

Thea S. Zöllner

Economist | thea.zoellner@unibe.ch | <https://www.theazoellner.com>

Selected Employment

Postdoctoral researcher , University of Bern (CHE) Department of Economics; Center for Research in Economics of Education	05.2026–present
Assistant , University of Bern (CHE) Department of Economics; Center for Research in Economics of Education	03.2022–02.2026
Intern , DIWEcon, Berlin (GER)	07.2020–09.2020
Student Assistant , University of Bochum (GER), Chair of Empirical Economic Research	04.2019–07.2019

Education

PhD candidate , University of Bern (CHE) Department of Economics; Centre for Research in Economics of Education and Swiss Leading House VPET-Econ <i>Grade: Summa cum laude</i> <i>Doctoral graduate program: Swiss Leading House VPET-ECON</i>	03.2022–02.2026
PhD Visiting Student Researcher , Stanford University (US) Graduate School of Education	02.2025-03.2025
PhD Guest researcher , University of Zurich (CHE) Department of Economics	03.2022-01.2025
Master: M.Sc. in Economics , Double degree University of Konstanz (DEU), University of Nottingham (UK) Specialization at the University of Konstanz: Public Economics	09.2019-12.2021
Bachelor: B.Sc. in Management and Economics University of Bochum (GER) Specialization: Industrial Organization & Economic Policy Erasmus: University of Rennes (FRA)	04.2016-07.2019 09.2017-12.2017

Research

Interests: applied microeconomics, economics of education, labor economics, personnel economics

My research addresses a central question: *How can institutions help young people maximize their educational and labor market opportunities?* This question remains pressing given persistent labor market inequalities, including gender gaps, and the rapid transformations created by emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), whose effects on career choices and labor market inequalities are still uncertain. Situated at the intersection of *economics of education, labor economics, and personnel economics*, I specialize in designing and implementing large-scale field and survey experiments, ensuring high-quality data collection, and applying causal inference methods tailored to the research question.

Published Research Projects:

Are parents an obstacle to gender-atypical occupational choices?

With Stefan C. Wolter

Published in: [Journal of Population Economics](#), 2025

Winner of: Best Paper, XXXII Meeting of the Economics of Education Association, València

Media Coverage: [BIZ \(German\)](#); [BaZ \(German\)](#); [Le Matin Dimanche \(French\)](#); [Transfer](#)

Ongoing Research Projects:

Generative AI and Career Choices

With Christian Gschwendt, Martina Viarengo

[Working Paper](#)

It's all about maths! Skill requirements and the gender gap in occupational choice

[Working Paper](#)

Media Coverage: [Transfer \(German/French/Italian\)](#)

Paying for Peers? Parental Willingness to Pay for School Composition and Quality in Switzerland

With M. Cattaneo, Stefan C. Wolter.

[Working Paper](#)

Backlash to Gender Equality?

With Anne A. Brenøe, Michela Carlana, Stefan C. Wolter

Working Paper

Beyond the Paycheck: Do Fringe Benefits Shape Gendered Career Choices

With Claudio C. Schilter

Skills

Languages	English (Fluent), German (Native), French (Good)
Technical	STATA, Qualtrics, Microsoft Office, LaTeX

References

Stefan C. Wolter

University of Bern
Professor of Economics
stefan.wolter@unibe.ch

Martina Viarengo

Graduate Institute of International and
Development Studies of Geneva
Professor of Economics
martina.viarengo@graduateinstitute.ch

Eric Bettinger

Stanford University
Graduate School of Education
Conley DeAngelis Family Professor
ebetting@stanford.edu

Michela Carlana

Harvard Kennedy School
Associate Professor of Public Policy
Visiting Associate Professor, Bocconi University
michela_carlana@hks.harvard.edu

Presentations at conferences and workshops

- 2026 Swiss Society of Economics and Statistics Annual Congress; Third International
Leading House Conference on the Economics of Vocational Education and Training
Scheduled: EEA; EALE; Workshop on Education Economics of Policy (WEEP)
Trondheim
- 2025 Sixth World Labor Conference (SOLE/EALE) Toronto; Annual Conference of the
European Economic Association (EEA) Bordeaux; Brown Bag Seminar University of
Bern; Leading House VPET-ECON Workshop, London
- 2024 AEDE Valencia; IWAEE Catanzaro; Workshop on Education Economics of Policy
(WEEP) Trondheim; 3rd Berlin Workshop on Empirical Public Economics: Gender
Economics Berlin; International Workshop BIBB & Swiss Leading House VPET-
ECON in Bonn.; Zähringen Behavioral and Experimental Economics Seminar in
Bern; Brown Bag Seminar University of Bern

Teaching

Graduate-level (assistant): Seminar in Economics of Education 2025/2026, University of
Bern