



VET Winterworkshop 2023

Title: Who dares to criticize the best system in the world?

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For some years now, the Swiss VET system has been praised everywhere. At the international level, it is regularly cited as one of the countries with the best VET system¹. At the national level it enjoys broad support from the entire range of political positions²: this situation has led the former minister in charge of VET, Johann Schneider Ammann, to repeat in the media: "we have the best system in the world". This enthusiasm is certainly pleasing for a field that had been used to being rather criticized or forgotten by public opinion. But such enthusiasm could also have negative effects in the long run, if it leads to complacency, and if it risks slowing down the reforms and adjustments necessary even for the "best system in the world".

The first VET winterworkshop in 2022 would like to question this enthusiasm and the relative absence of criticism³ in the public debate. This is a strange situation for a Western democracy accustomed to adversarial debate. The lack of criticism is all the more surprising since over the last few decades, research in VET has highlighted a number of weak points in the Swiss system (difficulties in accessing apprenticeship places, limitation of free choice of training occupation, unequal quality of the training provided, unequal treatment of upper secondary education programmes, etc.). But these weaknesses do not emerge in the public debate and consideration of them remains confined to academic circles, although in fact, it would be extremely useful to take these weaknesses into account in order to orientate current efforts to reform and adjust the system. This situation is somewhat strange, especially considering that with the 2002 law, research in vocational education and training has been strongly promoted, precisely to develop scientific monitoring of the system and to ensure its constant evolution. But why then do the results (or some of the results) of research in VET struggle to enter the public debate?

The workshop thus raises a series of questions:

- 1) Why do critical positions regarding VET seem to struggle to emerge in the public debate?
- 2) Which VET research findings emerge more easily in the public debate, and which do not?
- 3) What are the weak points in VET that the public debate should take up in order to solve them and ensure the long-term sustainability of the system? What are the weak points or blind spots in the research in VET in this regard?
- 4) Which actor constellations lead to the definition of the main topics in VET research and which perspectives tend to be promoted or marginalized in this regard?

¹ Cf. Nancy Hoffman 2011.

² Cf. Vote on the 2002 Swiss VET Act.

³ The term "criticism" is used here in its Kantian sense of "delimitation", an exercise that shows the limits of the object in question, thus an exercise that amounts to considering not only the strengths but also the weaknesses of the Swiss VET system.



From a more general point of view, the aim of the workshop is to allow researchers in Switzerland and abroad to exchange on a common topic from different points of view and experience. Presentations may be based on research results or work in progress, but they may also launch elements for further reflection and thereby open up possible avenues for further research. Participation is open to all interested persons from VET research in Switzerland and abroad by registration. Students, junior researcher and doctoral students are particularly welcome.

Date: Friday 03.02.2022

Time: 09h00 16h00

Place: SFUVET, Zollikofen, BE.

The program will be published at the end of 2022.

Registration for participation until 10. January 2023.

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