

BIBB-Kolloquium zur Berufsbildungsforschung

28.08.2024

14.00 Uhr, Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, Bonn, Raum 1.3.25
(*Achtung: ggf. aktuelle Änderungen im Intranet/Internet beachten*)

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zum Thema:

Natural Language Processing and the Analysis of Skill Formation Systems: Is There a Link between Economic Transformation and State Intervention?

Technological change and the decarbonization of European economies are changing the demand for skills on the labor market. While the demand side of skills is receiving increasing attention in the academic community, it remains puzzling how the equally important supply side, skill formation systems, has adjusted to the structural economic changes of the 21st century. This paper combines quantitative and qualitative analyses to investigate the link between the twin challenges of digital and ecological change and institutional change in vocational education and training (VET) systems. First and foremost, it uses natural language processing to identify the directions of change in skill formation systems across the EU. The analysis draws on a novel dataset consisting of standardized country-level descriptions of VET systems co-produced by Cedefop and its Refernet. In Germany, for example, the system descriptions are initially drawn up by the BIBB. The findings suggest that states have progressively and decisively intensified their involvement in initial and continuing VET between 2005 and 2022. Second, I conduct an in-depth case study of VET policy in Germany — a least likely case for increasing state intervention due to its collectively organized skill formation system — to explore why states expand their involvement in VET. The qualitative analysis, based on 28 elite interviews with decision-makers involved in drafting and negotiating recent VET reforms and policy documents, finds that digital and ecological structural change has been a key motivator for redefining the role of the state in the German VET system, introducing a wide range of new policies such as individual legal entitlements, public services, and training subsidies. The paper concludes by reflecting on the evolving role of the state in the political economy of future skills. In addition to an empirical contribution, the paper seeks to present new approaches to using textual sources for the analysis of VET systems.