

Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Issues, Concerns and Prospects

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Fernando Marhuenda-Fluixá
Editor

The School-Based Vocational Education and Training System in Spain

Achievements and Controversies

 Springer

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Foreword

The present handbook, edited by Fernando Marhuenda-Fluixá, is an exceptional milestone in the landscape of vocational education and training (VET) research. First, a systematic knowledge about the past, present and possible future of the VET system in Spain is rare and scattered. This situation has changed with the advent of this handbook. Second, anyone who used to consider VET in Spain as unstructured and without traditions now will be convinced of the opposite. The actual situation is that VET in Spain is differentiated; it is a diverse landscape with varied provincial manifestations and a long-standing tradition characterised by changes and flexibilisation on the one hand and centralisation and control on the other. Below, I highlight some insights to illustrate the richness of this handbook.

In the first chapter ‘VET system and its subsystems face to face the labour market. Strengths, weaknesses and challenges of VET in Spain’, the author, Fernando Marhuenda-Fluixá, demonstrates that the VET system in Spain is not in crisis within the meaning of a declining demand. It is rather under development and in progress. The number of participants is increasing, conservatives and social democrats are finding a consensus about VET and these developments are grounded in a long development history. In the second chapter ‘Building up a VET system: Formal VET’, the authors, Óscar Mas-Torelló und Patricia Olmos-Rueda, describe the continuous development of the VET system through its reforms – in 1955, 1970, 1990, 2006, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015 – in relation to the European integration process. Within these reforms, topics like competencies, lifelong learning and the qualification framework have been addressed as well as work orientation, which started with the alternance training scheme as early as 1984, continued with workplace training in 2011 and expanded with the dual VET in 2012/2013. VET is a dynamic sector in Spain.

The authors Laura Rego-Agraso, Eva M. Barreira Cerqueiras and Antonio F. Rial Sánchez wrote the third chapter of this book: ‘Continuing vocational education and training in Spain: Current organisation and challenges’. This chapter deals with CVET’s dependence on public funding and the labour market’s structure, which mainly comprises self-employed workers and SMEs. This is why the percentage of companies providing CVET is lower than the percentage of trained people compared

with the EU-28 mean. A development in this sector are the newer, stricter political regulations which are not producing the expected major effects, such as a better integration between IVET and CVET, but a problematic side effect, such as the decrease of companies providing CVET.

‘Accreditation of learning and vocational qualifications’ and their development within the Spanish non-formal system is the subject of the fourth chapter written by María José Chisvert-Tarazona. The legislative fundamentals were set up in 2002/2003 and actualised in 2009 and 2015. The author discusses the phases of the procedure for validation and accreditation (processing, counselling, evaluation and accreditation and registration). In addition, she analyses the strengths (introduction of basic competences and a larger number of qualifications on the first level) and identifies the overall weaknesses (neoliberal orientation and a lack of humanist orientation).

In the fifth chapter, ‘The education of VET teachers and trainers’, the authors, Alicia Ros-Garrido and Fernando Marhuenda-Fluixá, discover a major problem concerning school-based VET, which is not only its form but also teachers’ academic background, which is not vocational but rather academic. Teaching being an academic career helps in reproducing the ongoing distance between education and work, despite the abovementioned efforts (alternance training scheme, workplace training referred to in previous chapters) to close the gap. The problem facing the other side, the non-formal VET, is just the opposite: experience is often the substitute for a proper education and good qualifications. Crossing the boundary between these two very distinguished groups seems to be impossible nowadays.

In the sixth chapter, ‘The planning and organisation of VET: research on VET networks in Andalusia’, the authors, Ángela Martín-Gutiérrez and Juan Antonio Morales-Lozano, analyse the relationship (collaboration) of the government, VET schools, employers, social agents/institutions and unions in Andalusia. The focus hereby is on the management teams of VET schools. The authors develop a typology to characterise four different levels of maturity in this collaboration (from administrative schools to support or network schools). This perspective on the meso-level, the institutional level, is refreshing within VET research, which is mainly focussed either on the macro system level or on the micro individual competence level.

In the seventh chapter, ‘The role of work- and school-based supervisors in bridging educational and workplace contexts in Catalonia’, the authors, Ana Inés Renta Davids, José Miguel Jiménez González and Manel Fandos Garrido, continue the topic of collaboration with reference to VET in Catalonia. The actions of school-based and work-based supervisors are identified with in-depth analysis and grouped into four main categories (coordination, cooperation, co-construction and barriers). A comparable analysis within the context of dual VET in, for example, Germany or Switzerland is still missing.

In the eighth chapter, ‘The production of disqualified youth through basic vocational education and training provision. Examples from Valencia’, the authors, Míriam Abiétar and Almudena Navas, analyse the transition path of youth after the completion of basic vocational education and training. The authors clearly prove

that this programme increases societal segregation and limits the area of labour and social life of the youth.

The ninth chapter, ‘The promotion of educational success in intermediate VET level: the case of the Balearic islands’, written by Francesca Salvà-Mut, Antoni Cerdà-Navarro and Jaume Sureda-Negre, focuses on the low completion of intermediate-level studies in relation to a high dropout rate. The authors analyse student engagement (understood as behavioural and academic engagement, affective engagement and cognitive engagement) and identify the main characteristics of engagement’s erosion and its triggers.

In the chapter ‘Continuing training in the autonomous region of Galicia: Perspectives and new challenges’, the authors, Eva M. Barreira Cerqueiras, Laura Rego-Agraso and Antonio F. Rial Sánchez, describe the special socio-economic conditions in Galicia and how CVET could and should relate to these conditions. However, the involvement of the unions and employers in the decision-making process has been reduced. Faced with such a mindset, it is perhaps less surprising that an assessment culture or culture of final evaluation is not established. As remedies, the authors argue for more participation and decentralisation.

In the eleventh and final chapter, the authors, Fernando Marhuenda-Fluixá, María José Chisvert-Tarazona and Davinia Palomares-Montero, analyse a recent development in Spain: the implementation of dual VET. The authors remind readers that work-based learning has a long tradition in Spain and ask, therefore, what the added value of dual VET is. Empirically, the authors show that dual VET is implemented differently and, hence, already increases the existing variety within the VET system. Dual VET in countries like Germany or Switzerland is company-based and driven by business. In Spain, a new gestalt has arisen: school-based, dual VET driven by schools. The authors conclude, ‘Dual VET has been a good idea badly implemented in Spain’.

The present insights, which are just some examples, demonstrate another point which must be added to the two points at the beginning: even if the VET system in Spain is the focus, the discussion and empirical research conducted are relevant beyond the geographical territory. The handbook reflects, as the title indicates, an intensive case study about a school-based vocational education and training system with a long tradition. The handbook may also foster bridging time and experience, as most of the articles were jointly written by emerging researchers together with senior researchers. The book itself is, therefore, a metaphor of the VET system in Spain and it demonstrates that the VET system in Spain is on the move, as is its related research community.

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Preface

There is not a great array of literature on vocational education and training in Spain. There is not much literature neither in Spanish nor certainly in English. Among the latter are the reports published by Cedefop (Sancha and Gutiérrez 2016; *Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal* 2016; Cantero and Sancha 2014) but also other volumes such as the one by Milolaza (2014). Among the former are one on the history of vocational education (Martínez 2002), some about its political developments (De Asís 2003; Luzón and Torres 2013) or VET professionals (Ferrández et al. 2000) as well as a couple of overviews on achievements and challenges (Homs 2009; Marhuenda 2012).

I started researching on VET in year 1990 with my PhD (Marhuenda 1994). I participated in several research projects, regional, national and European, where VET was the context and the objects varied: transitions into work (Martínez and Marhuenda, 1998; Navas and Marhuenda 2013), work experience and work placements (Marhuenda 2000; Marhuenda et al. 2001; Marhuenda 2018), modularisation of VET (Marhuenda 2002), vocational identities (Martínez 2003) as well as on basic VET (Molpeceres 2004), connectivity (Marhuenda 2009), employability (Córdoba and Martínez 2011) or the tensions surrounding VET (Marhuenda 2017). Most of my academic and research work has been around vocational education and training, particularly on its connections to workplace learning, adult learning and social inclusion.

Vocational education and training in Spain has not been paid sufficient attention by scholars, and this is not but a reflection of the lack of interest it suffered in terms of policymaking as well. This trend, however, has changed pretty much in the past 25 years. We can identify a few research groups that have made VET their object of study. The first one was established almost four decades ago, *Colectivo de Investigación en Formación Ocupacional (CIFO)*¹ at the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* and with further connections in other universities, such as the *Universitat Rovira i Virgili* in Tarragona as well as the *Universidad de Sevilla* and the *Universidad de Santiago de Compostela*. Authors of Chaps. 2, 3, 6, 7 and 10 are either members

¹<http://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/cifo>

of this group or researchers who have stayed with professors in the group while working on their PhDs, most of which have been defended in the past few years.

In the *Universitat de València*, I myself have coordinated another small research group, *Transiciones entre formación y empleo en contextos de Vulnerabilidad Social (Transicions²)*, in which authors of Chaps. 1, 4, 5, 8 and 11 are and have been involved in different ways. The remaining chapter has been written by colleagues from the University of the Balearic Islands (Chap. 9). All of the authors are pedagogues. All of them hold a PhD in either Education or Sociology, and research upon VET is one of their main areas of interest, and in some cases the only one.

All throughout the country, there is no periodical journal, neither academic nor professional, devoted exclusively to VET, and educational journals have hardly edited monographs on vocational education (AAVV 1990, 1997, 2003, 2006, 2012, 2016, 2017). The academic community of scholars studying and researching vocational education is not too large, but there is a young generation who has started changing that trend, and I am very happy to have them contributing to this volume, where many of them publish a chapter.

In the meantime, it seems that vocational education has been able to develop without the need to rely upon research, and that has been particularly the case of VET in the Basque country, famous all over the country for it has kept a steady improvement along the years even if it is hard to find any academic who has researched VET in that region (García-Montero 2015; López de Guereñu 2018). Nonetheless, one may consider that VET has been part of a ‘nation strategy’ both in the case of the Basque country as well as in Catalonia (Valiente 2015a, b), where the link between the qualification of the workforce and economic development has been closer than in any other region. There are no other regions in Spain where this effort is so clear, perhaps with the exception of Navarra.

We can find more research upon VET in other regions. In the book, we will find examples and references to particularities of vocational education in different regions in Spain, like Galicia, Andalusia, the Balearic Islands, Valencia and Catalonia, the regions where most of the authors live, work and research. Regional data and problems will be used to illustrate nationwide structures and challenges of vocational education.

The first part of the book, ‘VET in Spain: subsystems, governance and actors’, has five chapters. The first one covers an explanation of the development of the three subsystems to facilitate better understanding of the complexities and rich challenges of the VET panorama in the country. Chapters 2 and 3 explain in detail two of those subsystems, the initial formal VET and the continuing VET provision; Chap. 4 details the most recent development in the system, the display of the accreditation of vocational qualifications; and Chap. 5 provides detailed explanation of the education of VET teachers and vocational trainers. All chapters in this part have the aim to describe the system and also to comment upon it, upon well informed analyses and commentaries written by authors who have conducted research upon these

² <https://www.uv.es/uvweb/servicio-investigacion/es/educacion/grupo-1285949713867.html?p2=GIUV2013-093>

issues. This part provides an overview of the landscape of VET in Spain, and it will be useful for the purpose of comparative research, also to get in-depth analysis of current socio-historical and political developments of VET.

Part II of the book gives an account on the most recent research conducted by scholars across the country, and it is full of references and relations to research upon VET everywhere in the world, with European research playing a significant role. Most of that research is either part of PhD collaborative work or of publicly funded research projects. All of the chapters focus on different issues, from initial to continuing VET, from basic to higher VET qualifications, from traditional work-based learning to the recent introduction of a dual type of VET. All of them give an empirical account, and, interestingly, the contributions also show the variety of regional specificities of VET in Spain. Such a display of research, without being exhaustive of all that is done, sets the scene of which are the main issues being currently debated at micro, meso- and macro level; and research here illustrates some of the main challenges that the system faces and what are the tensions to which the VET community of institutions and practitioners are confronted.

The reader might want to see other chapters that this book has not been able to offer. There is a clear gap in a missing chapter on the non-formal training subsystem. However, this has not been possible due to the lack of data that have not been recorded in any official, systematic way, as if it was not considered relevant. The contribution of this subsystem has been great along the past decades in offering a formative pathway for people whose access back to the education system was not allowed due to the entry requirements. In this sense, specific populations, among which people with disabilities outstand, have benefited from such training measures. Many institutions have taken part of this subsystem, of very different kind (municipalities, unions, employer federations, NGOs, companies), and they constitute nowadays a parallel network of which little is known for the precariousness embedded in this training subsystem, lacking the stability and certainties that characterise the formal VET system.

Another gap is that of vocational guidance, an area which lacks a chapter in this book. However, vocational guidance is a practice in need of great development, as it has been overwhelmed by academic guidance. There is little vocational guidance offered within the school system, and that out of the school system has not been systematic and has lacked a stable network of institutions and professionals, and there is hardly any record on its role, value and needs, other than that collected by institutions who have strongly favoured it, like that of *Fundación Forem* or authors like Consuelo Vélaz de Medrano (2013) or Benito Echeverría (2008), as well as others like María Luisa Rodríguez or María Teresa Padilla.

I cannot finish this Preface without thanking the generous reviewers of different chapters of this volume. Reviewing is a task most of us undertake and that sometimes we enjoy for what we learn from the texts we have to read and assess, though it often means an extra duty we have to add to our other commitments. Reviewing is sometimes painful, whenever texts need considerable improvement. All chapters in this book have gone through at least four reviews, including the publisher, external reviewers as well as the editor, most of them scholars in different parts of Europe

and all of them with a long-term expertise and research on VET in international contexts.

I would like to start thanking the only written contribution of this volume that has been produced by a non-Spanish scholar Michael Gessler, Professor at the University of Bremen and Board Member of the Vocational Education and Training Network of the European Educational Research Association (VETNET) as well as Lead Convenor of the International Research Network in Vocational Education and Training (IRNVET). Michael has been kind enough to write a foreword for this book. Professor Gessler has been generous in reading all chapters and commenting, out of his expertise, upon the particularities of the Spanish VET system. His point of view constitutes a relevant feedback and introduction for the chapters of this book.

Among other reviewers, I would like to mention the work of Andreas Saniter (*Institut Technik und Bildung*, University of Bremen, Germany), Gabriele Molzerberger (*Bergische Universität Wuppertal*, Germany), Graham Attwell (*Pontydysgu*, Wales-Spain), Jeroen Ostenk (University of Inholland, Netherlands), Johanna Lasonen (University of South Florida, USA), Jörg Markowitz (*3s Unternehmensberatung*, Wien, Austria), Lázaro Moreno (University of Stockholm, Sweden), Lorenzo Bonoli (*Eidgenössisches Hochschulinstitut für Berufsbildung*, Bern, Switzerland), Ludger Deitmer (*Institut Technik und Bildung* University of Bremen, Germany), Marja-Leena Stenström (Finnish Institute for Educational Research – University of Jyväskylä, Finland), Markus Weil (*Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz*, Basel, Switzerland) and Thomas Deissinger (*Universität Konstanz*, Germany). Other reviewers remain anonymous. Their generous and altruist effort, time and commitment have greatly contributed to the quality of this book, as some of the authors acknowledge in their chapters. Thank you for this often invisible yet highly valuable work. Thank you also to the authors who have shared their expertise and to those who have taken reviews and criticisms rigorously in order to improve their contributions and to make their messages much clearer.

Thanks also to Mary Jane Curry, Professor at the University of Rochester, NY, USA, where I enjoyed a research stay in Autumn 2016 when I started working on this book.³

A final word to thank the support from the publisher staff at Springer, Lawrence Liu and Lay Peng Ang, who assisted me all throughout the process and made it smooth.

Valencia, Spain

Fernando Marhuenda-Fluixá

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Series Editors Introduction

Work is a major feature of most people's lives. Not only does it provide individuals with the means to meet basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter, but also the type of work undertaken by individuals and groups has a major impact on their self-identity, social status and standard of living. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET), or vocational education and training (VET) as it is sometimes called, is concerned with 'applied learning': that is, with the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work to increase opportunities for productive work, sustainable livelihoods, personal empowerment and socio-economic development.

This Springer book series on TVET seeks to provide comprehensive information about many cutting-edge aspects of skills development for employability. The series showcases best and innovative approaches to TVET and seeks to create an effective bridge between research, policy and practice. It is an ongoing project which commenced in 2005. Publications in this Springer book series provide a comprehensive picture of current issues, concerns and prospects in TVET worldwide. This edited volume by Fernando Marhuenda Fluixá on *The School-Based VET System in Spain* is the 32nd volume to be published in this long-standing book series.

This book consists of 11 chapters written by eminent researchers and practitioners with an intimate knowledge of the VET system in Spain. Each contributor examines the various reforms, areas for improvement and controversies concerning vocational education and training and its relationship to the changing world of work. Important topics examined include the relationship of the VET system in Spain to the labour market, the interrelationship between formal and informal aspects of VET, accreditation of learning and vocational qualifications, the education and training of VET teachers and trainers, VET as a means to promoting access and equity in education and society, the contribution of VET to addressing the ongoing problem of youth unemployment, the role of work and school-based supervisors in bridging educational and workplace contexts, lifelong learning and VET and current key issues and controversies concerning the reform, strengthening and upgrading of VET in Spain, within the overall European context.

This important book is a true milestone in the field of vocational education and training research, with particular reference to Spain, a country about which there is

a paucity of reliable, well-researched and up-to-date information available on key aspects of vocational education and training. This book brings together, for the first time, comprehensive and reliable data which is of great importance to researchers, policymakers and practitioners as they navigate the future of VET in Spain.

This is an important, cutting edge volume on a topic that is of great importance to researchers, policymakers and practitioners throughout the world. I have no doubt that this book will be widely read and that it will have an important impact on policy and practice in the area of vocational education and training, not just in Spain but further afield, in other countries in Europe, that are keen to learn about VET in Spain.

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