International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training (IJRVET)
2026, Vol. 13, Issue 3, 313–343
https://doi.org/10.13152/IJRVET.13.3.1

Becoming a Company-Based Trainer in Swiss Dual VET: An In-Depth Look at Career Paths and the Role of the Trainer

Roberta Besozzi

Department of Teacher Education, University of Fribourg, Rue de Morat 36, 1700 Fribourg, Switzerland

Received: 02 February 2025, Accepted: 09 December 2025

Abstract

Context: In Switzerland, dual apprenticeships are the most popular post-compulsory education pathway, combining workplace-based training with vocational school learning. Company-based trainers play a pivotal role in guiding apprentices through this dual system, ensuring that they acquire both practical skills and professional knowledge. Despite their centrality in the apprenticeship system, research focusing specifically on these key individuals and their career trajectories remains scarce. This study investigates the career pathways leading to becoming company-based trainers and explores the factors and processes influencing their role adoption.

Approach: The research employs a qualitative methodology, comprising 80 semi-structured interviews with trainers across diverse sectors in French-speaking Switzerland. Participants were selected to represent a range of industries, company sizes, and professional backgrounds in order to capture the variety of experiences among trainers. Interviews focused on their career histories leading to the trainer role, as well as their experiences while performing this role. Data analysis followed thematic content analysis and typological approaches to identify distinct trainer profiles and their professional trajectories.

Findings: The study identifies four ideal types of trainers: entrepreneurs, artisans, converted, and resigned. These profiles highlight the varying factors, career transitions, and professional ethos underpinning trainers' engagement in their roles. Entrepreneurs often approach

*Corresponding author: roberta.besozzi@unifr.ch

ISSN: 2197-8646
https://www.ijrvet.net

training as an extension of their business or a strategic career step, while artisans see it as a way to pass on their craft and expertise. Converted trainers take on the role following career changes, seeking personal fulfilment or responding to organizational needs, whereas resigned trainers experience misalignment between their expectations and professional reality. These findings highlight the complexity and heterogeneity of trainers' career trajectories and the various factors shaping their role adoption.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the heterogeneity of pathways into the training role and its implications for vocational education and training (VET) systems. Recognizing and supporting these diverse pathways can enhance trainers' satisfaction and impact, ultimately benefiting apprentices and organizations. Future research should explore the interplay between organizational contexts and individual drivers to optimize the training experience.

Keywords: Dual Vocational Education and Training, VET, Company-Based Trainers, Career Pathways, Professional Ethos, Training Function

1 Introduction

In recent years, Vocational and Professional Education and Training has garnered significant attention from various governments, not just in Europe but globally. Political and economic stakeholders view this training pathway as closely linked to professional integration, benefiting both operational roles and higher-status positions, such as management (Lamamra et al., 2021). In particular, work-based learning, especially company-based professional training (dual or work-study model), has greatly succeeded in recent years with governments and professional organisations in many countries (Berger et al., 2018). This interest is largely explained by the growing dominance of a logic that frames training in terms of its adequacy with labour market needs (Tanguy, 2016). In this perspective, training is expected to ensure concordance between the skills of future workers and the qualifications demanded in the labour market (Charles, 2014). The abovementioned actors also rely on professional training to resolve professional integration issues. Indeed, many political Swiss and non-Swiss actors consider that the low rate of youth unemployment (e.g., in Germany and Switzerland) is due to many young people initially training in the professional path (particularly dual) so that after three to four years, they have learned a profession they can practice immediately (Berger et al., 2018; Granato & Moreau, 2019; Wettstein et al., 2018). Unsurprisingly, the dual initial vocational training system is Switzerland's most widespread post-compulsory route. Two-thirds of young people follow a vocational training course after compulsory schooling, with approximately 80% opting for the dual system (State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation [SERI], 2024).

Analysis of the connection between vocational training and employment is currently dominated by a one-sided labour-market matching perspective, where training is primarily viewed as preparation for the labour market's demands (Charles, 2014; Tanguy, 2016). Educational goals are rarely considered central to this discourse. Additionally, this relationship is still shaped by a linear view of training and employment trajectories, in which education—whether initial or higher—is regarded as a preliminary step towards entering the labour market. However, contemporary training and employment pathways marked by non-linearity, returning to education, changes in occupation, and bifurcations challenge the traditional role of vocational education and training (VET).

In this system, company-based trainers[1] are highly involved in overseeing apprentices (Besozzi, 2022, 2024; Lamamra et al., 2019). The typical week of dual apprenticeship training alternates between one to two days at a vocational school and three to four days in a company under trainers. Any company involved in apprenticeship training depends on employees who function as trainers, have the necessary skills, and ideally volunteer for this task. However, per Imdorf et al. (2010), few studies have examined the actors responsible for training young people in Switzerland (Barras, 2011; Besozzi, 2022, 2024; Filliettaz et al., 2014; Gonon et al., 1988; Lamamra et al., 2019) or abroad (Bahl, 2012, 2018; Capdevielle-Mougnibas et al., 2013; Favreau, 2013; Peycelon, 2018). This lack of understanding has accompanied the invisibility of this function (Bahl, 2019; Besozzi, 2025; Besozzi et al., 2017) in research, education, and the labour market (Delgoulet et al., 2019).

Despite the central role that trainers play in the dual vocational training system (Marrero-Rodríguez & Stendardi, 2023), little is known about how people come to fill this role, the career paths that lead them to it, and the factors that influence these trajectories. This knowledge gap is not insignificant: the recruitment, retention, and professional development of trainers directly affect the quality and continuity of apprenticeship training, as well as the system's ability to adapt to the changing needs of the labour market. In Switzerland, recent regulatory changes have further strengthened the requirement for companies to provide qualified trainers, which makes understanding these trajectories even more relevant. Studying the factors that shape career paths, and the typology of trainer roles can help identify both the strengths and the weaknesses of the current system, as well as possible areas for improvement. Given the central economic importance of vocational training, such insights have the potential not only to enhance system performance and sustainability but also to improve the quality of life of both trainers and trainees, who together represent a significant part of the workforce.

1 Under the 2002 Swiss Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPETA), in-company trainers are responsible for providing practical vocational training. The VPETA and the 2003 Ordinance on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPETO) lay down the federal access conditions for this role. They include a CFC (or equivalent qualification) in the field, a certain number of years of experience (from two to five, depending on the field) and 40 hours of training in vocational pedagogy.

Therefore, the following article aims to fill this gap by attempting to understand the meaning and values trainers carry in the context of their role. While more research evidence exists on the constraints and challenges of training in the workplace (Bahl, 2019; Baumeler & Lamamra, 2019; Besozzi, 2024, 2025; Besozzi et al., 2017; Lamamra & Besozzi, 2019), this study examined trainers' career path, the social and individual conditions (Weber, 1965) that led them to assume the training role, and their personal perspectives. Hence, in the context of contemporary training and employment trajectories the study asked, "How do career paths, and personal, professional, and organisational factors, shape entry into the company-based trainer role"? To answer this question, we examined these individuals' professional trajectories and experiences leading up to their role as company-based trainers. We focused on the meaning of the stages comprising their professional careers, including their access to the training function. Thus, we sought to understand their reasons for assuming this role with young people. We also identified the professional ethos in the surveyed population (i.e., the values, attitudes, and beliefs relating to work; Mercure & Vultur, 2010).

This contribution is based on the results of a doctoral thesis in sociology on the diversity of trainer's relationships to their function (Besozzi, 2022, 2024) using thematic content analysis (Miles et al., 2014) and typological analysis (Demazière, 2013; Schnapper, 2012) of 80 semi-structured interviews with company-based trainers across various sectors in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. After the theoretical background on (non-)commitment in a training role and contemporary career paths, along with a presentation of the methodology used, the results are organised according to professional pathways and the underlying reasons for assuming the role identified according to company trainers' profiles. Finally, we discuss these findings in light of the theoretical framework, highlighting how career paths and professional ethics are related to engagement (or lack thereof) in the training function and exploring the broader implications for VET policy and practice.

2 Exploring the Possibilities of Becoming a Company-Based Trainer

This chapter examines the various pathways that lead individuals to become company-based trainers, focusing on the factors and professional experiences that shape their entry into the role.

2.1 Companies' Perspectives on Training Apprentices

Training companies provide resources (e.g., staff, organisation, and materials) to train apprentices in a profession while considering their integration into the labour market. Apprenticeship training entails costs, as companies have to invest in order to obtain a skilled worker, manual

labourer, or employee. In small businesses, all employees are more or less involved in the training process; the business owner is formally responsible for and supervises the practice. However, the larger the company, the more training tasks are delegated to select employees.

These companies' characteristics and economic/managerial reasons for engaging in dual initial training have attracted researchers' attention (Schweri et al., 2003; Strupler & Wolter, 2012). Indeed, why companies train apprentices and invest in apprenticeships has been a central research topic in dual vocational training. Previous studies have revealed various reasons.

These reasons are often presented as distinct, yet they are not mutually exclusive, as multiple rationales can coexist simultaneously or gain and lose relevance over time (Gehret et al., 2019; Müller & Schweri, 2012; Wenzelmann & Schönfeld, 2022)[2]. A production motive is one reason for company training, to benefit from apprentices' productive contributions. Moreover, apprentices can be an investment, where companies train apprentices to retain them post-training to ensure their future employees' skills.

Training future employees is usually part of a company's recruitment policy, which offers lower costs than searching for, selecting, and integrating individuals from outside the company (Muehlemann & Wolter, 2020; Schweri, 2018). Firms also train due to social responsibility because they want to allow young people to integrate into the labour market. Investment in training for young people can also be motivated by a desire to perpetuate a tradition of training or contribute to society by helping young people find employment.

Finally, the company's reputation motivates training since it expects its apprentices to enhance its image as a young and innovative structure. In a context like Switzerland, with a widespread and well-regarded dual system, the 'host company' label can also help build and broaden customer loyalty that produces economic and symbolic benefits. Furthermore, Swiss companies are more likely to train apprentices when they are small (i.e., fewer than 50 full-time employees), over ten years old, and in the industrial, arts and crafts, construction, administrative, insurance, banking, or social sectors (Müller & Schweri, 2012).

2.2 Company-Based Trainers' Perspectives on Training Apprentices

French research has reiterated that training activities have been taken for granted (Thébault, 2018). Thus, scant research has investigated the reasons for becoming a trainer. The few studies that have done so have highlighted several main reasons.

For example, one reason is the desire to perpetuate the 'tradition' specific to a profession. In France, Favreau (2013) showed that involvement in the profession can be motivated by the desire to pass on the 'tradition' of a professional passion. Similarly, Zarca (1988) identified a characteristic of master craftsmen in their desire to pass on their 'vocation' to new

2 An extensive bibliography can be found in these texts to further explore the topic.

generations to ensure its continuity. Moreover, Capdevielle-Mougnibas et al. (2013) worked with the same craftsmen involved in apprentice training in Southern France and emphasised that this investment in the transmission of a trade also stemmed from the desire to accompany young people and support them in their professional integration; thus, the 'social contribution' of trainers. Furthermore, Bahl's (2012, 2018, 2019) work on training conditions in German companies observed that company-based trainers appreciated investing in vocational training due to the new skills and diversification of daily tasks. Finally, in a pioneering qualitative study of trainees in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, Gonon et al. (1988) argued that individuals viewed a vocational training post as a way of acquiring new professional skills, particularly in management, which could be useful in their subsequent careers.

2.3 Analysing the Professional Pathways of Company-Based Trainers

The sociological literature offers several definitions of professional pathways (Bachmann et al., 2020; Baruch, 2004; Bessin, 2009; Bessin et al., 2010; Demazière, 2019; Hughes, 1997; Johnson & Mortimer, 2002). Herein, the terms 'career', 'path', 'pathways' and 'trajectory' are used interchangeably to mean a non-linear and non-predictable path. This definition is primarily based on Demazière's (2019) definition: "An accumulation of lived experiences, and thus considered as a set of events, activities and situations, which are invested with meanings, reasoning and inter-interpretations" (p. 169).

To contextualise trainers' trajectories, we first present their main contemporary characteristics. Researchers have identified that 'career' employment is losing its hegemony, which benefits so-called atypical employment forms characterised by the instability of the employment relationship. Trajectories become more unstable in uncertain times (Denave, 2017; Sennett, 2006). As a result, "in the years to come, most employees will probably have to go through not only changes of employer, but also adaptations and professional reconversions of varying scope" (Veillard, 2017, p. 9). Therefore, a study of company-based trainers' paths must consider them "from a less ballistic than a processual point of view" (Bessin, 2009, p. 18). Simply analysing the different positions, responsibilities, sectors of activity, and occupations held seems insufficient; moments of change, their causes and effects on professional pathways and their subjective interpretation must also be considered.

Hence, we clarify another essential concept for analysing trainers' paths: Bifurcation (Bessin et al., 2010). Per Bidart (2006), career bifurcation is "a crisis that opens up an unforeseeable biographical crossroads, the paths of which are also initially unforeseen – even if they quickly become linked to a number of alternatives – within which an outcome is chosen that leads to a major change of direction" (p. 32). Bifurcation likely gives rise to reorientations, even involuntary (Brazier et al., 2024; Masdonati et al., 2022) or "partial reconversions" (Dieu

& Delhaye, 2009, p. 137), such as a sector change without a change of profession or more radical professional changes such as retraining or changing professions (Denave, 2017).

Furthermore, the relationship with the formative function resulting from professional experiences is studied considering work ethos, defined by Mercure and Vultur (2010) as the place given to work in an individual's life, the meaning given to it, and the posture of individuals in the face of the organisational norms in force. Thus, the notion of work ethos enables grasping these aspects to conceive the function of company training.

While the existing literature and these clarified definitions provide a solid conceptual framework, they also reveal a gap: Little is known about how company-based trainers' career trajectories develop in practice, or how personal, professional, and organisational factors influence entry into this role. Addressing this gap, the next chapter presents the methodological approach used to investigate the central research question: How do career paths, and personal, professional, and organisational factors, shape entry into the company-based trainer role? In summary, this chapter has examined organizational and individual perspectives on apprenticeship, reviewed existing research on the factors that lead people to take on the role of company-based trainer, and clarified key concepts such as career paths, bifurcation, and work ethic. While these perspectives provide a conceptual and empirical basis, they also highlight a significant gap in understanding how trainers' career trajectories develop and which personal, professional, and organizational factors shape access to this role. The following chapter addresses this gap by outlining the approach used to investigate these questions.

3 Methodological Framework

The present study was based on a comprehensive qualitative methodology (Miles et al., 2014; Schnapper, 2012), which was considered the most fruitful way to collect and analyse the subjective views of company trainers. The fieldwork was designed with the primary objective of understanding trainers' representations and experiences during apprenticeship training. In particular, we attempted to understand the interviewees' relationships to work, their professional ethics, and their representation of the training function in the company.

Semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method to obtain the respondents' accounts of their professional careers and representations (Demazière & Dubar, 1997; Paillé & Mucchielli, 2004; Paugam, 2019), so interviews were conducted with trainers ($N = 80$) to examine their educational, professional, and company-based VET training backgrounds. The interviews were conducted with people training one or more apprentices in companies of different sizes (i.e., micro, small and medium-sized enterprises [SMEs], and large companies) and various professional sectors in French-speaking Switzerland. In addition, four focus-group interviews were conducted with company-based trainers during their specific training.

The trainers were selected according to age, gender, sector of activity, company training function, and years of experience as trainers to address the heterogeneity of this population. The interviewed trainers were a majority of men (M: *N* = 48; W: *N* = 32) who occupied different positions within the training companies (i.e., employees, managers, and independents) with various functions related to apprentice training. Specifically, 25 were practical trainers responsible for daily supervision and direct teaching of apprentices, 23 were training managers with primarily administrative and strategic responsibilities, and 32 combined both roles, balancing human resources or administrative tasks with direct training activities.

In terms of professional sectors, the distribution of respondents reflected the diversity of the Swiss economy. The largest groups were from industry and skilled trades (n = 21) and commercial, transport, and logistics professions (n = 21), followed by health, education, culture, and scientific professions (n = 11). Other sectors included management, administration, banking, insurance, and legal professions (n = 9), hospitality and personal services (n = 7), technical and IT professions (n = 5), construction and mining (n = 4), and agriculture, forestry, and livestock professions (n = 2). This diversity of professional backgrounds provided a comprehensive overview of how trainers experience and interpret their roles across different organisational and sectoral contexts.

These trainers worked in companies of various sizes (large: *N* = 50, SMEs: *N* = 21, and micro: *N* = 9) with different training traditions. Subsequently, the semi-structured interviews were subjected to thematic content analysis (Miles et al., 2014) to identify the central elements of a rarely studied population (their trajectory linked to previous publications, practices, socialisation, and working conditions).

This analysis aimed to process 80 interviews to understand the trainers' relationships with their training roles. The analysis was comprehensive and typological (Demazière, 2013; Schnapper, 2012; Weber, 1965), characterised by four ideal types obtained via selective abstraction. Several steps were taken to create the typology for this study, and the interviews were extensively compared.[3]

From systematic comparison across interviews and engagement with the literature, two primary dimensions emerged: how the interviewees perceived apprentices and their satisfaction with the company training function. The former referred to the apprentice's hybrid status: Sometimes as a learner and sometimes as a worker (Moreau, 2003), while the latter referred to a "pleasant or positive emotional state resulting from their evaluation of their work or work experience" (Locke, 1976, p. 1300). The level of professional (dis)satisfaction among trainers was influenced by the conflict between their ideal vision and the actual conditions of

3 This typological approach was intended to describe a phenomenon, not individuals. The typology was developed to structure the subjective logics underlying the respondents' narratives by focusing on their relationships to the formative role—not a 'typology of people' but rather of formative activities. First, individuals did not consistently act according to any type since activities varied constantly. Second, because situations and activities changed, "there is no reason to expect people to act in the same way every time" (Becker, 2002, p. 87). Although Becker (2002) referred to "types of people", this phrase here only serves as shorthand for how some individuals approached their formative roles (p. 88).

company training. Thus, these two dimensions were mapped onto a vertical and horizontal axis, respectively.

Secondary dimensions – professional trajectories, professional orientations, socialisation, practices, and professional challenges – were systematically coded by comparing interview data with established theoretical concepts. The identification of these primary dimensions and secondary was guided by careful comparison across interviews and systematic engagement with the literature. Four core interviews were pivotal: They fully reflected the ideal types and served as concrete exemplars, anchoring the coding of secondary dimensions and validating theoretical constructs. These core units also helped map theoretical concepts onto empirical realities, ensuring that the typology captured both literature-based qualities and the lived experience of trainers.

The intersection of the primary dimensions facilitated understanding and identifying the central theme – professional ethos (Mercure & Vultur, 2010) – which inspired the names of the ideal types: Entrepreneurs, artisans, converted, and resigned. Each type was interpreted in light of both interview data and literature-based qualities, making the conceptual link explicit.

The final typology was built by systematically mapping interview data onto the ideal types, integrating empirical evidence with theoretical concepts at each step of coding, and taking into account company context and the trainer's role (company-based trainer, company-based training manager, or both. Behaviours, attitudes, and career patterns were compared with literature-based dimensions, ensuring that the typology was explicitly grounded in both theory and professional realities. Company size and sector were also considered.

For instance, the Entrepreneur type is characterised by high overall satisfaction with the training function and by a representation of apprentices as quasi-equivalent workers, reflecting adherence to contemporary work logics emphasising individual responsibility, flexibility, competition, and performance. Their professional trajectories illustrate both linear and non-linear paths: Josiane, a head of training, and Manuela, a store manager, are examples of such trajectories. Josiane described multiple occupational shifts from research and development to a commercial executive role, highlighting her proactive engagement with new responsibilities and career opportunities. Manuela exemplified a more linear trajectory from apprenticeship to managerial responsibility, demonstrating persistence and the continuous enactment of autonomy, responsibility, work commitment, effort, and entrepreneurship (Dardot & Laval, 2010; Mercure & Vultur, 2010). These trajectories reflect the trainers' professional orientations, showing how individual aspirations and dedication intersect with organisational expectations and illustrating the enactment of literature-based constructs in real-world training contexts.

4 Professional Pathways and the Training Function

The different profiles of trainers identified in our analysis are presented as follows: Entrepreneurs, artisans, converted, and resigned.

4.1 The Entrepreneur Ideal Type

Twenty-two of the 80 respondents worked in large retail companies and were closely aligned with this first ideal-type profile. These people, mostly training managers, primarily held management positions that required a significant investment in the economic success of their company, which transferred this profitability requirement to the training function.

4.1.1 Professional Pathways of Entrepreneurs

Most of these trainers emphasised their 'professional success', understood as advancing as high as possible in the hierarchy, either by becoming executives or starting businesses – 12 were executives, while five founded their own companies. Their professional goal of occupying managerial roles was evident in their narratives, which often described a professional ascent characterised by an exponential increase in responsibilities, which started with an apprentice role and culminated in an executive or business owner position, sometimes with one or more career shifts along the way. Most of these had changed companies at least once during their careers, with some having experienced up to five job changes. For example, Josiane, the head of training and a trainer in an insurance company, described her path:

> *In the industry, I loved it. I was in research and development, in administration –something scientists hate, so we're a bit of an administrative queen. Then, I was a travel agent, which involved selling trips. And the job I have now [commercial executive] excites me. The fact that there are regular changes and we introduce these changes, I find it fascinating. (Interview 39)*

The personal qualities highlighted by these trainers when describing their ascent reflected the value system at the heart of this ideal type. These qualities included autonomy, responsibility, work commitment, effort, and entrepreneurship (Mercure & Vultur, 2010). Some entrepreneurs had experienced career advancement, mainly within the same company or by creating independent ventures. For instance, Manuela, a store manager in a large retail company, described her trajectory:

> *I did my apprenticeship in a very small store, where I was involved in all aspects. After completing my apprenticeship, I immediately took on the responsibility for a department ... I was fortunate to quickly get the responsibility for a department right after my apprenticeship. (Interview 29)*

Thus, Manuela had a linear path from apprentice to manager. This type of internal mobility was seen as the result of unwavering determination and continuous effort.

4.1.2 Training Function of Entrepreneurs

The training function of the entrepreneur profile is predominantly associated with managerial roles. In some cases, this role allows for acquiring new skills to enable future advancement to higher positions in the hierarchy, which is especially true in very large companies with well-developed training departments.

According to the trainers, these departments had particular reputations in the job market. Thus, acquiring the role of training manager recognised their 'managerial talent'. For example, Andy, an assistant manager in a large retail company, described his path to becoming a trainer:

> *It came to me when I wanted to advance within the company … I was performing well as a vegetable department manager, as I was told at the time, and then, when the opportunity to advance within the company arose, I was very motivated. The company has excellent internal training, which is very well-regarded ... The central training department is almost as important as our sales department, or rather, support sales. (Interview 17)*

However, the underlying reason for these trainers' investment in the role was primarily financial. Securing productivity and maintaining one's business to ensure company competitiveness, economic profitability, and personnel management were the primary considerations guiding the hiring of apprentices. The companies relied on qualified personnel to offer their services and generate profits. Investing in training and apprenticeships was a way to ensure these outcomes. These benefits were even visible in the short-term concerning personnel management (Schweri, 2018): "Hiring apprentices instead of employees costs the company much less in terms of salary," as stated by Wilfred (manager of a family garage; interview 80) and Adrien (pharmacy manager):

> *[Apprentices] provide enormous benefits to the pharmacy. It's really a win-win contract. After a few months, if we have someone who is somewhat intelligent, they provide incredible services ... to the pharmacy. (Interview 65)*

For some trainers, apprentices represented a cost-effective labour force that could sometimes substitute for experienced employees. Assigning work to apprentices instead of skilled workers helped save labour costs since hiring apprentices rather than employees "cost the company a lot less in terms of salary," as Wilfred, manager of a family-run garage in Switzerland, stated (Interview 80). Several respondents, particularly from Swiss trainer interviews, highlighted how much they benefitted from apprentices' productive contributions.

A typical perspective here was the notion of a win-win' situation. Economic research has shown that Swiss firms are more likely to provide training without making a net investment (Muehlemann & Wolter, 2020). For instance, Mélanie, a lawyer in a large public administration company, emphasised, "I need someone who is particularly skilled and autonomous" (Interview 35). Several respondents expressed the desire for someone who could quickly become productive in the company, as Yvan-Jacky, the owner of a small restaurant in Switzerland, described:

> *It's a great opportunity; we train apprentices to identify with us with our trademark. And then, afterwards, to integrate these young people into our company, we also benefit because they are moulded to our [company] ... that's it. (Interview 58)*

Here, the goal was to 'mould' apprentices into the company's culture and 'shape' them into future 'virtuous employees' with the company's norms and values (i.e., socialising them into the company's organisation). Moreover, according to these trainers, hiring apprentices could enhance the company's image in the job market, so apprenticeship could be a value-added element in the "competitive battle between companies", as Borislav (a trainer at a large industrial company; interview 20) noted.

In Switzerland, where the dual system has a good reputation, the entrepreneur label generates increased clientele, which leads to economic and symbolic benefits. Thus, this group of statements was dominated by concerns about the company's competitiveness, economic profitability, and general sustainability. Often, these stemmed from the owners of small businesses who personally functioned as responsible trainers or employees who fulfilled a management position in the firm.

4.2 The Artisan Ideal Type

Unlike the entrepreneurs, the narratives of the 19 artisans, who mostly worked in large food industry companies, focused on mastering a trade that they perceived as a vocation. The career paths and ethos of these 'guardians' revolved around a deep 'love for their profession' and professionalism. These individuals sought to enhance their profession by emphasising the technical skills and know-how it demanded, and the 'tradition' rooted in it.

4.2.1 Professional Pathways of Artisans

Nearly half of the artisan trainers ($N = 9$) worked in large companies. Their narratives often linked their trajectories to acquiring professional skills through career advancement. Over time, they moved up the company hierarchy, with four reaching executive positions. Career

progression was generally viewed as a function of their professional skills and recognition of their expertise by peers.

Additionally, seven of 19 were self-employed. This high proportion of independents was a notable feature of the artisan profile. Many reflected on their decisions to start their own business, often preceded by previously salaried positions. This decision to become self-employed usually formed early in their careers, before or during their apprenticeships, as illustrated by Arnaud, an independent baker-pastry chef-confectioner: "Practically from the first day, I started my profession. It was always the goal to become my own boss. Yes, yes. It never left me" (Interview 50).

The desire to practice their trade throughout their pathways and 'do it well' was frequently cited as a reason for starting businesses or continuing the family tradition by taking over family businesses. For example, Éric, an independent baker-pastry chef-confectioner, expressed:

> *And then, I know very well how to work for someone else according to their perspective, but inside me, it always poses a problem if the boss doesn't ... if something isn't right and I think 'we could do this better' and the boss refuses, that's a problem for me. And because of that, I had to be the one who decides. (Interview 59)*

Generally, career advancements within a company or owning a business were not seen in terms of economic success or social ascent but as signs of recognition of these artisans' expertise and professionalism. Therefore, they achieved a sense of accomplishment through the production of their work.

4.2.2 Training Function of Artisans

Unsurprisingly, for most artisans, the mission and the "training inclination" (Besozzi et al., 2016; Besozzi & Lamamra, 2017) were integral to their conception of the profession. To them, loving their trade involved having the skills and sensitivity necessary for its transmission and continuity. Training was seen as an essential part of preserving and advancing the profession. Thus, becoming a trainer was a source of pride and symbolised belonging to the 'professionals'.

Training apprentices was seen as "a safeguard for the profession, and I always want our trade to be better and to improve", said Éric, an independent baker-pastry chef-confectioner (Interview 59). While advocating for the profession, he explained how his intention to pass on his knowledge influenced his choice of apprentices. He looked for those capable of inheriting his skills.

Indeed, ensuring the longevity of a business, especially when it belonged to them, was often indicated as a significant motivator of these artisans. For these trainers, passing on the

trade to successors meant creating 'professionals' who could later 'take over' the business. Moreover, teaching also involved imparting the 'love of the trade'. For instance, Alain, a painter-bodyworker in a large automotive company, stated: *"A good trainer is one who manages to pass on the enjoyment they have because you need to have pleasure in working to stay working in a garage" (Interview 1)*. For professionals who love their jobs, passing on knowledge to younger generations is a natural extension. The idea that the training function is 'embedded' in the profession itself was central to the narratives of these artisan interviewees.

Many artisan interviewees attributed their 'attraction' to training to their apprenticeship experiences. Loïc, a training manager in an SME in the Swiss watchmaking industry, explained that training meant "giving back what my apprenticeship master gave me at the time" (Interview 76). The concept of returning a gift was prominent in these accounts. However, this gift was not returned to the older generation but passed on to the next. Thus, an apprenticeship was viewed as a valuable loan or treasure to be passed on to those who followed. Following in the previous generation's footsteps was a significant conditional factor, though not the only one.

Many interviewees also justified their commitment to training based on their negative past experiences by seeking to prevent a recurrence of these issues. Thus, antecedent socialisation appeared to be a key component influencing teaching choice (Berger & D'Ascoli, 2012; Hofmann et al., 2014), which drove trainers to reproduce or disrupt past practices (Besozzi et al., 2016).

Finally, embodying the training role was reflected in the artisans' interviews. The participants noted the desire to demonstrate that they possessed the professional and pedagogical skills to train 'correctly'. Thus, the training function indicated a competent professional capable of training successors and transmitting the profession and its 'love'. The discourse emphasised that being a good professional also meant being a good trainer, sometimes even being born into the profession and its transmission.

For instance, Murielle, who built her career in a large Swiss hotel and catering company starting in housekeeping and later taking on managerial responsibilities, explained why it felt natural for her to train apprentices: *"It's part of our job. Housekeepers have this training ethos; otherwise, you're not a housekeeper. There's already this training role in the job" (Focus group 83)*[4]. Her account reflected a passion for her work, a fulfilment, and a flame she wanted to pass on to the next generation.

The desire to instil a love of work in others was also echoed in other accounts: If one enjoyed the work and had a strong personal connection to it, passing on its knowledge to others seemed natural. This view aligned with the idea of a precious gift meant not to be kept for oneself but to be transmitted. It was often linked to the personal experience of the trainers' apprenticeships and their relationships with previous generations in their occupations.

4 (Besozzi & Lamamra, 2017).

To conclude, this group of statements was either spurred by highly positive or negative memories of the participants' apprenticeships. In both cases, these individuals felt the urge to make a social contribution and train the young (Capdevielle-Mougnibas et al., 2013). However, trainers with unspectacular training did not cite their biographical experience to explain their work. Thus, antecedent socialisation was a central component influencing teaching choice (Berger & D'Ascoli, 2012), which primarily seemed to be a driver at the extreme ends of the emotional scale. The artisans, when assuming the trainer role, either followed the practices of previous trainers or deliberately introduced changes in how training was conducted (Besozzi et al., 2016).

4.3 The Converted Ideal Type

The career paths of the 37 converted trainers – most of whom worked in large companies in various sectors – were characterised by professional transitions (Bessin et al., 2010). These trainers found personal fulfilment in their roles by contributing to apprentices' preparation for the workforce and reconnecting with a 'calling' to teach. They felt their current roles aligned better with their work ethos, marked by a desire to serve others (i.e., their apprentices).

4.3.1 Professional Pathways of Converted

After difficult professional experiences in fields whose values conflicted with their own, these trainers either specialised or adjusted their careers by transitioning into training roles. For 20 of them, their 'new profession' was in corporate training, a distinguishing feature of this profile. Dissatisfaction with their previous careers often arose after several years in the field, though it could also emerge soon after starting. The most common reason for seeking a new role or profession was a loss of meaning, which stemmed from a mismatch between these converted trainers' values and those of their previous work. For example, Christine, a commercial employee in a social sector SME, explained: *"I worked for a few months in a bank, and I didn't like it at all because the bank's values didn't align with mine. For me to be satisfied, my work needs to be meaningful" (Interview 67)*.

Others sought a new profession to escape monotonous routines. These individuals often felt they had nothing left to learn and were bored. This boredom was a key characteristic of the converted, who desired a profession that offered ongoing learning. Gilles, a trainer in a large machinery company, illustrated this idea: *"I wanted a change of pace. So, I applied here [at the company's training centre]. It seemed like I had done everything I could there" (Interview 21).*

Moreover, difficult working conditions and job instability also drove career changes. For example, Thierry, a trainer in a large food company, described his journey:

> *I trained as a butcher ... Then, I went abroad for a few months. When I returned, I took over the family butcher shop. Meanwhile, I also ran restaurants. I had many roles, and eventually, I needed an escape. I couldn't keep working 80 hours a week; I needed to do something else. (Interview 14)*

In some cases, the difficulties stemmed from the inherent challenges of the profession. Jérôme, a training manager in a large food company, recounted:

> *After completing my agricultural training, I worked for a few years, and then I realised, 'Doing this for my whole life isn't going to work.' There were different factors: The difficulty of agriculture, the size of the operation. So, I decided to change. (Interview 15)*

4.3.2 Training Function of Converted

The meaning these converted trainers attached to their professional trajectory change affected their approach to their training role. The most frequently cited reason was a 'training inclination' they previously developed. For these individuals, a career change was a form of catching up that allowed them to assume a 'quasi-teaching' role and return to a practice they valued. Their reasons often included a desire to help others, particularly young people. As mentioned earlier, Christine viewed her training role as a continuation of her commitment to the social sector.

However, a minority did not emphasise their training inclination in their statements. Instead, they focused on their desires for new professional challenges. For these individuals, the training role was a means of changing positions without a prior passion. They saw training as a solution to a problematic routine. For some, training fulfilled a personal inclination to teach. Positive role models from their past also influenced their choices (Besozzi, 2023).

This group tended to view training as a profession akin to teaching, with references to school, methodology, and didactics. For example, Benjamin, a quality analyst in a Swiss food company, stated: "My aunt is a teacher. I've always liked the idea of being a teacher, too" (Interview 45).

Hence, training was seen as an opportunity to fulfil an earlier desire to teach, even if only partially. Odile, an operations assistant and coach in a Swiss distribution and logistics company, reflected: "I wanted to be a teacher at some point when I was a child ... I had to study, and then, as a teenager, it didn't happen!" (Interview 13).

Often, these individuals discovered their inclination and ability to teach retrospectively after recognising that they developed this habit early in life. For instance, Dinh, a training manager and trainer in a small chemical industry association, recalled: *"I enjoyed it from the*

start because, during my studies, I was always a tutor, giving support classes on the side to earn money. And I enjoyed it" (Interview 60). Here, enjoyment of teaching and training was a central theme. Like Dinh, many trainers also engaged in similar activities (e.g., coaching sports) in their spare time.

Statements in the converted category revealed the highest alignment with viewing training as a profession similar to teaching. The respondents included references to school, methodology, and the idea that training techniques could be developed and improved. Additionally, for many, training provided an emotionally enriching complement to their work (Besozzi, 2023; Besozzi & Lamamra, 2017). The converted trainers appreciated the opportunity to work with people and found that apprentices' questions and feedback positively impacted their self-esteem and expert status. The presence of apprentices forced these trainers to continuously update their knowledge, professionally and pedagogically, which helped reaffirm their competence.

Lastly, many converted trainers found joy in witnessing apprentices' growth and development. They often used metaphors to express their protective stance and satisfaction. Michaël, a sales manager in a large Swiss company, captured this sentiment:

> *When you go to the CFC (Federal Certificate of Competence) award ceremony, you see your apprentices—your 'little birds'—receiving their certificates. Seeing them with a little tear in their eye is the beauty of this profession. (Interview 42)*

Thus, the statements in the converted group showed the highest proximity to training conceived as a profession like teaching. The participants included references to the world of school, the notion of methodology and didactics, and the implicit understanding that training as a technique could be developed and improved (i.e., an openness to professional development).

4.4 The Resigned Ideal Type

The two individuals classified as resigned trainers shared characteristics with the entrepreneurs and the artisans because they initially pursued professional mobility or were focused on their profession, like these other profiles. Despite their desire for professional advancement and for passing on their skills, these trainers expressed limited engagement in the day-to-day aspects of their training roles.

4.4.1 Professional Pathways of Resigned

The careers of the two resigned trainers exhibited differences and similarities. Luc, a logistics specialist who became a team leader in a large transportation company, had ambitions for upward mobility that were frustrated. Edmond, an independent contractor in the building sector, also ex-

perienced career disappointment, mainly due to difficulties in practising his trade as he had hoped. Luc described his entry into the workforce through an apprenticeship not as a means to pursue a dream job but to secure a position offering career advancement and stability. The retirement of many colleagues largely facilitated his professional progression. However, despite this initial advancement, Luc faced ongoing disappointment. His promotion to team leader was the only progression he experienced, and technological changes rendered his skills outdated. At the time of the interview, over 30 years after starting in his role, Luc remained a team leader and described himself as "a low-level manager. (Interview 34)"

Edmond, who initially aimed to apprentice in a cherished profession and succeed his father in the family business, achieved this goal. Like Luc, Edmond's career had been marked by significant disappointments, which led him to lower his expectations of the profession. During our interview, he detailed his difficulties, including intensified production demands and increased productivity pressures. Both Luc and Edmond experienced stagnation, heightened production pressures, and a decrease in professional skills, which contributed to their gradual detachment—at least symbolically—from their company, work, and training roles.

4.4.2 Training Function of Resigned

The underlying logic of the resigned trainers aligned with aspects of the artisans and the entrepreneurs previously discussed. For Luc, the training role was seen not for its intrinsic value but as a potential stepping stone to achieving a managerial position. His engagement in the training role was meant to facilitate his progression within the company, similar to the goals of the entrepreneurs. However, unlike the entrepreneurs, Luc's training role did not meet his expectations, and his plan did not materialise as hoped. Edmond's experience paralleled Luc's in that he also took on a training role early in his career, motivated by his initial goal to continue the family business. His reasons for training apprentices reflected those of the artisans:

> *Listen, I wanted to give back what I had been taught. If we don't, we will lose skilled labour. So, it's important to invest some time and ensure there is a succession plan for the company. There's no reason I shouldn't train an apprentice. I was happy to find an employer for my apprenticeship. (Interview 64)*

Edmond's initial interest in training apprentices was driven by his work ethos since he believed that passing on the trade was essential for its future survival and quality and to ensure the continuity of his family business.

5 Understanding the Perspectives of Trainers and Organizational Impacts

This chapter examines the perspectives of company-based trainers and the effects of their work on the organizations in which they operate, as well as how organizational contexts influence trainers' activities. It focuses on the ways in which trainers carry out their roles and how the structures, practices, and expectations of organizations shape their professional experiences.

5.1 Perspective of Company-Based Trainers on Their Role

The typology developed revealed that the different trainer ideal types approached their roles in training apprentices with perspectives shaped by their professional paths. While these perspectives sometimes overlapped, each group exhibited distinct orientations. Among the entrepreneurs and some resigned trainers, training was often seen as a strategy to enhance productivity and secure their roles within the company. This pragmatic, economically driven outlook was aligned with theories framing training as a tool for career advancement while providing new skills relevant to higher-level roles (Muehlemann & Wolter, 2020; Schweri et al., 2003). However, this approach could limit the broader goals of long-term knowledge transfer and skill development since it often focused on skills that benefitted these trainers' immediate roles rather than sustaining generational knowledge transfer (Gehret et al., 2019; Müller & Schweri, 2012).

Some resigned trainers saw training as an opportunity for career progression or recognition in a difficult working environment. Their decision to train apprentices was linked to a vision of training to gain recognition or redefine their role in the company. Indeed, the resigned trainers saw training as a way of improving their position in the company or acquiring practical skills with a view to future promotion, which did not happen as hoped (Veillard, 2017).

In contrast, the artisans (and some resigned trainers) regarded training as an essential part of their profession, which aimed to preserve and advance their trade. They took pride in their craft and were committed to ensuring its continuity, often shaped by their apprenticeship experiences (Favreau, 2013; Zarca, 1988). This approach was aligned with theoretical perspectives emphasising the mentor-apprentice relationship, knowledge transmission, and craftsmanship (Thébault, 2018). However, the artisans and some resigned trainers' emphasis on craft quality and continuity might have diverged from the company's productivity-focused goals by prioritising efficiency and economic outcomes, as some resigned trainers showed (Capdevielle-Mougnibas et al., 2013).

In contrast, the converted trainers viewed training as fulfilling a personal interest in teaching and supporting others. Training provided them a source of enrichment that brought

new challenges and satisfaction. This focus on personal fulfilment was aligned with educational theories of apprenticeship, where the mentor role offers personal and professional growth. However, the converted trainers' perspectives might not always have directly supported the company's productivity-focused objectives since they prioritised meaningful engagement over operational efficiency (Bahl, 2012).

Each trainer's approach reflected a different training vision. For the entrepreneurs, training was viewed as a strategic step towards company advancement and growth (Baruch, 2004). In contrast, the artisans and some resigned trainers saw their training function as a way to preserve the legacy of their profession rather than as a means of upward mobility (Bessin, 2009). Moreover, the converted trainers approached training as a personal fulfilment that prioritised satisfaction over conventional progression (Mercure & Vultur, 2010). Finally, some resigned trainers began training out of necessity, hoping it would evolve into an opportunity for professional development, but this never materialized (Denave, 2017).

5.2 Alignment and Divergence With Company Objectives

Analysing the company's approach to apprentice training revealed points of alignment and divergence among the different profiles. Generally, companies design apprenticeship programmes to support objectives such as productivity, talent development, and efficient knowledge transfer (Muehlemann & Wolter, 2020; Schweri et al., 2003). This alignment was initially evident for entrepreneurs and resigned trainers; their practical approach mirrored the company's goals since it focused on career benefits and performance, which contributed to their professional growth and the organisation's success. However, this alignment could diverge when the trainers emphasised skills that primarily served their interests rather than broader organisational knowledge transfer (Wenzelmann & Schönfeld, 2022).

The artisans and some resigned and converted trainers often prioritised craftsmanship and trade continuity over economic and hierarchical goals, which could create friction with company priorities favouring standardisation and efficiency (Bahl, 2019). While the artisans were dedicated to preserving their trade, the converted trainers often approached training as a personal fulfilment path, which aligned more closely with the educational aspect of apprenticeship than the company's focus on economic utility (Schweri, 2018).

Each trainer ideal type demonstrated a unique approach shaped by distinct paths and goals. The entrepreneurs and resigned trainers viewed training as an opportunity to enhance their company status and develop valuable skills. This focus aligned with organisational expectations of training as a tool for productivity, though it could lack the depth of mentorship emphasised in apprenticeship theory (Thébault, 2018). In contrast, the artisans saw training as central to preserving and advancing their craft, which reflected their values rooted in mentor-apprentice relationships and knowledge sharing. Nevertheless, their emphasis

on craftsmanship often diverged from the company's economically oriented training outcomes. The converted trainers were passionate about teaching and supporting others, so they found fulfilment in the training process rather than the immediate economic benefits. This approach, while aligned with vocational education theories, did not always match the company's productivity-driven model.

Despite these differences, some common ground existed between the ideal types. For example, the entrepreneurs and resigned trainers prioritised practical benefits, while the artisans and converted trainers derived satisfaction from their roles. Collectively, these perspectives suggested that training is not simply a productivity-enhancing activity but a role fulfilling diverse personal and professional aspirations.

Hence, the typology showed that trainers engaged with apprentice training according to diverse perspectives. Some were aligned with company goals (e.g., productivity and skills transfer), while others focused on personal ambition (e.g., craft preservation and fulfilment). These insights highlighted the importance of supporting varied career paths among company-based trainers for vocational education and organisational development. This approach can foster a training environment that balances individual goals and organisational needs, creating a more cohesive and beneficial experience for all involved.

5.3 Variability in Company-Based Trainer Types and Organisational Factors

This section aims to interpret the varying numbers of trainers within the four groups and examine companies' impact on the different pathways to becoming a company-based trainer.[5] Differences in the number of trainers within each group were attributed to a range of organisational and sector-specific factors, including company size, industry requirements, training resource allocation, and workplace culture (Schweri et al., 2003; Strupler & Wolter, 2012). For instance, larger companies or those in highly specialised industries often had more trainers to meet complex professional development needs, while smaller companies or those in less specialised fields required fewer trainers overall.

The results showed that large companies tended to have more entrepreneurs and converted trainers, which likely reflected these companies' extensive resources and focus on continuous skill development (Muehlemann & Wolter, 2020). Specifically, more entrepreneurs were found in large retail companies, which suggested that such companies favoured trainers who could navigate the complex and evolving demands of retail. In comparison, converted trainers appeared more frequently in large companies across diverse sectors, which indicated that larger organisations provided structured pathways for employees to transition into training roles as part of their development strategies (Capdevielle-Mougnibas et al., 2013).

5 This study was qualitative, not quantitative, yet numerical differences helped deepen the insights gained without a quantitative analysis.

In contrast, artisans were more prevalent in sectors emphasising hands-on expertise and craftsmanship. These trainers mostly worked in large companies within the food industry, where training is often viewed as an extension of craftsmanship, so these trainers took pride in honing and passing down specialised skills (Favreau, 2013; Gonon et al., 1988). Smaller companies tended to have fewer artisan trainers since their need for highly specialised training programmes was generally lower due to limited demands.

Notably, only two resigned trainers were identified among the interview participants: One was in a large transportation company, while the other worked at a small industrial company. However, this limited sample did not necessarily indicate a general scarcity of resigned trainers, but it reflected the responses gathered for this study. Therefore, the presence of resigned trainers could have been influenced by various organisational contexts and personal career considerations.

The variability in trainer types across different company sizes and industries highlighted how organisational and sector-specific factors shaped the pathways into company-based VET training roles. The 80 participants were selected to represent a range of company sizes, sectors, and professional experiences, providing a broad perspective on pathways into company-based VET training roles. Large companies with robust training infrastructures tended to attract trainers aligned with the companies' continuous development goals, while sectors emphasising hands-on skills fostered a stronger presence of artisan trainers. These insights underscored the importance of adapting training strategies to meet organisational needs and the diverse motivations of trainers.

5.4 Implications for Company-Based Trainers

The above observations resulted in several implications for company-based trainers. First, the largest group, converted trainers, showed that many individuals did not originally intend to pursue training roles, but over time, they rediscovered an existing interest in training and education. This high number might have implied that the companies fostered environments where training roles were integrated into career growth pathways to encourage employees to embrace the role as they experienced its impact. Additionally, it might have indicated that the companies provided informal or flexible pathways to becoming trainers, which allowed employees to take on training roles gradually and find satisfaction in them over time.

Second, the entrepreneurs, artisans, and converted trainers comprised a significant portion of the trainers who reported finding satisfaction—or, in some cases, dissatisfaction—in training. The entrepreneurs sometimes viewed training as strategically valuable to their career goals, the artisans saw it as an extension of their craft and expertise, and the converted trainers often appreciated the opportunity to redefine their professional path through training. However, the artisans frequently experienced challenges due to the tension between production

and training time (Besozzi et al., 2017). The substantial numbers in these groups suggested that the company valued training and invested in structured development pathways, such as certifications and mentoring programmes, where motivated trainers could thrive and align their goals with the organisation's mission (Wenzelmann & Schönfeld, 2022).

Conversely, the resigned trainers suggested some level of disengagement or dissatisfaction with the training role. Their small number could imply either a selection process favouring commitment to training or company conditions that did not support trainer satisfaction (Müller & Schweri, 2012). This scarcity might also reflect a potential bias: resigned trainers could have been unwilling to participate in the study or were not encouraged by the company to participate in the interviews.

The variations in trainer types reflected a blend of company priorities, industry demands, and individual engagement levels. A significant number of trainers transitioned into their roles informally and gradually found satisfaction. Hence, the companies might have encouraged training as a growth opportunity or offered flexible pathways for engagement. Indeed, companies are crucial in shaping internal trainer pathways; those that invest in structured development (e.g., certifications and mentorship programmes) tend to cultivate more skilled trainers and entrepreneurs (Bessin, 2009; Bessin et al., 2010). In contrast, smaller organisations often rely on informal pathways, which can attract artisan trainers who view training as integral to their craft but can also lead to challenges in performance and motivation without adequate support.

This distribution of trainers highlights a potential disconnect between organisational objectives and individual motivation. Companies lacking clear pathways or support for trainers risk disengagement and turnover that undermine the effectiveness of their training initiatives. By addressing structural gaps in training teams, organisations can better align their goals with individual motivations to enhance training effectiveness and satisfaction among trainers.

6 Conclusion

This study investigated the factors and processes contributing to becoming a company-based trainer. The research utilised a qualitative and comprehensive methodology to address this objective based on 80 interviews with trainers from companies of various sizes (i.e., micro, SME, and large enterprises) and sectors in the French speaking part of Switzerland. The data were analysed using a typological approach that considered two dimensions: trainers' perceptions of apprentices (i.e., workers and students) and their satisfaction with their training role (low vs high). This analysis identified four ideal typical profiles of trainers: Entrepreneurs, artisans, converted, and resigned. These profiles revealed diverse work ethos, career

paths, and reasons for engaging in training roles. Consequently, the role of training and its significance in professional journeys could not be universally defined.

The results highlighted linear career paths common in large enterprises driven by ambitions, contrasted with more varied trajectories typical in vocational training and entrepreneurship. Some trainers, like the artisans, aligned their training roles with their goals, while others, like the resigned, had expected the role to align with their professional aspirations but found it did not. The converted trainers, often disillusioned by changes in their professions, found training a refuge to reconnect with their professional ethos of service, particularly after challenging previous experiences.

6.1 Limitations and Further Research

While this study provides valuable insights into trainers in French speaking part of Switzerland, several limitations must be acknowledged that may affect the generalizability of the findings. The focus on a specific geographical region may restrict the applicability of these results to other contexts. Future research can explore trainer profiles across diverse geographical and organisational settings to better understand the factors influencing their professional satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Besozzi, 2024). Notably, research conducted in Switzerland has revealed similar experiences among vocational schoolteachers regarding their roles as trainers and highlighted factors such as career development, social usefulness, and interest in human relations. These previous outcomes raise further questions about transitions between training roles, particularly for individuals who switch to professional schools later in their careers.

This study's sample size and diversity may also pose limitations since the findings from a single region may not accurately represent broader processes in company-based training. Therefore, future investigations can include a wider array of industries and demographic backgrounds to enrich the understanding of training practices. Moreover, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, as trainers may present their experiences more favourably or understate their challenges.

The context in which qualitative research is conducted also plays a significant role in shaping results. Variations in organisational culture, industry practices, and local training regulations can be explored to better understand how these contextual factors influence trainer roles and experiences.

The present study did not examine how the identified trainer types relate to broader professional identities. Nonetheless, some interesting divergences were apparent. For example, a few artisans in our typology worked in larger industrial or service-based companies where their daily work did not align with traditional artisanal industries, and they might not have considered themselves artisans in a broader professional sense. These examples suggest that

the typology captures a dimension of trainers' engagement with company-based training that is related to—but distinct from—their overarching professional identity. By focusing on practices, challenges, and representations directly linked to training, this study was able to analyse these aspects in depth. Future research could explore how broader professional identities interact with these typological distinctions, enriching our understanding of the processes shaping trainers' roles.

Furthermore, trainers' perspectives may shift over time, influenced by personal growth, organisational developments, and industry transformations. Conducting longitudinal qualitative research may reveal how trainers' experiences and professional paths evolve to provide a richer understanding over time. Researcher bias must also be considered since researchers' backgrounds and beliefs can influence data collection and analysis. Ensuring reflexivity and incorporating multiple researchers in the analysis process can enhance the validity of future studies.

Addressing these limitations and outlining potential avenues for further research can significantly enhance the discourse on company-based training. Comparative studies across various industries can investigate how trainer profiles differ and the implications for training effectiveness. Understanding how organisational culture shapes trainer roles and paths can provide another fruitful area of inquiry to potentially reveal how organisational values influence trainers' perceptions of their roles.

6.2 Practical Implications

These findings underscore the critical need to broaden perspectives on career paths within international VET, particularly concerning company-based trainers. Recognising trainers as a diverse group with distinct definitions of fulfilment can inform more effective policy and programme design globally. By addressing varied aspirations—economic, professional, and personal—VET systems worldwide can better support trainers' unique needs (Muehlemann & Wolter, 2020; Schweri et al., 2003).

Research has indicated that choice is an ongoing process shaped by individual characteristics (e.g., interests, abilities, and values) and broader socioeconomic factors that either facilitate or constrain career options (Baruch, 2004). In an international context, factors such as family background and societal perceptions significantly influence vocational paths. Therefore, VET systems must present vocational choices as viable and respected options (Müller & Schweri, 2012).

The diversity among the trainers (i.e., entrepreneurs, artisans, converted, and resigned) highlights the necessity for VET programmes to adopt nuanced approaches to trainer development across different countries. Indeed, effective training for strategically driven entrepreneurs may not resonate with artisans who value craftsmanship or resigned trainers who may

lack engagement in their roles. This diversity necessitates international VET programmes to tailor development pathways and provide targeted support according to trainers' profiles. For example, artisans can benefit from specialised skills-building resources, while converted trainers can gain from mentorship to reinforce their commitment to training (Favreau, 2013; Gehret et al., 2019).

Notably, the high number of converted trainers suggests the importance of flexible pathways into training roles. International VET systems can facilitate these varied pathways by incorporating on-the-job learning or 'trainer introduction' programmes for employees transitioning from other roles (Bahl, 2019). Clear, structured development paths (e.g., certifications, mentorship, and growth opportunities) can enhance the skills and engagement of entrepreneurs and artisans to potentially improve training quality across different contexts (Denave, 2017). Future research can investigate how these diverse career paths impact long-term satisfaction and trainer retention in various international settings, particularly by comparing the effectiveness of informal versus structured pathways.

Though minimal, the presence of resigned trainers raises concerns about disengagement in international VET systems. Programmes can use these insights to establish early intervention systems to address trainer dissatisfaction by focusing on burnout prevention, role rotation, and supportive feedback channels. Future research can explore the factors contributing to trainers feeling resigned or disconnected by examining workload, role clarity, and company support to proactively address the conditions leading to disengagement (Wenzelmann & Schönfeld, 2022).

These findings emphasise the importance of developing policies that accommodate the multifaceted nature of trainer roles within international contexts by moving beyond a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Policies supporting differentiated professional development can encourage countries to implement training that aligns with trainers' needs. International VET research can prioritise understanding trainers' career paths and satisfaction levels. This focus can inform the creation of programmes designed to support trainers' unique profiles and career requirements to benefit apprentice learning outcomes worldwide.

Furthermore, highly engaged trainers (e.g., entrepreneurs, converted and some artisans) are more likely to deliver high-quality training that positively impacts apprentices' learning experiences and outcomes. International VET systems can encourage countries to cultivate these trainer profiles through recognition, growth opportunities, and incentives that resonate with these trainers' values. Further research can investigate the link between trainer satisfaction and apprentice outcomes across different countries to offer insights into optimising training environments and advancing best practices within international VET frameworks (Thébault, 2018).

Finally, the study underscores the importance of recognising the diverse pathways of trainers and ways of becoming one, which spur professionalisation. Thus, private and public

sectors can tailor their support and development programmes to align with different trainer profiles' specific needs and goals. Providing opportunities that cater to the varied reasons for engaging in training can enhance effectiveness and satisfaction. We recommend that companies develop targeted career development plans that reflect trainers' personal and professional aspirations. Creating supportive environments that value the contributions of trainers can help retain talent and boost interest and commitment. Addressing the distinct reasons trainers engage in their roles can lead to more effective training practices and improved job satisfaction.

In conclusion, these findings highlight the importance of acknowledging and adapting to the diversity among company-based trainers within international VET frameworks. Tailored training pathways, supportive policies, and targeted research efforts can enhance trainer effectiveness and overall satisfaction to improve the quality of global vocational education. By embracing this diversity, international VET programmes can more effectively support the development of a skilled and committed training workforce.

Acknowledgement

This study is part of the project "Vocational education and training trainers, key persons in the professional socialisation process", which is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) (No. 100017_153323) and carried out at Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET) (Lamamra et al., 2019).

Ethics Statement

The primary ethical concerns in this study were informed consent and participant privacy. Thus, the participants were fully informed about the study's aims to address these issues, and their consent was obtained prior to their involvement to ensure that their participation was voluntary and well-understood. Given the qualitative nature of the research, biographical information was collected from all participants; however, these data were anonymised to protect their identities. Furthermore, all data storage practices adhered to relevant data protection regulations to ensure the confidentiality and security of participant information.

References

Bachmann, R., Bechara, P., & Vonnahme, C. (2020). Occupational mobility in Europe: Extent, determinants and consequences. *De Economist*, *168*(1), 79–108.

Bahl, A. (2012). Ausbildendes Personal in der betrieblichen Bildung: Empirische befunde und strukturelle Fragen zur Kompetenzentwicklung. In P. Ulmer, R. Weiss, & A. Zöller (Eds.), *Berufliches*

Bildungspersonal: Stellenwert, Entwicklungstendenzen und Perspektiven für die Forschung (pp. 21–43). Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung.

Bahl, A. (2018). *Die professionelle Praxis der Ausbilder: Eine kulturanthropologische Analyse*. Campus Verlag.

Bahl, A. (2019). Le/la formateur·rice : une position fragile. Étude de cas de grandes et moyennes entreprises, en Allemagne. *Formation emploi*, *146*, 53–75. https://doi.org/10.4000/formationemploi.7350

Barras, M. (2011). *Transition école-monde professionnel : étude des paramètres en lien avec la formation en entreprise facilitant l'insertion professionnelle des adolescents. Analyse du point de vue de six formateurs actifs en entreprise* [Master's thesis, Haute école fédérale en formation professionnelle HEFP].

Baruch, Y. (2004). Transforming careers: From linear to multidirectional career paths: Organisational and individual perspectives. *Career Development International*, *9*(1), 58–73. https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430410518147

Baumeler, C., & Lamamra, N. (2019). Micro firms matter. How do they deal with the tension between production and training? *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, *71*(3), 464–481. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2018.1518922

Becker, H. (2002). *Les ficelles du métier : comment conduire sa recherche en sciences sociales*. La Découverte. https://doi.org/10.3917/dec.becke.2002.01

Berger, J.-L., & D'Ascoli, Y. (2012). Motivations to become vocational education and training educators: A person-oriented approach. *Vocations and Learning*, *5*(3), 225–249. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12186-012-9075-z

Berger, J.-L., Lamamra, N., & Bonoli, L. (2018). Des enjeux de la formation professionnelle en Suisse : une introduction. In L. Bonoli, J.-L. Berger, & N. Lamamra (Eds.), *Enjeux de la formation professionnelle suisse : le « modèle » suisse sous la loupe* (pp. 19–30). Seismo. https://doi.org/10.33058/seismo.20722

Besozzi, R., & Lamamra, N. (2017). Devenir formateur ou formatrice en entreprise : modes d'accès et motivations à endosser cette fonction. *INITIO*, *6*, 113–136.

Besozzi, R., Duc, B., & Lamamra, N. (2016). Les trajectoires professionnelles des formateurs et formatrices en entreprise : leur transition vers la fonction de formation à la lumière de leur propre expérience d'apprentissage. *Céreq Echanges, Les transitions professionnelles tout au long de la vie*, *1*, 85–96.

Besozzi, R., Perrenoud, D., & Lamamra, N. (2017). Le temps au cœur des contraintes des formateurs et formatrices en entreprise. *Revue économique et sociale*, *75*(1), 53–68.

Besozzi, R. (2022). *Les personnes formatrices d'apprenti·e·s en entreprise : parcours professionnels et rapports à la fonction en Suisse romande* [Doctoral dissertation, Université de Lausanne].

Besozzi, R. (2023). Swiss in-company trainers: multiple ways to train and socialize apprentices. *Revue suisse en sciences de l'éducation*, *45*(1), 2–14. https://doi.org/10.24452/sjer.45.1.1

Besozzi, R. (2024). F*ormer des apprenti·e·s. À la rencontre des formateurs et formatrices en entreprise. Editions Alphil*. https://doi.org/10.33055/ALPHIL.00612

Besozzi, R. (2025). Les formateurs et formatrices d'apprenti·e·s en entreprise : de la (non-)reconnaissance de leur fonction. *Revue Phronesis*, *14*(2), 76–91. https://doi.org/10.7202/1116683ar

Bessin, M. (2009). Parcours de vie et temporalités biographiques : quelques éléments de problématique. *Informations sociales*, *156*, 12–21. https://doi.org/10.3917/inso.156.0012

Bessin, M., Bidard, C., & Grossetti, M. (Eds.). (2010). L'enquête sur les bifurcations : les sciences sociales face aux ruptures et à l'événement. La Découverte.

Bidart, C. (2006). Crises, décisions et temporalités : autour des bifurcations biographiques. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, *120*, 29–57. https://doi.org/10.3917/cis.120.0029

Brazier, C. É., Masdonati, J., Oliveira Borges, A., Fedrigo, L., & Cerantola, M. (2024). Drivers of involuntary career changes: A qualitative study of push, pull, anti-push, and anti-pull factors. *Journal of Career Development*, *51*(3), 303–326. https://doi.org/10.1177/08948453241246720

Capdevielle-Mougnibas, V., Cohen-Scali, V., Courtinat-Camps, A., de Léonardis, M., Favreau, C., Fourchard, F., & Huet-Gueye, M. (2013). *Quelle place pour les apprentis dans les petites entreprises? Représentations de l'apprenti et rapport à la fonction de tuteur des maîtres d'apprentissage dans l'apprentissage de niveau V*. Université de Toulouse.

Charles, N. (2014). Quand la formation ne suffit pas : la préparation des étudiants à l'emploi en Angleterre, en France et en Suède. *Sociologie du travail*, *56*(3), 320–341. https://doi.org/10.4000/sdt.3348

Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2010). *La nouvelle raison du monde : essai sur la société néolibérale*. La Découverte.

Delgoulet, C., Boccara, V., & Santos, M. (Eds.). (2019). *Les formateurs au travail : conditions d'exercice, activités, interventions*. Octarès.

Demazière, D. (2019). Parcours professionnels. Trois perspectives pour les parcours professionnels. In D. Mercure & M. Vultur (dir.), *Dix concepts pour comprendre le nouveau monde du travail* (pp. 165–179). Presses de l'Université Laval.

Demazière, D. (2013). Typologie et description. À propos de l'intelligibilité des expériences vécues. *Sociologie*, *4*(3), 333–347. https://doi.org/10.3917/socio.043.0333

Demazière, D., & Dubar, C. (1997). *Analyser les entretiens biographiques. L'exemple des récits d'insertion*. Nathan.

Denave, S. (2017). Comprendre les bifurcations dans les parcours professionnels. *Vie sociale*, *18*, 109–125. https://doi.org/10.3917/vsoc.172.0109

Dieu, A.-M., & Delhaye, C. (2009). Des reconversions professionnelles positives : le retour des femmes sur le marché de l'emploi. *Éducation permanente*, *181*, 133–147.

Favreau, C. (2013). *Approche psycho-développementale de la diversité des pratiques tutorales dans les petites entreprises : influence du rapport au savoir sur l'activité des artisans maîtres d'apprentissage* [Doctoral dissertation, Université Toulouse II-Le Mirail]. HAL Thèses.

Filliettaz, L., Rémery, V., & Trébert, D. (2014). Relation tutorale et configurations de participation à l'interaction : analyse de l'accompagnement des stagiaires dans le champ de la petite enfance. *Activités*, *11*(1), 22–46. https://doi.org/10.4000/activites.288

Gehret, A., Aepli, M., Kuhn, A., & Schweri, J. (2019). *Formation des apprenti-e-s : quel intérêt pour les entreprises ? Résultats de la 4ème étude coût/bénéfice*. Haute école fédérale en formation professionnelle HEFP.

Gonon, P., Karrer, D., & Straumann, M. (1988). *Der Ausbilder in der Schweizerischen Maschinen und Elektroindustrie - Eine qualitative Analyse von Berufsbiographien und Gruppendiskussionen*. Sauerländer.

Granato, M., & Moreau, G. (2019). Les défis de l'apprentissage en Allemagne. *Formation emploi*, *146*, 7–28. https://doi.org/10.4000/formationemploi.7326

Hofmann, C., Stalder, B. E., Tschan, F., & Häfeli, K. (2014). Support from teachers and trainers in vocational education and training: The pathways to career aspirations and further career deve-

lopment. *International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training*, *1*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.13152/IJRVET.1.1.5

Hughes, E. C. (1997). Careers. *Qualitative Sociology*, *20*(3), 389–397. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024731416961

Imdorf, C., Granato, M., Moreau, G., & Waardenburg, G. (2010). Vocational education and training in Switzerland, France, Germany – Perspectives for sociological research [Editorial]. *Swiss Journal of Sociology*, *36*(1), 5–10. https://doi.org/10.5451/unibas-ep23206

Johnson, M. K., & Mortimer, J. T. (2002). Career choice and development from a sociological perspective. In D. Brown (Ed.), *Career choice and development* (4th ed., pp. 37–81). Jossey-Bass.

Lamamra, N., & Besozzi, R. (2019). Former en entreprise : les pratiques éducatives au cœur du monde du travail. *Revue suisse de sociologie*, *45*(3), 317–336. https://doi.org/10.2478/sjs-2019-0015

Lamamra, N., Duc, B., & Besozzi, R. (2019). *Au cœur du système dual : les formateurs et formatrices en entreprise. Résultats d'une recherche et pistes d'action pour les acteurs de la formation professionnelle*. Haute école fédérale en formation professionnelle HEFP.

Lamamra, N., Kuehni, M., & Rey, S. (dir.). (2021). *Finalités et usages de la formation professionnelle. Apprendre un métier, trouver un emploi, poursuivre ses études?* Antipodes.

Locke, E. A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organisational psychology* (pp. 1297–1343). Rand McNally.

Marrero-Rodríguez, J.-R., & Stendardi, D. (2023). The implementation of dual vocational education and training in Spain: Analysis of company tutors in the tourism sector. *International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training*, *10*(1), 90–112. https://doi.org/10.13152/IJRVET.10.1.5

Masdonati, J., Frésard, C. É., & Parmentier, M. (2022). Involuntary career changes: A lonesome social experience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 899051. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.899051

Mercure, D., & Vultur, M. (2010). *La signification du travail : nouveau modèle productif et ethos du travail au Québec*. Presses de l'Université Laval.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Moreau, G. (2003). *Le monde apprenti*. La Dispute.

Muehlemann, S., & Wolter, S. C. (2020). The economics of vocational training. In S. Bradley & C. Green (Eds.), *The economics of education: A comprehensive overview* (2nd ed., pp. 543–554). Academic Press.

Müller, B., & Schweri, J. (2012). *Die Betriebe in der dualen Berufsbildung: Entwicklungen 1985 bis 2008*. Bundesamt für Statistik.

Paillé, P., & Mucchielli, A. (Eds.). (2004). *L'analyse qualitative en sciences humaines et sociales*. Armand Colin.

Paugam, S. (2019). *L'enquête sociologique*. Presses universitaires de France.

Peycelon, M. (2018). *Devenir maître d'apprentissage : configurations et affordances pour construire sa pratique tutorale en entreprise* (Publication No. tel-02309613v2) [Doctoral dissertation, Université Lumière Lyon 2]. HAL Thèses.

Schnapper, D. (2012). *La compréhension sociologique : démarche de l'analyse typologique*. Presses universitaires de France.

Schweri, J. (2018). La formation professionnelle face au marché du travail : forces, faiblesses et défis futurs. In L. Bonoli, J.-B. Berger & N. Lamamra (Eds.), *Enjeux de la formation professionnelle en Suisse : le « modèle » suisse sous la loupe* (pp. 102–127). Seismo.

Schweri, J., Mühlemann, S., Pescio, Y., Walther, B., Wolter, S. C., & Zürcher, L. (2003). *Kosten und Nutzen der Lehrlingsausbildung aus der Sicht Schweizer Betriebe*. Rüegger Verlag.

Sennett, R. (2006). *The culture of the new capitalism*. Yale University Press.

State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation [SERI]. (2024). *La formation professionnelle en Suisse : faits et chiffres 2021*. Confédération suisse, Département fédéral de l'économie, de la formation et de la recherche.

Strupler, M., & Wolter, S. C. (2012). *La formation duale : un gage de réussite – aussi pour les entreprises. Résultats de la troisième enquête coût/bénéfice de la formation des apprentis du point de vue des entreprises suisses*. Université de Bern.

Tanguy, L. (2016). *Enseigner l'esprit d'entreprise à l'école. Le tournant politique des années 1980-2000 en France*. La Dispute.

Thébault, J. (2018). La transmission professionnelle en situation de travail : une approche ergonomique. *Formation emploi*, *141*, 67–87. https://doi.org/10.4000/formationemploi.5368

Veillard, L. (2017). *La formation professionnelle initiale : apprendre dans l'alternance entre différents contextes*. Presses universitaires de Rennes.

Weber, M. (1965). *Essai sur la théorie de la science*. Plon.

Wenzelmann, F., & Schönfeld, G. (2022). *Kosten und Nutzen der dualen Ausbildung aus Sicht der Betriebe Ergebnisse der sechsten BIBB-Kosten-Nutzen-Erhebung Ausbildung*. BIBB.

Wettstein, E., Gonon, P., & Schmid, E. (2018). *La formation professionnelle en Suisse : formes, structures, protagonistes*. Éditions Loisirs et Pédagogie.

Zarca, B. (1988). Identité de métier et identité artisanale. *Revue française de sociologie*, *29*(2), 247–273. https://doi.org/10.2307/3321907

Biographical Note

Roberta Besozzi, Dr phil, is a research associate at the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Fribourg. She conducts qualitative research in education and vocational education and training, focusing on educational and professional trajectories, work and training conditions, professional socialisation, and professional integration. Her current research also addresses professional identities and inclusion in educational contexts.