy-making, through increased awareness of new developments in the fields of education, training and employment” (UNESCO-UNEVOC 2024, p. 25).

UNESCO-UNEVOC contributes to the global evidence base on VET with its TVET Country Profiles, providing concise, up-to-date information on national VET systems.¹ These profiles include key statistics, diagrams illustrating the position of VET within national education systems, overviews of national VET institutions, summaries of qualifications frameworks, policy documents, and other relevant information.

In addition, UNESCO-UNEVOC supports diverse VET research aligned with key thematic areas in the UNESCO Strategy for TVET and its own Medium-Term Strategy. Notable examples include the “Handbook of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Research” (RAUNER/MACLEAN 2008), the “International Handbook of Education for the Changing World of Work” (MACLEAN/WILSON 2009), and recent publications on the return on investment in VET (cf. UNESCO/NCVER 2020), the impact of artificial intelligence on skills development (cf. UNESCO-UNEVOC 2021), digital skills for VET teachers (cf. UNESCO-UNEVOC 2022a), and VET curricula in Africa (cf. UNESCO-UNEVOC 2023).

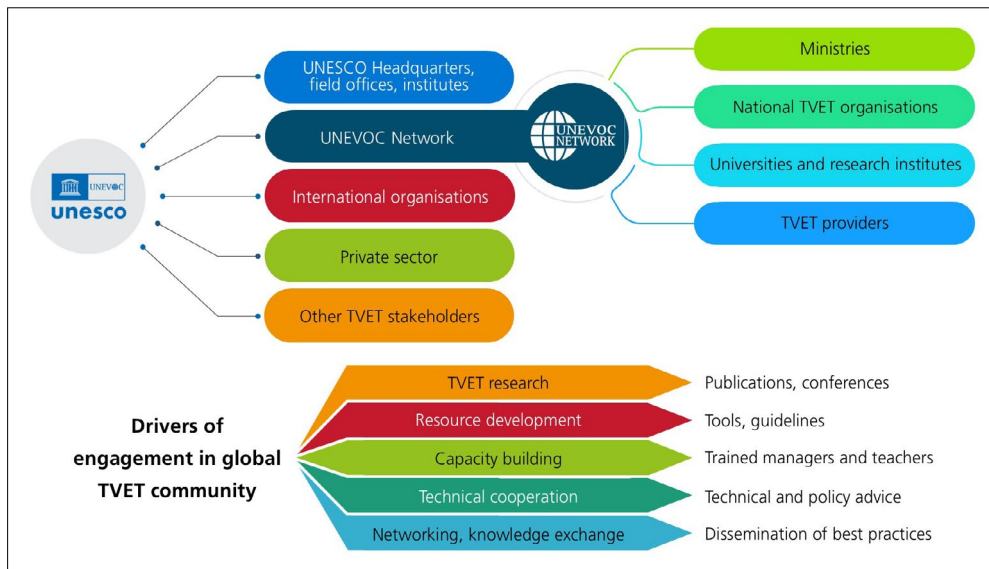
1 URL: <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVET+Country+Profiles> (Retrieved on 27.11.2024).

Research findings are promoted by UNESCO-UNEVOC through webinars, workshops, and conferences organised by UNESCO-UNEVOC or its partners. UNESCO-UNEVOC ensures the dissemination of new knowledge through the UNEVOC Network and its wider network of VET institutions, including the members of the Inter-Agency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training that was convened by UNESCO in 2008 to ensure co-ordination of activities by key international organisations involved in policy advice, programmes and research on VET.

The UNEVOC Network stimulates collaborative research among UNEVOC Centres, partly funded by UNESCO-UNEVOC with support from its donors, through its UNEVOC Network Co-Action Initiative and other efforts aimed at increasing collaboration among VET institutions. UNESCO-UNEVOC also promotes inter-institutional mobility of VET researchers, including hosting by UNESCO-UNEVOC in Bonn. This joint research can become part of the institutional development of UNEVOC Centres as it opens up further opportunities for their international relations.

Although not a research network in the narrow sense as discussed by Bohlinger et al. (2024), the UNEVOC Network facilitates innovative research benefiting the global VET community. The UNEVOC Network is thus a “key driver for mutual learning, capacity-building and advancing international cooperation in TVET” (UNESCO 2022). Figure 2 illustrates the connections between UNESCO-UNEVOC, the UNEVOC Network and the global VET community, the drivers of engagement and selected outputs.

Figure 2: UNESCO-UNEVOC’s and the UNEVOC Network’s position in the global VET community



Source: own representation

The BIBB has been an active member of the UNEVOC Network since 1994. As the national centre of competence for VET in Germany it contributes in different ways to the UNEVOC Network, for example with joint research projects meant to support capacity building in VET (cf. BAHL/DIETZEN 2019) or by advancing policy and peer learning as in the BILT project.

Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) project²

The Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) initiative is a current flagship project of UNESCO-UNEVOC and a prime example of engaging VET stakeholders from research, policy, and practice in collaborative international exchange to strengthen VET systems.

BILT was launched in 2019 to promote policy dialogue, peer learning and knowledge exchange among VET stakeholders in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, and Europe. BILT is implemented by UNESCO-UNEVOC with the support of the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

In several formats, such as international conferences and expert groups, BILT facilitates interregional and global dialogue on new qualifications and competencies required for the transition to green and digital economies. BILT also examines two other dimensions linked to new qualifications and competencies in VET: entrepreneurship and migration. Within the BILT network, methods of empirical social research are applied together with methods that are based more on practical plausibility.

To stimulate policy and peer learning, international expert groups were formed as part of the BILT project. They consist of experts from all BILT project regions active in VET policy, research and practice. The experts contribute existing evidence derived from project results, targeted studies or surveys, and data from monitoring and evaluation in order to identify successful examples that promise added value for other national or regional VET reform processes. During this transfer of knowledge and innovation research gaps become apparent and are seized to encourage collaboration in joint research as well as capacity building to strengthen VET research in the BILT community. The expert groups' sectoral foci – tourism and hospitality in 2023, building and construction in 2024 and 2025 – complement the thematic focus areas of UNESCO-UNEVOC and thus add a new dimension to the research output facilitated by UNESCO-UNEVOC, BIBB and the other BILT partners.

With a strong link to VET research, the first international BILT expert group provided the methodological basis for the interregional project work. The group developed a structured approach to examine the processes of identifying new qualifications and competencies, integrating them into training regulations and curricula and implementing them through innovative VET provision. The structured approach to the process of identifying, integrating and implementing new qualifications and competencies (BILT's "three I's" process) is illustrated in Figure 3.

² Thanks to Ms. Katharina Engel for her helpful support.

Figure 3: Key components of the "three I's" approach



Source: own representation adapted from LOVEDER 2021, p. 9

For each of the three levels of stakeholders involved in the process – VET governance (macro), advocacy (meso) and delivery (micro) – specific challenges and best practices from the BILT regions Africa, Asia-Pacific and Europe are discussed in the expert groups and elaborated in publications. To date, the BILT project has yielded three research compendiums on new qualifications and competencies (cf. LOVEDER 2021; SGARZI 2021; KEEVY et al. 2021), as well as reports by expert groups.

BILT conferences in the three project regions, a biennial global BILT Learning Forum and webinar formats provide opportunities to discuss project findings and new directions for future collaboration and research while deepening thematic policy dialogue and peer learning. National developments to support and explore VET research are thus complemented by the interregional and international perspectives that BILT formats offer.

In addition, the multi-level stakeholder involvement, bringing VET research, policy, social partners and practice in exchange with each other, is a particular strength of the BILT project.

In spite of the challenges for research collaboration in the UNEVOC Network mentioned above, the BILT project has proven to be an outstanding example of UNESCO-UNEVOC's approach to fostering VET research through platforms for interregional and multi-level exchange, collaborative efforts, and data-driven insights. This has been confirmed in repeated evaluations of the BILT project which highlight consistent achievement of its expected outcomes. So far, institutions in the official project regions – Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Europe – are the main beneficiaries of the project. An extension to the Americas would allow institutions in that region to share their unique insights and expertise and lead to even more opportunities for globally relevant VET research.

4 Regional Association for Vocational and Technical Education: VET research in Southeast Asia before the backdrop of ASEAN integration

The Regional Association of Vocational and Technical Education in Asia (RAVTE) was founded in 2014 by 14 universities with the constitutional objective of supporting the integration process in member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN states increasingly pursue the goal of socio-economic integration; the provision of a workforce qualified to meet the requirements of the labour market is a field of common interest (cf. SCHRÖDER 2022; 2023). The ASEAN Economic Community was founded in 2015, and Human Resource Development and vocational education are receiving increased programmatic attention. RAVTE has committed itself to supporting the regional integration of ASEAN (cf. RAVTE 2015).

RAVTE is a civil society organisation that currently consists of 29 institutions that share an interest in VET from ASEAN countries and China. RAVTE is a community of practice for the development and expansion of regional VET research capacities and for improving the training of VET personnel and VET systems. Convinced of the need for evidence-based VET policy advice and practical reform through international knowledge exchange and innovation, RAVTE follows the guiding principle of regional, autonomous VET research based on an independent academic discipline (cf. SCHRÖDER 2023; 2019; 2017).

RAVTE's strategic alignment is inspired by important UNESCO VET initiatives, such as the Hangzhou Declaration (2004), the Shanghai Consensus (2012) and the Kuala Lumpur Declaration (2015). The current RAVTE strategy consists of eight sub-strategies (cf. RAVTE 2015) with three specific objectives: work-based VET with a special focus on employer engagement, enhancing VET with regard to digitisation and automation (Industry 4.0), and promoting green skills and jobs.

RAVTE specifically favours reform-oriented, participative and design-oriented action research approaches. Joint research activities are understood as a medium for the organisational development and expansion of individual competencies and regional capacities in

VET research. Improving the didactical skills of VET staff is a high priority, followed by institutional upgrades of VET schools and the dissemination of knowledge and research findings. RAVTE sees itself as a “learning” university network, in which the focus is on reform in dialogue with regional stakeholders. In this sense, “learning” is analogous to the work process-oriented acquisition of holistic competence development in individual vocational education and training (cf. SCHRÖDER 2017, p. 176; SCHRÖDER 2014). It is worth noting that three universities from the RAVTE network have set up research institutes for VET:

- ▶ the Malaysian Research Institute for VET at the University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, founded in 2019;
- ▶ the TVET Research Centre at Indonesia’s University of Education (UPI), part of an excellence initiative, founded in 2020; and
- ▶ the Research Centre TVET at the Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna (RMUTL), which emerged from the BMBF-funded project “ProWoThai“, founded in 2022.

Furthermore, RAVTE operates in cooperation with the UNESCO Chair at TU Dortmund University the online and open access journal TVET@Asia to offer a platform to disseminate research results and best practice models free of charge for authors and readers.

ProWoThai – Shaping work-based learning through dialogue and reform

A research demand formulated in RAVTE’s strategy gave rise to the research project ProWoThai (Progressing Work-based Learning in Thailand, 2019–2023), funded by the BMBF as part of a programme to promote research cooperation in international VET cooperation (cf. SCHRÖDER et al. 2024). The UNESCO Chair for TVET and Competence Development for the Future of Work at TU Dortmund University was the implementing institution.

ProWoThai found its most important connection in the Work-integrated Learning projects at RMUTL (cf. MOONPA/SONGTHANAPITAK/DAROON 2022). In 2012, a cooperation with Michelin and the relevant government agencies, the Office of the Vocational Education Commission and the Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council, was established in the form of the “School-in-Factory” programme. This initiative was followed in 2019 by the Tripartite Education System, in which VET colleges, companies and RMUTL formally act as trilateral cooperation partners. Based on these developments and in the context of ProWoThai, partners gave rise to the foundation of an industry- and government-supported Research Center for TVET in Thailand at RMUTL. The reform-oriented action research approach to be implemented by the Research Center for TVET is to conduct work process analyses in companies with partners from universities and the private sector in order to develop “Work-and-Learning Tasks” that are part of the repertoire of modern, action-oriented didactics aimed at acquiring holistic vocational competences.

With two facilities – the Industrial Liaison Office and the VET Hub – RMUTL also acts as support for public-private partnerships in which it does not cooperate directly. Certain degrees from the range of degrees available in Thailand (Vocational Certificate, Diploma,

Bachelor, Master) can be obtained. The addition of a PhD programme is currently being examined, as RMUTL has achieved best-practice status with its projects in Thailand.

At a VET conference in Bangkok in September 2023, which RAVTE organised together with ProWoThai, options for joining ProWoThai were summarised and discussed, especially with regard to further deepening regional research cooperation in Southeast Asia. The most important stakeholders in Thai VET and the ASEAN context (SEAMEO TED) were represented, as well as internationally active organisations (BIBB, ETF, UNESCO-UNEVOC). For the future, the conference has envisaged an “action-oriented, supranational research perspective on labour market requirements in the face of digitalisation and the green energy transition” with a wide range of topics: new greening qualifications and skills in vocational education and training for a sustainable future; Digitalisation of VET and IR 4.0; Excellence in VET through Regional Cooperation; Work-Based Learning as a Guiding Principle; Research on VET in Southeast Asia; VET Teachers and Instructors – the Agents of Change.³

ProWoThai and RAVTE are thus good examples of the future shape of regional VET research in the context of international cooperation. The primary goal is a regional network as a community of practice that further expands the paths of autonomous regional research and development – as a prerequisite for high-quality, demand-oriented VET. Individual competencies and organisational capacities of VET research are the driving force that produces regional experts who can act as “agents of change” in their national VET systems.

5 Conclusion

The experience gained from many years of cooperation with VET institutions at the regional and global levels proves that cross-national research and development projects and mobility activities are a decisive factor for strengthening organisational development and capacities of research institutions. These activities foster the successful exchange of knowledge and sustainable development processes. Regular exchanges and mutual understanding of respective VET environments, developed over many years, enable innovative solutions and development through joint research and advice provided for VET policy and practice. Cooperation with multilateral institutions enables far-reaching global and regional networking, involvement in international VET agenda-setting, and the dissemination of good practices and innovations worldwide. Analysing good practices and case studies advances the development of theoretical approaches in VET research (cf. GEIBEN/LE MOUILLOUR/THOMANN 2017).

To strengthen the evidence-based foundation for the development and innovation of VET systems in a sustainable manner, the following interventions are recommended:

- ▶ Effective, evidence-based VET policy requires well-designed information services, reliable and up-to-date data, relevant research results, and dissemination of best practices. The UNESCO Strategy for TVET 2022–2029 emphasises the importance of policy learning and capacity development through regional and global platforms for dialogue and

3 Cf. URL: <https://tvetcon.rmutt.ac.th>; <https://www.bibb.de/de/183326.php> (Retrieved on 27.11.2024).

knowledge exchange. The UNEVOC Network is key as the only global network of VET institutions.

- ▶ National governments and the international community should engage in capacity building for VET research at the local, national, regional, and global levels. This includes educating VET researchers and establishing institutional structures that are linked with international or regional organisations.
- ▶ Providing advice and counselling on developing research institutions in a self-reliant manner is essential. These institutions should be able to contribute to the development of national VET systems and advance progress on global priorities, such as the green and digital transformation of economies and societies and skills development for future-oriented decent work. UNESCO-UNEVOC, in collaboration with its partners in the UNEVOC Network and beyond, can play a key role in this process.
- ▶ VET should be promoted as an autonomous academic discipline. This is a precondition for establishing research capacities, systematically structuring VET-related knowledge, and disseminating knowledge and best practices. Establishing international doctoral programmes for VET is an option for recognising VET as an academic discipline and facilitating international exchange and dissemination. Research in these programmes should be designed to encourage innovation.
- ▶ Promotion of a variety of interdisciplinary research approaches is vital for fostering innovation and development of VET operations and the education of VET personnel. Vocational Education, as an interdisciplinary academic discipline, has the potential to bring technical and societal innovations to the market via the design of VET programmes.
- ▶ VET research at the national, regional and global levels requires sufficient funding. Funding of VET research that aims at the governance and development of VET systems creates added value for different fields of policy and facilitates a just and successful transformation of economies and societies.

Elevating the quality of VET hinges on integrating research findings into policy and educational practice. In order to improve and strengthen VET, it is therefore crucial to consider the state of VET research as an indispensable element of the VET system.

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