

Final report to the WERA Council on the activities of

Internationalisation of Research in Vocational Education and Training (IRN-VET) 2014-2016

31.01.2017 by Pekka Kämäräinen on behalf of the IRN-VET convenors

1. Introduction

This document is the final report of the activities of the International Research Network on “Internationalisation in vocational education and training (VET) research” (IRN-VET) during its three-year period of activity 2014-2016. Below, the next section summarises the proposed initiatives to promote internationalisation of VET research and how the IRN-VET has progressed in putting them into practice. In the following sections the report informs of the main activities and achievements during the years 2014, 2015 and 2016. Then, the report draws conclusions from this period of activity and summarises the proposal for a second period of activities with a specified focus. The proposal has already been submitted to the WERA Council in October 2016.

2. Proposed key initiatives and their implementation

The key initiatives outlined in the proposal for the IRN-VET network (for the period 2014-2016) are the following:

1) To participate with its IRN-VET contributions to **WERA Focal Meetings** or other activities. In the WERA Focal Meeting 2014 in Edinburgh the IRN-VET coordination team contributed to sessions ‘Analyses of Vocational Education and Training in Europe and Beyond’, ‘Scaffolding Competence Development through Mobile Technologies’ and to the IRN Chairs Meeting with WERA Executive Committee. In the WERA Focal Meeting 2015 in Budapest IRN-VET invited its members’ to participate in the Capacity Building Workshops. In the WERA Focal Meeting 2016 in Washington D.C. IRN-VET was represented in the IRN Chairs Meeting by the members who were also convenors of AERA SIGs.

2) To establish a coherent set of **IRN-VET communication channels** by developing shared facilities and mailing list services (on the basis of existing services of the interested research communities). The internal communication was organised via using the website of the EERA network VETNET and mailing list. For research communication the IRN-VET has been actively involved in the launch of the international journal IJR/VET (see below 3.2).

3) To organise at **least three IRN-VET sessions** under the auspices of ‘regional’ or thematic conferences (e.g. ECER, AERA, INAP-net) based on the work outlined above and in the subsequent work plan. In the context of ECER 2014 the IRN-VET organised its opening event - **WERA IRN-VET Forum** (see below 3.1). The ‘regional’ implementation has been continued by individual workshops in the above-mentioned conferences. From 2015 on the IRN-VET has started to develop the “Crossing Boundaries in VET” conference as its major forum for bringing research from

different global regions together (see 4.2, 4.3, 5.3). In 2016 the conference “Competence Theory, Research and Practice” served as an interim conference between two “Crossing Boundaries ...” conferences.

4) To set up ‘**task forces**’ to work with International mapping of VET in research based on the prior work of Wageningen University. After analysing the predecessor activity of Wageningen University the mapping activities were implemented with reference to the newly launched IJRNET journal (volumes 1-3), the ECER-VETNET proceedings (2014-2016) and Crossing Boundaries in VET proceedings (2015). This work was supported by the editorial board of IJRNET, by the VETNET Board and by the organising committee of the Crossing Boundaries conference. The result of the mapping was a digital resource base “**International VET Research Overview**” that was implemented as a Moodle application (see 3.1 and 5.4).

5) To explore the possibility to **co-organise specific events for emerging researchers** in collaboration with the interested ‘regional’ associations or thematic networks. This prospect has been explored taking into account reported cases of trans-national cooperation with PhD programs. In this context the international cooperation of the Swedish PhD program and the related conference “*Vocational Education and Training – Emerging Issues. Voices from Research*” have served as ‘laboratories’ for such engagement. In a similar way the experiences of the European VETNET network and Emerging Researchers’ network in ECER have been analysed. The conclusions have been taken on board in the proposal for IRNVET activities for 2017-2019 (see 3.1, 6.2).

3. Main activities and achievements in 2014

3.1 The opening event WERA IRN-VET Forum at ECER 2014

The IRN-VET Forum was organised as the initial event of the network in the context of the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER’14) in the beginning of September in Porto, Portugal. Here some key points on the session:

- Pekka Kämäräinen gave firstly a presentation on the founding steps of the WERA IRN-VET and on the key activities outlined in the proposal.
- Martin Mulder gave insights into the two pilot rounds of International VET research review that had organised 2012 and 2013 with his fellow colleagues in Wageningen University. He drew attention to the fact that it was difficult to keep the review process alive as a single-university initiative but that it would be highly interesting to keep it going on as a joint activity of a global network.
- Lazaro Moreno (Stockholm University) gave insights into the national PhD programme in VET research that had been launched as a joint initiative of several Swedish initiatives. Here, the issue of internationalisation came into picture via different channels of mobility and international exchanges.

3.2 Launch of the International Journal for Research in VET (IJRVET)

IJRVET (<http://www.ijrvet.net>) has been launched as the official organ of the European Research Network in Vocational Education and Training (<http://vetnetsite.org>). It is supported by the European Educational Research Association and the International Research Network IRN-VET of the World Education Research Association (www.weraonline.org).

The Editorial Board consists of the following persons: Karen Evans, University of London, United Kingdom, Michael Gessler, University of Bremen, Germany, Johanna Lasonen, University of South Florida, United States, Margaret Malloch, Victoria University, Australia, Martin Mulder, Wageningen University, the Netherlands

IJRVET is an international double-blind peer reviewed open access journal for VET-related research. This journal provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. IJRVET subscribes to the principles of the committee on publication ethics. IJRVET is indexed in the AIRITI (China), DOAJ (International), ERIC (USA), OpenAire (Europe), VOCED PLUS (Australia), World Cat and other databases. Long-term-archiving is guaranteed by LOCKKS and a permanent DOI (DataCite) for each article. All articles are under a Creative Commons License 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). Authors retain copyright and grant the journal right of first publication. During the year 2014 the journal published two issues.

4. Main activities and achievements in 2015

4.1 Support for the International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training (IJRVET)

As has been mentioned above, the IJRVET (<http://www.ijrvet.net>) was launched as the official organ of the European Research Network in Vocational Education and Training (<http://vetnetsite.org>). It is supported as one of the key activities the WERA IRN-VET. During the year 2015 the journal has published four issues - three regular issues and one special issue.

The role of WERA IRN-VET has become manifest in the widening the participation in the Editorial Board and Editorial Advisory Board to different global regions (beyond Europe). Currently the editorial teams have 8 members from Asia, 2 from Africa, 2 from Australia and 4 from America. Equally, from the very beginning, the journal has published articles that cover VET research in different global regions (e.g. country studies on Europe, Rwanda, Bangladesh, USA and Canada).

4.2 Launch of the International VET conference “Crossing Boundaries in Vocational Education and Training: Innovative Concepts for the 21st Century” (Bremen, September 2015)

In September 2015 the University of Bremen organised the International VET conference with the theme “Crossing Boundaries in Vocational Education and Training: Innovative Concepts for the 21st Century”. The conference was initiated by the comparative research project “Workforce Skills Formation” of the University of Bremen and it was supported by the WERA IRN-VET and VETNET networks.

The conference took place on 2.9.-4.9.2015 at the premises of the Chamber of Commerce (Handelskammer) of Bremen and it was accompanied by Mr. Joao Delgado Santos, Head of Unit on Vocational Education and Training, European Commission, DG Employment. The conference had six keynote speakers coming from Europe, America, Australia and Asia. Altogether the conference had sixteen sessions with 41 papers or research workshops. In addition to European participants the conference had delegates from the USA, Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Rwanda and South Africa. The proceedings have been published by ITB, University of Bremen as Volume 6 of the Evaluation Europe Handbook Series. The electronic version is available here:

<http://vetnetsite.org/2015/10/31/conference-proceeding/>

The conference was a successful event and the participants found this type of international conference as a positive experience. This provided a basis to continue organising such a conference (supported by the IRN-VET, see 5.3).

4.3 Contributions to WERA, ECER and other conferences

Given the vicinity to ECER 2015 in Budapest, IRN-VET tagged ECER sessions as “IRN-VET” in the preparation and VETNET board grouped them together.

In April 2015 several co-convenors of IRN-VET participated in the AERA conference and its SIGs with contributions on VET, workforce education and interculturality.

In September 2015 the INAP network organised an international conference in Ballarat, Australia, see <http://www.inap.uni-bremen.de>). IRN-VET contributed with papers on Governance of VET in Europe and on Apprenticeship in China.

5. Main activities and achievements in 2016 (Report 2016)

5.1 Continuing support for the International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training (IJRVET)

As has been mentioned above, the IJRVET (<http://www.ijrvet.net>) was launched as the official organ of the European Research Network in Vocational Education and Training (<http://vetnetsite.org>). It has been supported as one of the key activities the WERA IRN-VET. During the year 2016 the journal has published three issues.

5.2 Conference ‘Competence Theory, Research and Practice’

This conference took place in Wageningen from October 19th to 21st. The conference will be held at the Campus of Wageningen University & Research. There were 150 participants, from 27 countries, from all continents contributing to 39 sessions with a total of 128 paper presentations.

The following themes were discussed during the conference:

- competence management and development, with presentations on management and leadership competence, training and development, team learning and performance improvement;
- competence-based education systems, including competence in crisis, challenges in reform in VET systems, legislation and its effect, occupational science, and permeability of VET and HE;
- competence assessment, such as for modeling and measurement of teachers’ competence, and computer-based assessment of problem solving competence.

The information about the conference can be found on the conference website www.competence2016.nl.

5.3 Preparation of the second “Crossing boundaries in VET Conference” 2017

Two years after the first “Crossing boundaries in VET – Conference” in Bremen, the Institute for VET at the University of Rostock will host the second conference with focus on the following reference levels:

- **Reference level 1 ‘Systems’:** Socio-culturally different VET systems have evolved along conceptual lines. The comparison of different skill formation systems and governance of VET systems are on the one hand of theoretical and on the other hand of practical importance in the context of economic development and international cooperation.
- **Reference level 2 ‘Institution and Agency’:** The different VET systems are defined by the interactions of the involved institutions, stakeholders and participating individuals. These inter-institutional spaces of open or closed discourses, depend to the regional and national culture and the political mission statements of the collaboration partners.
- **Reference level 3 ‘Practice and Actors’:** In the institutions or systems of rules, practices have been established to cope with the central questions of teaching, learning, and competence development. Practices of teaching and learning can help to lower boundaries of qualification and employment biographies.

In 2017 the conference will focus on conceptual ideas and structural approaches that are helpful for crossing boundaries towards democratic society with well-trained and self-confident workers as well as sustainable development.

5.4 Completion of mapping activities with International VET Research Overview as a Moodle application

The mapping activity was planned on the basis of a predecessor model - the International VET Research Review that was implemented in 2011-2013 by Wageningen University and presented in the founding event in 2014 (see above 3.1). These reviews were conducted on VET research as presented in the VETNET sessions of ECER and/or published in related journals in the years 2011-12. For the year 2011 a total of 119 and for the year 2012 a total of 173 articles were reviewed, and after a qualitative interpretation divided into seven different research themes.

With reference to the predecessor activity the IRN-VET looked for a way to develop a similar approach on the basis of new initiatives to bring the international research community in VET research together. In this respect it was concluded to create a resource base with focus on the following IRN-VET forums and key activities:

- International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training (IJRVET) Vol, 1 - Vol. 3 (2014 - 2016),
- "Crossing Boundaries in VET" conference proceedings (2015) and
- ECER VETNET proceedings 2014 - 2016 (containing selected papers with IRN-VET relevance).

This resource-base has been provided as a moodle application hosted by the Institut Technik & Bildung (ITB), University of Bremen:

<http://moodle.itb.uni-bremen.de/course/view.php?id=12>

In the next phase the proposed IRNVET successor activities for the period 2017-2019 will benefit of further work with such a resource base.

6. Conclusions and reflections

6.1 Concluding reflections on the activities and achievements 2014-2016

In the light of the above the IRN-VET network has completed the proposed activities and contributed to the building of an international research community in research on vocational education and training (VET):

- By launching (together with the European VETNET network) the **international journal** (IJRVET) the IRN-VET network has managed to create a common organ for the international VET research community.
- With the "**Crossing Boundaries in VET**" **conference** tradition the IRN-VET has created an important biennial forum that links up with ECER and WERA events.
- With the **International VET Research Overview** (the moodle application) the IRN-VET has created an instrument to follow the thematic diversity and progress of research themes within the international VET research community.
- Based on the above-mentioned key activities - and by analysing the engagement of international advisers in the Swedish PhD programme and in the affiliated

conference - the IRN-VET has built capacity to provide international **support for PhD programmes** and **services for emerging researchers** in the field of VET.

- With its engagement in WERA activities and exchanges with parallel IRNs the IRN-VET has developed its own style to work within WERA *and* with its 'regional' member associations and networks.

6.2 Proposal for the successor network “*International Research Network in Vocational Education and Training (IRNVET)*” 2017 - 2019

With the proposed second working period the WERA *International Research Network in Vocational Education and Training* (IRNVET) in 2017-2019 seeks to support a broad range of research activities in vocational education and training (VET). It takes into account different levels of steering and practice linking system-related issues to cultural aspects of VET. The field of research in VET covers *initial* and *continuing* vocational training, both *school-based* and *workplace-based* learning provisions as well as the development of *pedagogic expertise* for *vocational and professional education*. The IRNVET will raise awareness of the impact of research with its mapping activities, thematic ‘task forces’ and with IRNVET events. The IRNVET will support the established International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training (www.ijrvet.net). Besides Products we will focus in our next period on the establishment of an Emerging VET Researcher Virtual Network.

The aims of the IRNVET network for the period 2017-2019 are the following ones:

- a) To increase the awareness of educational research communities on the importance and impact of *national and international* research in VET by contributing to WERA symposia;
- b) To facilitate knowledge sharing and communication across existing research communities (or networks) by developing common channels.;
- c) To carry out work with selected key initiatives (that cover the global picture of research in VET) and focal themes (that highlight specific areas of global interest);
- d) To develop models for joint IRNVET focal meetings under the auspices of the ‘regional’ associations (AERA SIGs, VETNET), thematic networks (INAP-Net) and other research events;
- e) To develop models for international peer support for promoting the learning and research activities of emerging researchers in the field of research in VET.

Annex

Convenors and co-convenors of IRN-VET and their participation in key activities of the network

- Ludger Deitmer, Institut Technik & Bildung (ITB), University of Bremen, Germany, deitmer@uni-bremen.de, Coordinator (IRN-VET contact for WERA), Member of Editorial Advisory Board of IJRNET, Contributions to “Crossing boundaries in VET” conference and to INAP conference in Ballarat, Australia;
- Pekka Kamarainen, ITB, University of Bremen, Germany pkamar@uni-bremen.de, (IRN-VET contact for WERA), Reviewer of IJRNET, Contributions to “Crossing boundaries in VET” conference; Rapporteur of the network
- Michael Gessler, ITB, University of Bremen, Germany mgyessler@uni-bremen.de, Editorial Board of IJRNET, Organiser of “Crossing boundaries in VET” conference;
- Martin Mulder, University of Wageningen, The Netherlands martin.mulder@wur.nl (IRN-VET contact for WERA), Editorial Board of IJRNET, Keynote speaker in “Crossing boundaries in VET” conference;
- Johanna Lasonen, University of South Florida, USA, lasonen@usf.edu, Editorial Board of IJRNET, Keynote speaker in “Crossing boundaries in VET” conference;
- Margaret Malloch, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, marg.malloch@vu.edu.au, Editorial Board of IJRNET, Keynote speaker “Crossing boundaries in VET” conference;
- Len Cairns, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia len.cairns@monash.edu, Editorial Advisory Board of IJRNET;
- Jailani bin Md. Junos, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn UTHM, Malaysia, jailani@uthm.edu.my Editorial Advisory Board of IJRNET, Contributions via team members participating in “Crossing boundaries in VET” conference;
- Zhiqun Zhao, Beijing Normal University, China, zhiqunzhao@263.net, Editorial Advisory Board of IJRNET, Contribution via team member participating in “Crossing boundaries in VET”, Contribution to INAP conference in Ballarat, Australia;
- Salim Akoojee, University of Witwatersrand salimakoojee@live.co.za, Editorial Advisory Board of IJRNET, Contribution to “Crossing boundaries in VET” conference;
- Lazaro Moreno Herrera, University of Stockholm, Sweden, lazaro.moreno@edu.su.se; Editorial Board of IJRNET, Keynote speaker in “Crossing boundaries in VET” conference;
- Özlem Ünlühisarcikli. Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, unluhisa@boun.edu.tr, Editorial Advisory Board of IJRNET, Contribution to “Crossing boundaries in VET” conference.