



This research project investigates the technical and structural regulations, policy standards and conditions inherent within the academic research system which influence acceptance, dissemination and use of Open Access (OA – free access to academic research information) from the point of view of authors working within the field of vocational education and training research. OA has thus far enjoyed its greatest level of acceptance in the field of STM¹, where research into it as a publication model has also been most extensive. By way of contrast, very few research results which also focus on specific products or series of publications within the area of OA are available for the humanities and social sciences. Because vocational education and training research consists of a combination of different related fields of study rather than constituting an independent discipline in its own right, the supposition must be that the results of the research project will be at least partially transferable to the humanities and social sciences and will thus help to provide a benefit in the form of improved findings for the whole of this area with regard to OA. A reciprocal expectation is that the various publication customs of the related academic research areas will also exert an influence on the use and perception of OA in vocational education and training research.

Free access to academic research literature is being fostered by the BIBB OA Policy and the BMBF OA Strategy. Nevertheless, critical counter-arguments are also being levelled. The supporters of OA see it as an opportunity to promote transparency and dissemination of academic research results. The extent to which OA is also producing a positive impact on the quality of research will be an object of debate.

The background to the research project has its basis in the sociology of science and media theory. The empirical foundation of the project is provided in the form of a qualitative exploration that takes place via the vehicle of group discussions (focus groups) with academic researchers from the field of vocational education and training research who are primarily addressed in their capacity as authors. Within this context, consideration is accorded to the fact that this group also takes on the role of users of (OA) publications. The exploration of the field of research serves as the basis for an online survey aimed at academic researchers from various disciplines who have common ground in that they deal with topics related to VET research. One positive side effect that is expected to ensue from the methodological approach is a systematic identification of the vocational education and training research community in Germany.

¹ STM = Science, Technology, Medicine.