

In turbulent times, we need vocational education and training which offers balance



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Nothing characterises our lives more than the phenomenon of acceleration. Media topics replace one another in the news at ever greater speed, and new smartphone models are released onto the market at shorter and shorter intervals. Such matters are a frequent source of fascination for us. At the same time, we ask ourselves what the price of this accumulating dynamism may be. Some fear that they will not be able to keep up and may even feel that digitalisation is jeopardising their job. In the light of growing digitalisation, networking and automation, the pressure on vocational education and training is increasing in much the same way. Especially in such turbulent times, we need a VET system which offers balance, combines tried and trusted elements with innovation and adopts an active yet cautious approach to driving forward reforms.

Actively shaping change

BIBB has identified the requirements arising from digitalisation in as timely a manner as possible and promoted innovation in order to continue to develop the dual system in a research-based way. Brief mention should be made of three recent research results in this regard. Firstly, we have discovered that “Economy 4.0” is accelerating the structural shift towards more services. As our QuBE projections demonstrate, sectors such as “teaching occupations”, “healthcare professions” and “residential homes and social services” are deriving a benefit from this. Secondly, we are able to state that the polarisation thesis put forward by FREY and OSBORNE does not strictly apply. Any rise in the proportions of low-skilled and highly skilled employees at the expense of staff at the intermediate skilled worker level will only occur in a very small area of German trade and industry. And thirdly, our preliminary investigation into dual core IT occupations and our cooperation with Volkswagen have shown that, although updates are needed in some occupations, adaptations at the level of company-based training organisation are already providing a means of keeping pace with technological developments.

Combining tried and tested elements with innovation

BIBB will follow up these findings by embarking upon a future-oriented and practical programme of substantive

research. A joint initiative with the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) [Federal Ministry of Education and Research] will look at the following questions in further selected branches and occupations. What remains important, and which competences need to be expanded for tomorrow’s world? And how can schools and vocational education and training make appropriate preparations? BIBB will continue to support providers of inter-company VET on the basis of the guidelines for the promotion of digitalisation in inter-company vocational training centres and in centres of excellence. SMEs and education and training providers in particular will be given assistance with the digitalisation process within the scope of the third funding round of the JOBSTARTER plus programme.

In addition to this, the focus is also on a further area in which BIBB is conducting research – media competence and digital media in company-based vocational education and training. This is linked with issues such as how learning in the smart factory takes place, which new forms of teaching and learning are emerging in Training 4.0, and which media teaching skills trainers will need to have at their disposal in future.

In all these activities, it is important to us that the academic research process feeds back into VET practice. ◀

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