

**Civil Institute. The Ministry of Education and Science. The Institute of Education**

**3rd International Conference "Dare to Dream"**

**Achievements and Challenges Facing Vocational Education and Training in Bulgaria**

**16–17 June 2026, Sofia**

**Greening VET: A Case for Rural-Sensitive VET Policies in Romania and Bulgaria**

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**sociologie &  
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Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai

# Initial vocational education and training (iVET)

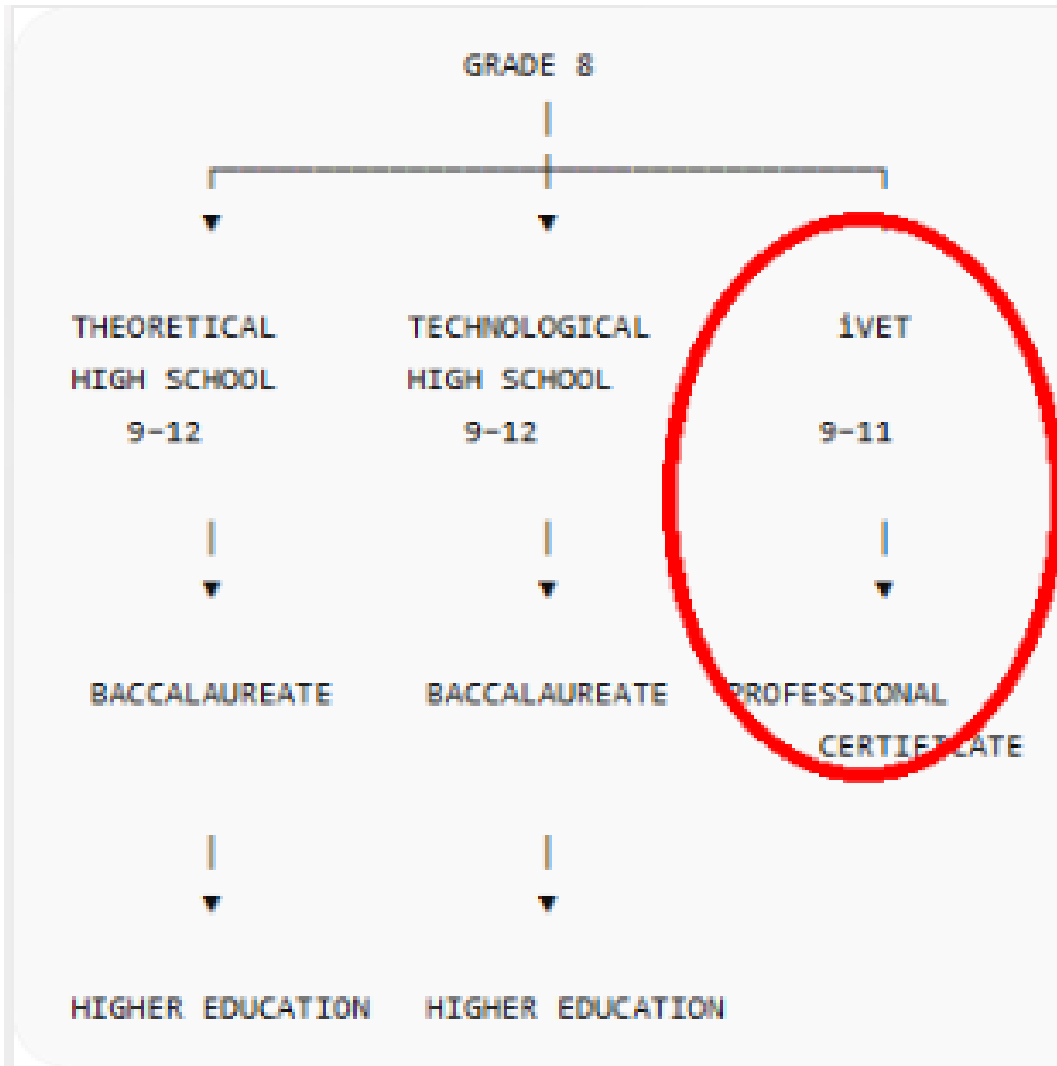
CONTEXT

THEORETICAL  
BACKGROUND

RESEARCH DESIGN

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THEORY & PRACTICE



# Policy developments

CONTEXT

THEORETICAL  
BACKGROUND

## Reforms since the '90s

school model → market model

- **2003** – iVET abolished
- **2012** – iVET reinstated
- **2014** – Three-year iVET
- **2017/ 2018** – Dual iVET introduced
- **2026/ 2027** – 'Professional schools' phased out - dual technological high schools

RESEARCH DESIGN

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THEORY & PRACTICE

## CONTEXT

**Youth studies** → what matters to young people

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

**Vocation** = work that is fulfilling, that does not subordinate the person to the practice (Billett, 2011)

## RESEARCH DESIGN

**Craftmanship** (Sennet, 2004) → **precariat** (Standing, 2011)

## FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

**Precariatisation** = habituation to expecting a life of unstable labour and unstable living.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY & PRACTICE

CONTEXT

THEORETICAL  
BACKGROUND

## ***How young people imagine their future (working) lives?***

RESEARCH DESIGN

Interviews & FGs explored the recent past, imagined futures.

- 33 iVET schools
- 250 + young people 16-18 yrs. old

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THEORY & PRACTICE

# Life circumstances of YP in iVET (I)

CONTEXT

THEORETICAL  
BACKGROUND

Very heterogeneous:

- **rural or small urban**
- parental migration or precarious work
- single parents
- large families
- fostercare
- Roma

RESEARCH DESIGN

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

→ typology

IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THEORY & PRACTICE

## Life circumstances of YP in iVET (II)

### CONTEXT

Parents from a convoluted generation

Grandparents: job losses in early 90s

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Localism/ foster care/ family crises & absence of choice →

### RESEARCH DESIGN

iVET as **capability deprivation** (Powell, 2014)

### FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

Girls: 'Mismatch of aspirations' (Kovacheva et al., 2021)

### IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY & PRACTICE

# Perceived reasons for being in iVET

CONTEXT

THEORETICAL  
BACKGROUND

RESEARCH DESIGN

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THEORY & PRACTICE

- **To learn a trade. Skills.**
- Teachers' advice (or profiling?)
- Atypical school trajectories: fostercare, repatriated
- Some family grounding in VET (esp. siblings)
- Very few instances of 'strategic choice'/ agency
  
- **The majority of interviewees ended up in iVET against their will, with a remote understanding of the field.**

## Once in VET...

- Navigate shame
- Pride ethos, but also instances of segregation
- By accident, *but now, I like it!* (Vocation as socially constructed, cf. Billet, 2011)

CONTEXT

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IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THEORY & PRACTICE

# Imagined futures

## *What matters to young people?*

- 'To have a job you really like'
- Conservative plans: financial security, house, family.
- Stability and decent work
- Human interaction at workplace

CONTEXT

THEORETICAL  
BACKGROUND

RESEARCH DESIGN

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THEORY & PRACTICE

# Layers of contradictory expectations

CONTEXT

THEORETICAL  
BACKGROUND

No identity narrative that makes sense

No predictable plans

RESEARCH DESIGN

E.g:

- Migration
- Employment in RO in another area than iVET
- Training in another field
- Continuation of school
- Entrepreneurship ...

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THEORY & PRACTICE

CONTEXT

THEORETICAL  
BACKGROUND

**Masculinisation trend in rural areas**

**Green transition – potential for being more gender inclusive**

**The EU *Right to stay* policy**

**Greening of VET – a window of opportunity**

RESEARCH DESIGN

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THEORY & PRACTICE

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**Thank you.**

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