
Finland

VET in Europe – Country report

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CHAPTER 1

1. External factors influencing VET

1.1 Demographic development

In Finland, the proportion of young age groups within the population has remained slightly above the EU27 average during the early 21st century due to immigration and a small increase in the birth rate. Nevertheless, Finland's demographic development has followed the general European trend, i.e. the proportions of child and adolescent age groups within the total population have decreased, while the proportion of senior citizens has increased.

For some years now, Finland has been in a situation where the number of young people entering the labour market falls below the number of people retiring from the labour market due to old age. The national objective is to raise the average retirement age. During the 21st century, the expected effective retirement age among 50-year-old employees has in fact increased by almost two years, from just above 60.5 years to almost 62.5 years.

Table 1.1 Population by age group in Finland and EU 27 in 2000–2010

Age group	2000		2005		2010	
	EU27	Finland	EU27	Finland	EU27	Finland
0–14	17.2	18.2	16.2	17.5	15.6	16.6
15–24	13.2	12.8	12.8	12.4	12.3	12.3
25–49	36.7	35.5	36.5	33.5	35.8	32.3
50–64	17.2	18.7	18.0	20.7	19.1	21.7
65–79	12.3	11.5	12.6	12.0	12.7	12.4
80–	3.3	3.3	4.0	3.9	4.7	4.4

Source: Eurostat

According to Eurostat statistics, immigration into Finland increased from 14,700 in 2000 to over 29,100 in 2008. In 2009 and 2010, the number of immigrants decreased by a few thousand, amounting to 25,600 in 2010. During the same period, the number of emigrants remained between 12,000 and 14,000, standing at its lowest at 11,900 in 2010. Consequently, Finland's immigrant population increased from 87,700 to 167,000 between 2000 and 2010.

According to population forecasts, the proportion of those aged over 65 is increasing faster than the EU average. This is mostly due to the 'baby-boomer' generations, born after the Second World War, reaching pensionable age. Over 100,000 children were born every year between 1945 and 1950, whereas the annual number of births during the 21st century has even fallen short of 60,000 at its lowest. Forecasts suggest that the ratio of over 65-year-olds to those aged 15 to 64 will increase in Finland at a higher rate than the EU average up until the 2030s.

The coming years will see problems with a diminishing labour force owing to demographic changes, changes in competence requirements and challenges in terms of the sustainability of the national economy. For society, the availability of labour will be a problem in at least two respects. The shortage of labour will complicate the operations of growth businesses and undermine the availability of welfare services in particular.

For some time now, Finland has based its competitiveness on high-standard knowledge and skills – on higher education and on strong professional competence – on the innovativeness thus engendered and on rapid utilisation of innovations in production. The problem with the availability of labour may evolve into a bottleneck in the competence-driven competition strategy. A worst-case scenario would be that businesses encountering difficulties with hiring workers also increasingly outsource their planning and design abroad.

The availability problem also involves Finland's capacity for providing extensive welfare services. Even if the social and health sector could improve its productivity and develop new, less labour-intensive care methods, the demand for labour in the field will grow substantially in the future. According to the Government Institute for Economic Research, the number of personnel involved in health care and social welfare services in 2025 will be around 1.24 times what it was in 2005. Counted in terms of labour, the sector would be clearly larger than the manufacturing industry, even if the ambitious aims set for productivity were realised. According to a foresight study conducted by the Finnish National Board of Education, demand for new employees in health care and social services will be nearly 80,000 in the period from 2008 to 2025.

Table 1.2 Projected old-age dependency ratio in 2010–2040

The projected number of persons aged 65 and over expressed as a percentage of the projected number of persons aged between 15 and 64.

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
EU (27)	25.9	28.5	31.4	34.6	38.3	42.3	45.5
Finland	25.6	31.4	36.2	39.8	42.7	44.3	43.5

Source: Eurostat

Due to the changing population structure, the aim is to accelerate completion of education and training and prevent drop-out. According to the Development Plan for Education and Research 2011–2016 adopted by the Government (<http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2012/liitteet/okm03.pdf?lang=en>), the aim is for 94 per cent of 30-year-olds to have completed a post-compulsory qualification in 2020. The current figure is 86 per cent.

1.2 Employment

The employment rate among Finns is slightly above the EU27 average regardless of level of education. In 2011, over 84 per cent of tertiary degree-holders (ISCED 5–6) were employed, while the figures for holders of upper secondary certificates (ISCED 3–4) and those who had only completed compulsory schooling (ISCED 0–2) were 73 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively.

In 2011, unemployment in Finland was below the EU27 average at all levels of education. The unemployment rate among tertiary degree-holders stood at 4.0 per cent, while the figures for holders of upper secondary certificates and those with compulsory schooling stood at 6.9 per cent and 11.3 per cent, respectively. The corresponding EU27 figures were 5.0 per cent, 7.6 per cent and 14.8 per cent, respectively. Finnish youth unemployment has also remained below the EU27 average in recent years. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate among those aged 15 to 24 was 22.5 per cent in the EU27 in July 2012, whereas the figure for Finland was 17.8 per cent (Eurostat).

More than half of those completing a curriculum-based upper secondary vocational qualification (mostly on school-based programmes) find employment immediately: 56 per cent of those who completed a vocational qualification in 2008 were gainfully employed at the end of 2009, while unemployed people accounted for 18 per cent. Another 11 per cent were full-time students and 15 per cent fell within the group 'Others' (those doing their military or non-military service, home-makers or pensioners). Conversely, the employment rate among those who had completed an upper secondary vocational qualification as a competence-based qualification was clearly higher one year after graduation: 71 per cent of those who completed a competence-based qualification in 2008 were gainfully employed at the end of 2009, while 19 per cent were unemployed.

Young and adult Finns are avid learners: 43 per cent of Finns aged 20 to 29 and 15 per cent of those aged 30 to 34 participate in education. Both figures are clearly the highest in the OECD. This reflects Finns' aspiration to gain a good education and the strong adult education system in Finland. On the other hand, it also says something about the inefficiency of the education system. The overall duration of education and training is influenced by the flow in transition points and the overall time spent on each programme. These appear to take longer in Finland than elsewhere in the world.

1.3 Gross Domestic Product

During the economic upswing of the late 1990s and the early 2000s, economic growth in Finland was among the fastest in the EU. In particular, the technology industry developed positively. The annual growth in GDP was over 6 per cent in 1997 and it remained at over 4 per cent in 2007. The global recession also meant a decrease in GDP for Finland. In 2009, the decrease in GDP even exceeded any year during the recession of the 1990s. However, GDP increased by 3.3 per cent and 2.7 per cent in 2010 and 2011, respectively (the latter figure is preliminary data), but it has taken another downward turn in 2012.

1.4 Industrial structure

Finland's industrial structure is strongly service-intensive, with almost three quarters (73 per cent) of the labour force working in the services industry. The manufacturing industry accounts for 22 per cent, while the figure for agriculture and forestry stands at below 4 per cent. In 2000, services accounted for two thirds of the labour force, while manufacturing still accounted for over a quarter. In other words, the service-intensification of the economic structure has been a strong trend throughout the early 21st century.

Small- and medium-sized enterprises form the foundation of economic life in Finland. In 2010, enterprises with less than 50 employees and those with less than 250 employees accounted for 99.1 per cent and 99.8 per cent, respectively, of all enterprises in Statistics Finland's Business Register. Enterprises with less than 250 personnel employed 64 per cent of total personnel in all enterprises. Combined, their net turnovers accounted for 51 per cent of the total net turnover of all enterprises. SMEs also play a significant role in Finland's export trade: 29 per cent of enterprises with less than 250 employees are engaged in exports.

Finns leave the 11th largest ecological footprint in the world. This means that Finns consume natural resources three times more than the Earth can produce. In other words, Finland is not yet a leading country in terms of the green economy. The Government has therefore presented a clean energy programme as part of the energy and climate strategy update. The programme aims at balancing Finland's current account by investing in production of clean domestic energy and reducing imports of energy by one third.

As part of the programme, a pioneering market for clean energy will be established in Finland. Finland will be the first country in Europe to abandon the use of coal almost completely by 2025 and to reduce the use of natural gas and oil by 10 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively. Promotion of wood- and waste-based bioenergy, wind power and solar power plays a key role in the development of domestic energy production. Additional investments will be made to enhance the energy efficiency of industry, transport and housing and in generating new export-oriented business.

Core competencies of cleantech in Finland include clean production of renewable energy and enhancing energy efficiency. The aim is to create 40,000 new cleantech jobs in Finland by 2020. Energy efficiency is the world's fastest growing cleantech sector and Finland's strength lies in combining ICT with energy expertise. In 2012, the Finnish Government allocated some 400 million euros of funding to the cleantech sector. From the beginning of 2013, public funding will focus increasingly on energy efficiency and clean energy.

1.5 Professional regulation

In Finland, relatively few professions require a specific type of education. Educational requirements mainly exist in certain health care, teaching and rescue and security professions. Furthermore, the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church requires its employees to have education in the field. The professions requiring a specific educational qualification usually require a higher

education degree, such as teaching, medical and nursing professions. Still fewer occupations require a specific vocational qualification. These include practical nurses, prison and security guards, divers (working in underwater construction) and chimneysweeps.

Licences to practise health care professions are granted by the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira). Valvira is a nationwide authority which guides municipalities and Regional State Administrative Agencies on legislation associated with Valvira's jurisdiction. Valvira is the national licensing authority for social welfare and health care in Finland and licensing forms the basis of Valvira's proactive supervision. All businesses subject to licence and individuals practising a profession must apply for a licence or report their activity to Valvira to register. In addition, there are other authorities granting licences to practise certain professions within their respective administrative sectors.

There are also jobs where independent self-employment is not possible solely on the basis of vocational education and training. For instance, the Decision on Electrical Work sets out minimum requirements based on training and work experience, determining when a person can be considered to be sufficiently skilled to carry out electrical work independently.

1.6 Level of education in Finland

In recent years, Finnish education policy has paid plenty of attention to transition points between levels of education. Practically all young people apply to upper secondary level after finishing their basic education. In principle, all young people finishing comprehensive school have access to either general upper secondary education or upper secondary vocational education and training. However, not all young people are admitted to the field of their choice, which means that 91 per cent of those finishing basic education start their upper secondary studies immediately after comprehensive school.

There is also some delay in the transition from upper secondary to tertiary level. The average age of Finnish entrants to higher education is over 20 years. This also means that Finns graduate later than the EU average.

Prolonged periods in education are reflected in the development of the level of education among the youth population. In 2010, the proportion of post-compulsory certificate-holders in the 20-to-24 age group fell 4.5 percentage points below the proportion for 2000. Over the same period, the difference between Finland and the EU27 has been halved. The proportion of 20-to-24-year-olds still in education in Finland is clearly higher than the EU average. Faster completion rates of both upper secondary and tertiary studies constitute one of the objectives of national education policy.

Table 1.3 Persons aged 20 to 24 who have completed at least upper secondary education in 2000–2010

Per cent of the population aged 20 to 24

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
EU27	76.6	76.6	76.7	77.1	77.3	77.5	77.9	78.1	78.4	78.6	79.0
Finland	87.7	86.1	85.8	85.3	84.5	83.4	84.7	86.5	86.2	85.1	84.2

Source: Eurostat

The level of education among Finns aged 25 to 64 has increased significantly during the early 21st century – and at a slightly faster rate than the EU average. This is mostly due to the fact that, of the post-World War II baby-boomer generations, only those born between 1948 and 1950 are still under 65. Back in the day, Finland was not able to provide enough study places for baby boomers, leaving many without a qualification. It was only in the 1990s that expansion of adult education and training and the creation of the competence-based qualifications system offered many of them a chance to complete a vocational qualification.

In 2011, the proportion of those who had completed at least an upper secondary qualification was almost 84 per cent in Finland, which is over ten percentage points above the EU27 average. Finland's percentage share was the ninth highest in the EU27. In Finland, however, tertiary degree-holders accounted for a higher proportion of all those with post-compulsory qualifications than in other countries with a high level of education.

Table 1.4 Total population having completed at least upper secondary education in 2000–2011

Per cent of population aged 25 to 64

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
EU27	64.4	64.9	65.8	67.2	68.4	69.4	69.9	70.7	71.3	72.0	72.7	73.4
Finland	73.2	73.8	75.0	76.0	77.6	78.8	79.6	80.5	81.1	82.0	83.0	83.7

Source: Eurostat

About a tenth of young Finns are at risk of exclusion. The proportion is below the EU27, but the gap has narrowed throughout the early 21st century. The proportion has remained quite steady at around 9–10 per cent in Finland, whereas it has decreased by more than four percentage points in other EU countries between 2000 and 2011.

Prevention of exclusion from education has been one of the key objectives of Finnish education policy for quite some time now. The current Government Programme includes a social guarantee for young people, which will enter into force at the beginning of 2013. It ensures that each young person under 25 and every new qualification-holder under 30 will be offered a job, a study place, or some other form of activity within three months of becoming unemployed (see chapter 4). One concrete measure relating to the social guarantee is giving priority to comprehensive school leavers in upper secondary level application procedures. The aim is to offer the entire age group immediate further study opportunities. Other measures have also been put

forward in relation to the social guarantee. The regional Employment and Economic Development Offices will promote integration of young people and new graduates into the labour market. Young people's guidance and counselling services will be consolidated. The Ministry of Education and Culture will allocate additional funding to activities such as outreach youth work. Outreach youth work aims to identify young people being excluded from education or employment after basic education as early as possible and to refer them for services matching their individual circumstances.

Table 1.5 Early school leavers in 2000–2011

Population aged 18 to 24 with the highest level of education or training attained being ISCED 0, 1, 2 or 3C short and declared not to have received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey (LFS).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
EU27	17.6	17.2	17.0	16.5	16.0	15.8	15.5	15.1	14.9	14.4	14.1	13.5
Finland	9.0	9.5	9.7	10.1	10.0	10.3	9.7	9.1	9.8	9.9	10.3	9.8

Source: Eurostat

Adults' participation in education and training has traditionally been at a high level in Finland. In an EU labour force survey conducted in 2011, almost a quarter of the population reported that they had participated in education or training in the month preceding the survey, whereas the corresponding proportion in the EU27 remained below 10 per cent.

Table 1.6 Lifelong learning in 2000–2011

Persons aged 25 to 64 who stated that they received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey (LFS).

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
EU27	7.1	7.1	7.2	8.5	9.2	9.6	9.5	9.3	9.4	9.3	9.1	8.9
Finland	17.5	17.2	17.3	22.4	22.8	22.5	23.1	23.4	23.1	22.1	23.0	23.8

Source: Eurostat

Vocational adult education and training was reformed during the 1990s when Finland launched adults' competence-based qualifications, which are offered at three levels: upper secondary vocational qualifications, further qualifications and specialist qualifications. People may complete these qualifications by demonstrating their vocational skills in competence tests regardless of how these skills were acquired. Preparatory training for competence-based qualifications is available, but it is also possible to participate in competence tests without any preparatory training.

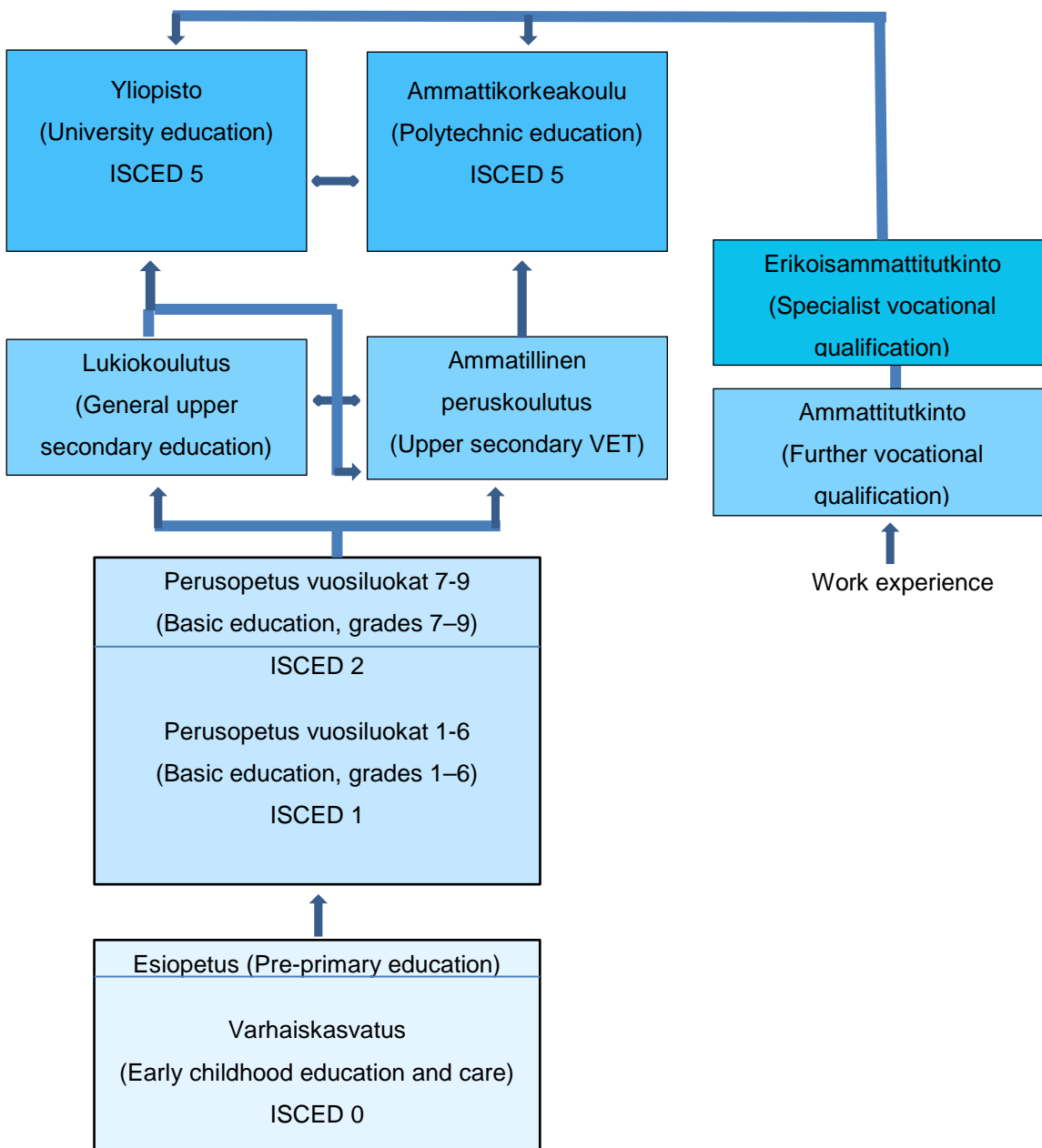
The numbers of completed qualifications have increased continuously. In 2010, 14,000 Finns completed upper secondary vocational qualifications as competence-based qualifications, while 13,900 and 5,300 people took further qualifications and specialist qualifications, respectively. In practical terms, all qualification-holders had acquired some type of preparatory training for their qualification.

CHAPTER 2

2. Providing vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective

One of the basic principles of Finnish education is that all people must have equal access to education and training. Consequently, compulsory education is provided within a single structure. The education system is also highly permeable. There are no dead ends preventing progression to higher levels of education. Vocational education and training is available as school-based programmes, apprenticeship training and competence-based qualifications.

2.1 Diagram of the national education and training system



2.2 Government-regulated VET provision

In Finland, almost all VET provision is government-regulated. Most of the funding comes from the State and from local authorities. The qualification requirements for the different professions are also decided at a national level.

Vocational education and training starts at upper secondary level. Students who have successfully completed compulsory education are eligible for general and vocational upper secondary education and training. Student selection is mainly based on the students' grades on their basic education certificate. The selection criteria used by vocational institutions may contain work experience and other comparable factors, including entrance and aptitude tests.

More than 40 per cent of the relevant age group starts vocational upper secondary studies immediately after basic education. The biggest fields are technology, communications and transport and social services, health and sports.

Table 2.1. New students in upper secondary VET according to field of study, gender and type of education in 2007 and 2010

Field of VET	2007	2010	Women %	Apprenticeship training %
Humanities and education	1,255	1,333	76.4	25.2
Culture	4,178	4,350	65.3	1.8
Social sciences, business and administration	9,037	8,587	65.3	16.7
Natural sciences	2,793	2,165	20.2	6.7
Technology, communications and transport	30,604	29,018	18.7	7.3
Natural resources and the environment	3,735	4,113	56.6	5.2
Social services, health and sports	13,087	15,397	87.0	12.2
Tourism, catering and domestic services	7,620	8,313	71.8	5.3
Other education ¹	513	493	17.8	-
Total	72,822	73,769	50.3	9.0

¹ Fire and rescue services, police services and correctional services

Source: Statistics Finland

As can be seen in Table 2.1, half of the students are female. The proportion, however, varies greatly from field to field. Technology and natural sciences are still very male-dominated areas while health care and social services as well as tourism and catering are very female-dominated.

2.2.1 Upper secondary VET, apprenticeship training and competence-based qualifications

In Finland, vocational qualifications can be completed in upper secondary VET, apprenticeship training or as competence-based qualifications. The majority of young learners complete their upper secondary vocational qualifications at vocational institutions (Table 2.2). Vocational qualifications may also be completed as apprenticeship training, which contains courses arranged at vocational institutions. In Finland, most apprentices are adults. Furthermore, upper secondary vocational qualifications may be obtained through competence tests independent of how the vocational skills have been acquired. Competence-based qualifications are usually completed by adults.

Table 2.2. Number of VET students according to type of education in 2007 and 2010

	2007	2010	Proportion as a % of all VET students in 2010
Upper secondary VET			
Upper secondary vocational qualification	126,025	133,690	49.9
Competence-based qualifications			
Upper secondary vocational qualification	28,041	36,931	13.8
Further vocational qualification	30,081	31,664	11.8
Specialist vocational qualification	6,864	6,541	2.4
Apprenticeship training			
Upper secondary vocational qualification	27,169	22,797	8.5
Further vocational qualification	20,503	19,633	7.3
Specialist vocational qualification	14,841	16,461	6.1
Total	253,524	267,717	100
Women %	50.2	50.6	
Special needs education	6.1	7.2	
Mother tongue other than FI or SE	4.2	5.0	

Source: Statistics Finland

All qualifications include on-the-job learning. On-the-job learning is focused, supervised and assessed study carried out in service or production capacities at the workplace. The objective is to familiarise students with real working life in order to enhance their employment opportunities. Vocational skills demonstrations were introduced as a means of assessment in August 2006 and they mostly take place during on-the-job learning periods (see also Chapter 3).

Vocational special education institutions provide facilities and services for students with severe disabilities or chronic illnesses. Instruction is given in small groups and the main emphasis is on practice rather than theory. Students are also offered individual guidance and support for their studies and everyday lives.

2.2.2 Flexibility and permeability of the education system high on the national agenda

Equal opportunities and the permeability of the education system are the cornerstones of Finnish education policy. In the 1970s and 1980s, basic education was reformed so that pupils' choices could not prevent or restrict their studies at upper secondary level. Permeability and equal opportunities for further studies also constituted one of the underlying principles adopted when the vocational education and training system was reformed in the 1990s and 2000s. Today, there are no dead ends within the education system. In the late 1990s, upper secondary vocational education and training was placed on an equal footing with general upper secondary education in that the vocational track also provided eligibility for higher education.

Efforts are being made to improve horizontal co-operation between institutions as well as vertical co-operation between different levels of education. Co-operation within upper secondary education and training – between vocational institutions and general upper secondary schools – has been encouraged for several years. Legislation requires providers of general and vocational upper secondary education and training to co-operate regionally. In addition, the current Government programme urges upper secondary providers to increase co-operation and networking among themselves.

The benefits of co-operation include better individualisation opportunities for students. Students can, for example, complete several qualifications concurrently. Students also have better opportunities to take studies at other recognised institutions. Co-operation between institutions further ensures efficient use of resources and is seen as being a way of improving the quality of education and training.

Flexibility and individualisation are also seen as ways of reducing drop-out rates and enhancing completion rates of qualifications. Students may receive certificates for completion of individual modules. This makes it easier to continue studies after an interruption.

Prevention of drop-out from education and exclusion from society are a policy priority in Finland. Although the drop-out rate from VET programmes is not high in European terms, the reasoning is that every individual who drops out from education and the labour market is seen as being both a personal tragedy and a significant cost to society. Drop-out from vocational education and training is far more common than from general upper secondary education.

Table 2.3. Completion of VET and general upper secondary education aimed at young people by 2009

Vocational education and training				General upper secondary education				
Starting year	New students	Students who completed VET by 2009	%	Starting year	New students	Students who completed general upper secondary education by 2009	who	%
2002	46,815	34,622	74.0	2002	35,695	31,596		88.5
2003	46,000	33,220	72.2	2003	36,714	32,398		88.2
2004	48,482	34,719	71.6	2004	36,020	31,762		88.2
2005	48,041	33,269	69.3	2005	35,065	30,703		87.6
2006	48,705	30,624	62.9	2006	35,007	27,782		79.4

A programme was set up in 2012 to develop anticipatory and individualised procedures in guidance and counselling and to create pedagogical solutions and practices supporting completion of studies as well as work-centred learning environments and opportunities. There is also an emphasis on creating practices to recognise prior learning more effectively. An additional 4 million euros have been allocated to this programme.

Recognition of prior learning is also the ideology behind competence-based qualifications. Thus, these qualifications increase horizontal and vertical permeability. A learner, usually an adult learner, can access formal qualifications by demonstrating that he or she possesses the required skills. These skills may have been acquired within the formal education system or non-formally and informally. The competence-based qualifications also provide eligibility for higher education.

2.2.3 Adult education and training available at all levels

Finland has a long history of participation and promotion of adult education and training. The first Finnish folk high school opened its doors in 1889. Adult education and training is very popular and the participation rate is also high in international terms.

The main objectives of adult education policy are to ensure the availability and competence of the labour force, provide educational opportunities for the entire adult population and strengthen social cohesion and equity. The objectives should support efforts to extend working lives, raise the employment rate, improve productivity, implement conditions for lifelong learning and enhance multiculturalism.

Educational institutions organise education and training intended for adults at all levels of education. Efforts have been made to ensure that provision is as flexible as possible in order to enable adults to study alongside work.

Adult education and training comprises programmes leading to a qualification or certificate, liberal adult education and continuous professional development, other training provided or purchased by employers, as well as labour market training, which is mainly targeted at unemployed people (see also 2.3).

In both general and vocational education, there are also separate educational institutions for adults. In the VET sector, competence-based qualifications are specifically intended for adults. In higher education, adults can study on separate adult education programmes offered by polytechnics.

2.2.4 Individualisation and modularisation of VET qualifications

Vocational education and training covers eight fields of education and more than fifty vocational qualifications including over a hundred different study programmes. The scope of vocational qualifications is three years of study and each qualification includes at least half a year of on-the-job learning in workplaces.

The National Core Curricula for Upper Secondary Vocational Qualifications and the Requirements of Competence-based Qualifications are the same for young and adult students. The scope of the qualifications is 120 credits. One year of full-time study corresponds to 40 credits.

The curricula include vocational studies and on-the-job learning, which vary according to the qualification, as well as core subjects common to all qualifications (Table 2.4).

Studies in upper secondary VET are based on individual study plans, comprising both compulsory and optional study modules. The modularisation allows for a degree of individualisation of qualifications. Students can integrate relevant modules into their qualifications from specialist and further vocational qualifications (see also Chapter 3), as well as modules from polytechnic degrees.

Table 2.4. Example of a vocational qualification in upper secondary VET

Vocational qualification in forestry, study programme in forest-based energy production, upper secondary qualification, 120 credits	
Vocational modules, 90 credits	
Compulsory modules for all, 20 cr.	The modules include a minimum of 20 credits of on-the-job-learning, a minimum of 5 credits of entrepreneurship and a final project (2 credits). Silviculture and timber harvesting, 20 cr.
Study programme in forest-based energy production, forest-based energy producer, 70 credits	Harvesting and use of forest-based energy materials, 20 cr. and Harvesting of energy wood, 30 cr., or Peat production and storage, 30 cr. In addition, a minimum of 20 credits from other modules are to be selected, e.g.: Mechanised timber harvesting, 10 cr. Further processing of energy wood, 10 cr. Operation, maintenance and servicing of a heating plant, 10 cr. Peat production, 10 cr. Short-rotation cultivation, 10 cr. Module from a further vocational qualification Module from a specialist vocational qualification
Core subjects, 20 credits	
Compulsory modules for all	Incl. mother tongue, foreign languages, mathematics, social studies, health education, arts and culture
Optional modules	Incl. environmental studies, ethics, ICT, psychology
Free-choice modules, 10 credits	
Free-choice modules can be vocational studies in one's own or other vocational fields, or core subjects, general upper secondary studies or studies preparing for the matriculation examination or further studies, work experience or guided interests, which support the general and vocational objectives of education and training and the growth of the student's personality.	

2.2.5 Vocational education and training in co-operation with the world of work

Vocational qualification requirements are developed in broad-based co-operation with stakeholders. The national qualification requirements have been based on a learning-outcomes approach since the early 1990's. Consequently, close co-operation with the world of work has been essential.

Co-operation with the world of work and other key stakeholders is carried out in order to ensure that qualifications support flexible and efficient transition to the labour market as well as occupational development and career change. In addition to the needs of the world of work, development of vocational education and training and qualifications takes into account consolidation of lifelong learning skills as well as the individuals' needs and opportunities to complete qualifications flexibly to suit their own circumstances. For more information on development of vocational education and training, see Chapter 3.

2.2.6 Most education and training providers are public entities

The majority of vocational institutions are maintained by local authorities, joint municipal authorities and the State. Nearly 40 per cent are maintained by private organisations, but only 20 per cent of students are enrolled in institutions maintained by private organisations. Funding criteria are uniform irrespective of ownership.

The Ministry of Education and Culture grants authorisations to VET providers, determining the fields of education in which they are allowed to provide education and training and their total student numbers. VET providers determine which vocational qualifications and which study programmes within the specified fields of education will be organised at their vocational institutions.

The strategy for vocational institutions, implemented since 2008, aims at strengthening the network of VET providers. To enhance the service capacity of VET providers, providers have been encouraged to merge into regional or otherwise strong entities. These vocational institutions cover all VET services and development activities. Thus, vocational institutions offer initial and continuing training both for young people and adult learners. Vocational institutions work in close co-operation with the labour market. Their role is to develop their own provision in co-operation with the labour market, on the one hand, and to support competence development within small and medium-sized enterprises, on the other.

The strategy for vocational institutions has been seen as being a necessary means to ensure and increase the flexibility of education and training. Consequently, larger entities can offer enough vocational modules to ensure that learners can individualise their qualifications and choose studies that match changing learning needs.

Vocational institutions can organise their operations freely, according to the requirements of their fields or their regions, and decide on their institutional networks and other services. The State has supported mergers among VET providers since 2007 to the tune of 5 to 11 million euros per year. The number of education providers has decreased considerably since 2006. While there were 212 VET providers in 2007, their number had dropped to 173 by the beginning of 2011.

2.2.7 Teachers and trainers

In Finland, there is a clear distinction between teachers and trainers or workplace instructors. In addition to different qualification requirements, their working contexts differ. In other words, teachers work at vocational institutions while trainers and workplace instructors work within enterprises. Trainers supervise students during their on-the-job learning periods or apprenticeship training within enterprises.

Even if there is a clear difference in status, the roles of teachers and trainers show more similarities today than before. This is partly due to the introduction of the on-the-job learning periods and vocational skills demonstrations into vocational qualifications and their increasing importance. Thus, trainers' activities today also encompass guiding and assessing students as well as co-operation between the institution and the enterprise.

Teachers and trainers are very autonomous in their work. Thus, decisions on learning methods and materials are generally made either by individual teachers and trainers or in collaboration with other teachers or trainers.

2.2.8 Training is an attractive career option

A career as a VET teacher is generally considered to be attractive. This is also reflected in the number of applicants to vocational teacher training programmes, which invariably exceeds intake numbers. In spring 2012, about 31 per cent of all applicants and 41 per cent of those formally eligible were admitted to training. With regard to salaries and terms and conditions of employment, there are no remarkable differences from those of teachers in general education.

Although there is no official data for trainers and workplace instructors on the attractiveness of their profession, the general impression is that trainers are generally satisfied with their training tasks. The trainers consider their training as positive changes in their careers. In many cases they feel that they have been given a promotion. The time spent with young students away from normal routines is also considered to be rewarding. The status of trainers and workplace instructors is also on the increase with new vocational skills demonstrations that involve workplace instructors in student assessment. This assessment plays a significant role on students' final qualification certificates.

2.2.9 Teaching and training qualifications

Vocational teacher training was reformed in the mid-1990s. The core of this reform was that VET teachers in upper secondary VET are required to hold either a Master's or a Bachelor's degree in their field as well as pedagogical training with a scope of 60 ECTS credits. In fields where no such degrees exist, it has been possible to be formally qualified with the highest existing qualification in that field.

One specific challenge has been to find qualified teachers in some fields. Another challenge is related to the sometimes limited shop-floor experience of teachers with a university degree. In some fields, it is therefore now possible to acquire teaching qualifications by completing a specialist vocational qualification (ISCED 4) or some other qualification or training that provides solid competence in the field concerned.

In the case of VET principals, it has also been proposed to make entry to the profession more flexible. This would mean that the teacher training required today could be completed within three years of being appointed as a principal.

The contents of teacher training are updated continuously by vocational teacher education colleges. Teacher education colleges enjoy wide autonomy in deciding on their curricula and training arrangements. Legislation steers the qualification requirements, but only at a very general level.

There is also plenty of autonomy regarding continuing training for VET teachers. The continuing training obligation of teaching staff is defined partly in legislation and partly in the collective agreement negotiated between the Trade Union of Education in Finland and the employers' organisation.

Most continuing training is provided free of charge and teachers enjoy full salary benefits during their participation. Funding responsibility rests with teachers' employers, mainly local authorities. Training content is decided by individual employers and the teachers themselves.

There are no formal qualifications requirements for trainers in Finland. Their continuing professional development is also left completely up to them and their employers. Training programmes are available for in-company trainers that follow national guidelines. Trainers are generally experienced foremen and skilled workers. They frequently have a vocational or professional qualification, but hold no pedagogical qualifications. According to a regional study, 75 per cent of trainers or instructors had more than 10 years' experience in their own field.

Trainers who supervise students during on-the-job learning periods within enterprises are not obliged to take in-service training. Their training activities depend on themselves, their employers and what training is on offer.

2.2.10 Funding

In Finland, education is publicly funded. The public education system and education primarily provided through public tax revenue at all levels have been perceived in Finland as being a means to guarantee equal opportunities for education for the entire population irrespective of social or ethnic background, gender and domicile.

Private expenditure only accounts for 2.6 per cent of all expenditure on the education system. The proportion of private funding is slightly higher in upper secondary vocational education and training and in higher education, but it still remains below 5 per cent.

Education and training is mainly financed by the State and local authorities. State funding accounts for approximately 40 per cent of the total funding. The VET providers decide on the use of all funds granted under the statutory government transfer system, as funding coming from the State is not earmarked in any way. In upper secondary VET, operating costs per student varied between 5,766 euros in apprenticeship training to 31,021 euros in special needs VET in 2010 (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5. Operating costs euros/student in upper secondary VET by field in 2007–2010

VET field				
School-based VET				
	2007	2008	2009	2010
Humanities and education	9,179	9,917	10,237	10,189
Culture	10,484	11,187	11,300	11,520
Social sciences, business and administration	6,933	7,510	7,786	7,890
Natural sciences	6,984	7,560	8,063	8,204
Technology, communications and transport	9,983	10,652	11,192	11,263
Natural resources and the environment	14,244	15,628	15,924	15,880
Social services, health and sports	7,989	8,755	8,900	8,964
Tourism, catering and domestic Services	9,924	11,069	11,523	10,909
Rehabilitative instruction and guidance for the disabled at special institutions	-	-	-	31,021
Rehabilitative instruction and guidance for the disabled in mainstream education	-	-	-	13,277
Pre-vocational preparatory education for immigrants	-	-	-	8,984
Preparatory education for VET	-	-	-	9,245
Apprenticeship training	5,324	5,745	5,519	5,766

Source: FNBE Statistical Yearbook 2011

The statutory government transfer is based on a unit price calculated per student, assigned to each VET provider. The unit price is based on the specific fields and, in some cases, on the qualifications included in its provision. The amounts of funding are influenced by each provider's student numbers in different fields and in different types of provision, such as school-based programmes, apprenticeship training and special needs VET.

A certain proportion of funding is based on the provider's performance. Funding allocated on the basis of performance accounts for 3 per cent of the total euro amount of the government transfer. In order to determine the share of performance-based funding, a performance index is calculated for each provider on the basis of the following indicators: graduate employment rate, transition to further studies in higher education, reduction in drop-out rates, VET completion rate, qualifications of teaching staff and human resources development.

2.3 Other forms of training

Very little training is provided outside the government-regulated sector in Finland. Private vocational institutions operating under the Vocational Education and Training Act are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture, receive government subsidies and have the right to award official qualification certificates.

There are 26 national specialised vocational institutions, which are generally maintained by manufacturing and service sector enterprises. These institutions provide training for their own needs outside the national qualifications structure and mainly focus on continuing training for their staff. The national specialised vocational institutions have been authorised by the Ministry of Education and Culture to provide education and training. Although these institutions receive state funding, most of the costs are covered by the owner enterprises themselves.

There are also a number of private educational institutions in Finland, offering training for a fee, for example in the service sector. These institutions do not have the right to award qualification certificates. They do not receive public funding even though they fall under the supervision of the consumer authorities. The students participating in this type of training also do not receive public student financial aid.

In-service training for enterprises is provided both by public VET institutions and private training companies.

Liberal adult education has a long tradition in Finland. Liberal adult education offers non-formal studies. It promotes personal growth, health and well-being by offering courses relating to citizenship skills and society and in different crafts and subjects on a recreational basis.

Labour market training is mainly intended for unemployed people. Some training is also offered to those at risk of losing their jobs and those who are becoming excluded from the labour market. Labour market training is financed by the labour administration. The aim of the training is to maintain the balance between labour demand and supply and prevent unemployment and labour shortage.

Young people under 29 who are at risk of marginalisation can participate in so called youth workshops. In these young people have an opportunity to learn life skills and get support for planning and shaping their future (see also 4.1.6).

CHAPTER 3

3. Shaping VET qualifications

3.1 Methods used to anticipate labour market needs

Anticipation of educational needs is one of the permanent tasks of the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE), a national agency subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The FNBE anticipates national long-term demand for labour and educational needs (quantitative foresight) and develops anticipation of skills needs (qualitative foresight). Foresight efforts are backed up by an extensive co-operation network composed of different ministries, research institutes, regional authorities and labour market organisations. The Ministry of Education and Culture makes use of the results when defining the targets for education and training provision. Target numbers for the whole country for student intake within different levels and fields of education for 2016 were published in the Development Plan for Education and Research for 2011–2016.

3.1.1 Quantitative foresight

The Ministry is responsible for quantifying and targeting education and training provision at a national level. The FNBE produces national anticipation data on demand for labour and educational needs in support of decision-making. In addition, the FNBE supports regional anticipation efforts carried out under the supervision of regional councils. It obtains statistics and produces tools required for anticipation as well as estimates of labour demand and educational needs for regional councils in co-operation with regional councils, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Government Institute for Economic Research (VATT).

The FNBE is also responsible for anticipation of Swedish-language education and training and for providing support and guidance for regional foresight. In addition to carrying out anticipation, the FNBE maintains and develops the online foresight knowledge service (ENSTI), which caters for users and producers of anticipation data.

Objectives concerning education and training provision are set in the Development Plans for Education and Research adopted every four years by the Government, which specify the key qualitative, quantitative and structural policies for different educational sectors. According to the Decree issued on the Development Plans (987/1998), the Development Plans include, among other things, quantitative development targets for education and training. Preparatory work in support of decision-making was carried out under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The responsibility of education providers for anticipating and responding to changes in the world of work has increased, as operational targeting and steering powers have been devolved on universities, polytechnics and VET providers since the 1990's. Providers are required to play an active role in considering the competence needs of the world of work and in regional development.

Education and training provision is also steered by means of performance-based financing systems, which will be developed for all the aforementioned forms of education.

In addition to national anticipation of educational and skills needs, a wide variety of other national and regional EU-funded anticipation and foresight projects are carried out in Finland by bodies such as research institutes, labour market and business and industry organisations, VET providers, universities and polytechnics. In particular, regional anticipation activities have developed rapidly in recent years. Key players in regional anticipation efforts include regional councils, Centres for economic development, transport and the environment, VET providers and higher education institutions. At the same time, the number of national and regional anticipation portals has increased considerably over the last few years. EU-funded projects have also resulted in creation of new enterprises offering expert services in anticipation and foresight for both businesses and public-sector organisations.

In 2011, the FNBE published a report anticipating demand for labour by means of occupational structure forecasts by industry for 2025. In addition, the report anticipates natural wastage from the employed labour force over the 2008–2025 period. In other words, there will be a reduction in the number of employed people for reasons such as retirement. The work reflects views of experts representing different fields as well as industry forecasts by the VATT. The report includes two alternative scenarios.

3.1.2 Qualitative foresight

Qualitative foresight analyses the impact of changes in work content on curricula and qualification structures. Responsibility for qualitative anticipation of educational contents rests with the FNBE, higher education institutions and education providers. The system of National Education and Training Committees functions as the expert organisation in qualitative foresight of education, consisting of a steering group, the National Education and Training Committees and fixed-term expert groups. (Government Decree 882/2010.) The National Education and Training Committees are tripartite advisory bodies appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture to ensure effective contacts between the VET sector and the world of work at a national level. Committees participate in development and anticipation of vocational education and training as advisory bodies. The education providers undertake foresight at the training programme level and react rapidly to changes in competence needs. The National Education and Training Committees undertake long term foresight relating to fields of education. The FNBE develops qualitative foresight of competence needs and supports the National Education and Training Committees in qualitative foresight.

The FNBE carried out an anticipation project on future competences and skills needs from June 2008 until May 2012. The project, known as VOSE, received support from the European Social Fund. The aim of the project was to create procedures which would facilitate anticipation of competences and skills needs for the future for post-compulsory education and in all vocational and professional fields.

The procedures include methods for anticipating competences and skills needs, anticipation processes, as well as networking between the institutions involved. VOSE was a co-operation project engaging several stakeholders, including the state administration, social partners, VET providers, polytechnics, universities, local authorities, research institutes, and student organisations. (See: http://www.oph.fi/english/sources_of_information/projects/vose)

The knowledge produced through the model serves different levels of education, including vocational, polytechnic and university education, education for both youth and adults. Anticipatory knowledge may be utilised for purposes such as the National Core Curricula, curriculum planning and development of the content of education and training.

3.2 The process of designing qualifications

In 2008, the Ministry of Education and Culture determined principles and policies in support of reform of upper secondary vocational qualifications, which the FNBE has followed in its work to develop qualification requirements in 2008–2010. The Decision of the Ministry of Education and Culture covers the requirements for upper secondary vocational qualifications laid down in legislation, the guidelines set out in the Development Plan for Education and Research adopted for the 2007–2012 period and the priorities and objectives for development of vocational education and training specified in the performance agreement between the Ministry and the FNBE. European Union recommendations have also been included in the Decision. The legislation on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is yet to be finalised, as it is being discussed in Parliament. The FNBE has, however, placed upper secondary vocational qualifications and further vocational qualifications at EQF level 4 and specialist vocational qualifications at level 5 according to the Government proposal when preparing the qualification requirements. According to the Development Plan for Education and Research for 2011–2016, the ECVET system will be put into practice in Finland in 2014. The key competences for lifelong learning have been fully taken into account in the qualification requirements in keeping with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council. Further key competences have been added to the requirements from the Finnish perspective.

The qualification requirements are drawn up under FNBE leadership in tripartite co-operation between employers, employees and the educational sector. Independent self-employed people are also represented in the preparation of qualification requirements in fields where self-employment is prevalent to a significant extent. The qualification requirements document determines the modules included in the qualification, any possible specialisations made up of different modules, the composition of the qualification, the vocational skills required for each qualification module, the guidelines for assessment (targets and criteria of assessment) and the ways of demonstrating vocational skills. The qualification requirements and the vocational competences form the basis for identifying the types of occupational work processes in which vocational skills for a specific qualification can be demonstrated and assessed. VET providers, competence test organisers and Qualification Committees may neither fail to comply with nor deviate from the qualification requirements. Qualification committees are appointed by the FNBE. The members represent

employers, employees, teachers and professionals of the field in question. The Committees monitor for example the organisation of competence tests and grant certificates.

The FNBE is responsible for deciding on and preparing the qualification requirements. The starting points for launching the preparation process may be changes in the skills needs in the labour market. These changes can lead to a reform of the qualification requirements or even the qualification structure of upper secondary, further and specialist vocational qualifications. Changes to the qualification structure require that qualification requirements are also renewed. The process of preparing a qualification requirements document usually takes 1 to 2 years. When a qualification requirements document in line with the new qualifications structure is about to be completed, the FNBE determines the Qualification Committee under which the specific qualification will fall or establishes a new Qualification Committee for the new qualification. The qualifications requirements adopted by the FNBE are published in electronic form on the FNBE website and in print.

Vocational qualifications are modular. These modules comprise units of work or activities found in the world of work. Each vocational qualification module constitutes a specific occupational area which can be isolated into an independent and assessable component. The vocational skills requirements determined for each qualification module focus on the core functions of the occupation, mastery of operating processes and the occupational practices of the field in question. These also include skills generally required in working life, such as social skills and key competences for lifelong learning.

The targets of assessment defined in the qualification requirements indicate those areas of competence on which special attention is focused during assessment. The criteria for assessment have been derived from the vocational skills requirements. The assessment criteria determine the grades awarded for modules in upper secondary vocational qualifications and the standard of an acceptable performance in further and specialist qualifications. The section entitled 'Ways of demonstrating vocational skills' describes how candidates are to demonstrate their vocational skills in vocational skills demonstrations or in competence tests.

Under the Vocational Education and Training Act (630/1998), each VET provider is required to approve a curriculum for the studies it provides. The provider prepares and approves a curriculum for vocational qualifications to be completed in upper secondary vocational education and training, which includes a common section for all qualifications and qualification-specific sections. The curriculum is based on the national qualification requirements adopted by the FNBE. It is drawn up in cooperation with the local enterprises so that the training provided corresponds to the local needs. It is particularly important that the representatives from the enterprises participate in the planning of on-the-job learning and vocational skills demonstrations as well as the modules offered locally.

The provider's curriculum regulates and guides the education and training implemented by the provider and other activities closely linked to education. The curriculum also functions as the basis for internal and external evaluation, offering the possibility to evaluate the effectiveness of the education and training implemented by the provider.

The qualification requirements for different qualifications are reformed on the average every 5 to 10 years, but they can be renewed when necessary, either partially or completely. The cycle of reform is influenced by changes to the qualifications structure and legislation, changes in the relevant occupations and other change needs coming from the world of work. Reformed qualification requirements repeal the corresponding previous documents. Those currently taking a qualification may complete the qualification according to the qualification requirements effective when they started taking the qualification. However, the VET programmes and competence-based qualifications that were started prior to entry into force of the reformed qualification requirements must be completed within ten years (upper secondary vocational qualifications) and within two years (further and specialist qualifications), subject to other statutes and regulations.

3.2.1 Involvement of the world of work in developing qualification requirements and quality in VET

The representatives of the world of work are involved in setting the national objectives in the Government programme and the Development Plan for Education and Research. In addition, they participate in the anticipation of skills and education needs both nationally and regionally, for example through Training and Qualification Committees, advisory committees and through consultation processes. The representatives of the world of work are closely involved in defining the vocational competence requirements of qualifications. They also participate in drawing up the qualification requirements at national level.

At regional level the representatives from enterprises participate in the work on local curricula, in organising and planning training and skills demonstrations, regional committees as well as assessment of both skills demonstrations in upper secondary qualifications and competence tests in competence-based qualifications. This allows continuous feedback from the world of work.

The qualification requirements for upper secondary vocational qualifications (52 in total) as well as the National Core Curricula for pre-vocational programmes (4 in total: pre-vocational preparatory education for immigrants, preparatory and rehabilitative instruction and guidance for disabled students, home economics courses and education preparing for upper secondary vocational education and training) were reformed between 2008 and 2010. VET providers and Qualification Committees have implemented curricula revised in compliance with the qualification requirements at the latest on programmes that started on 1st August 2010. The reformed documents are common to upper secondary vocational qualifications completed in school-based VET and as competence-based qualifications (National Core Curricula and qualification requirements).

The reform of the qualification requirements involved strengthening the relevance of upper secondary vocational qualifications to the world of work; diversifying opportunities to complete qualifications; increasing flexibility by diversifying opportunities to include modules from other vocational qualifications in the qualification being completed; including sections supporting entrepreneurial competence, dimensions of sustainable development, as well as health, safety and functional capacity in qualification modules; clarifying the objectives of and competence provided

by core subjects complementing vocational skills; and consolidating the role of the key competences for lifelong learning. The National Core Curricula for pre-vocational programmes were drawn up so as to ensure the best possible consistency in terms of structure and compatibility with the objectives of reforming the qualification requirements.

The FNBE follows the situation of implementation of the reformed qualification requirements through annual questionnaire surveys covering years 2011, 2012 and 2013. Each survey has a common section for all qualifications as well as a sample-based qualification-specific section. The 2011 survey was carried out in the spring of 2012. The surveys will be supplemented by a sample-based document analysis in 2013. The follow-up is being carried out nationally, covering provision of both Finnish- and Swedish-language programmes and qualifications. Surveys focus on VET providers and organisers of competence-based qualifications and, through them, on representatives of the world of work as well as on students and candidates. Surveys are also targeted at Qualification Committees. The follow-up of implementation of the qualification requirements is being carried out on commission by the Ministry of Education and Culture, in compliance with a follow-up plan approved by the Ministry.

The follow-up of implementation of qualification requirements aims to acquire information about the status of implementation in national terms, the extent to which VET providers and qualification organisers have implemented the reformed qualification requirements in terms of schedule and content, the stage at which different providers/organisers and their individual units are in the implementation process and to what extent the objectives set for reform have been achieved. In relation to the above-mentioned broader areas, the FNBE will look more specifically into the status of approval of providers' own curricula, orientation for workplace instructors and assessors of vocational skills demonstrations, individual study plans prepared for students and teachers' participation in work placement periods, etc.

As a result of the follow-up of implementation of the qualification requirements, it will be possible to make decisions, where required, on further development of statutes and qualification requirements and their preparation process, support for VET providers' curriculum development work and support for preparation of plans for arranging competence tests.

To support implementation of follow-up, a steering group has been set up with representatives of employers' and employees' organisations, VET providers and qualification organisers, Qualification Committees, teachers, students, the Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the educational administration.

The implementation and progress of reformed documents was also investigated as part of the previous reform of the National Core Curricula (1999–2001).

3.2.2 Quality assurance of the process

The needs to prepare and reform qualification requirements stem from the world of work, its changes and national skills needs. If there is demand for a new qualification into the qualification structure, the Ministry of Education and Culture needs to approve the new qualification to be included in the qualifications structure by amending its decree. A prerequisite for the approval is

that there is a need for the filed in question in the labour market. This needs to be justified by examining the existing qualifications at different levels of training.

Revision of qualification requirements, which already exist in the qualification structure may be initiated by the FNBE.

The FNBE sets up a qualification project for renewing her requirements, inviting experts representing employees, employers and teachers in the field to participate. The National Education and Training Committee for the field may also appoint an expert to the working group. In the course of its work, the expert group must also consult other experts in the world of work. Once the expert group has completed a draft version of the new qualification requirements, the document will be sent out for a broad consultation process to representatives of unions, organisations, the world of work and VET providers. Following the consultation process, the FNBE adopts the qualification requirements as a nationally binding regulation.

3.3 Validation of non-formal and informal learning (initial VET)

3.3.1 Recognition and validation of a student's prior learning

The Decree on Vocational Education and Training (603/2005) provides that a student's prior learning must be accredited. The education provider is to inform the student of what kind of material and documents must be presented for recognition of prior learning and details of when the student must apply for recognition of prior learning.

3.3.2 Recognition of prior learning

According to the Decree, a student's competence must be assessed as early as at the beginning of the studies. The student's competence and its level must be investigated for identification of his/her strengths and for recognition of prior learning. Recognition of prior learning forms the basis for setting the student's personal objectives, but it is also used to determine the amount of guidance and support that each student needs.

Recognition of prior learning calls for an assessment discussion between the student and the teacher or teachers. To promote recognition of prior learning, different facilitating assessment methods must be developed.

3.3.3 Validation of prior learning

The purpose of recognition of prior learning is to prevent overlapping studies and shorten study times. If the recognition process shows that the objectives set for the module in question, or part thereof, have been reached, such prior learning is validated. Validation of prior learning is recorded in the student's individual study plan.

Validation of prior learning is part of student assessment and it is subject to the same statutes as other forms of assessment. Studies included in the qualification to be completed can be

substituted or accredited by validation of prior learning. The modules substituted by the validation of prior learning are marked on the qualification certificate. The teacher or teachers in charge of the studies in question decide on validation of prior learning. No general time limit can be set for expiration of any previously acquired competence, but the validity of such competence may be verified. If necessary, the student must demonstrate the correspondence of his/her competence with the skills requirements and objectives of the qualification concerned.

The studies assessed on another qualification certificate or general upper secondary school certificate compensate for corresponding core subjects as well as free-choice modules and the optional modules included in vocational modules, for a total of 40 credits (out of 120) at most. Recognition of individual general upper secondary school courses into core subjects may also be validated.

If there is no grade for the competence that covers a complete module and has been achieved through earlier studies or in another way, such competence must be demonstrated to receive a grade for the qualification certificate. Skills demonstrations are used to show evidence of competence in vocational qualification modules. In further and specialist vocational qualifications, the 'pass' grade awarded by the Qualification Committee is marked on the qualification certificate for the recognised module.

The grades for qualification modules which are substituted through recognition and validation can be improved during training. Students wishing to improve their grades after completing their training may do so as private students.

3.3.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning in the competence-based qualifications system

In adult education, the competence-based qualifications (CBQ) system offers an opportunity for adults to obtain upper secondary, further and specialist vocational qualifications based on the principle that full and partial competence-based qualifications can be awarded regardless of how and where the competences and knowledge have been acquired. Recognition of prior learning is at the very core of this system and, in principle, candidates can obtain such qualifications without any formal training at all. This means that there are no requirements to complete a certain amount of studies and the requirements are described in terms of learning outcomes. The competence-based qualifications system also offers by law and in practice each and every candidate an individualisation plan at the following three stages: application for competence-based qualifications and for preparatory training, acquisition of the required vocational skills, and completion of qualifications. The plan takes into account the candidates' personal circumstances, including relevant learning acquired through informal and non-formal means, such as through work or interests. Training providers are responsible for guiding candidates through this process. The validation of informal and non-formal learning is more commonly used in the context of the competence-based qualifications system than in other types of education. This is because the CBQ system has been built around the concept of validation and many learners are adults with relevant work experience.

CHAPTER 4

4. Promoting participation in VET

4.1 Promoting access to VET

4.1.1 Social guarantee for young people

The current Government is committed to implementing a social guarantee for young people. It means that each young person under 25 and every new qualification-holder under 30 will be offered a job, on-the-job training, a study place, or a period in a workshop or in rehabilitation within three months of becoming unemployed. With a view to realising the social guarantee, measures will be taken to ensure flexible education paths and flexible combination of education and work and to make full use of the capacity and expertise of liberal adult education institutions. The realisation of the guarantee entails several measures taken by different administrative sectors towards the same end. The social guarantee will come into effect from the beginning of 2013.

The educational guarantee forms part of the social guarantee. Every school-leaver will be guaranteed a place at general upper secondary school, in vocational education and training, in apprenticeship training, in a youth workshop, in rehabilitation or by other means.

Although the supply of education and training at upper secondary level exceeds the size of the school-leaving age group, there are problems with regard to the transition to further studies. One challenge is the marked difference in the regional accessibility of VET. Another challenge is related to the fact that there is more than one age group competing for the same study places. Many of the places are taken by those who already have a qualification, while many school-leavers and other unqualified people remain outside education and training. Consequently, the educational guarantee will be taken into account in the size and regional targeting of student intake as well as in the revision of student admission principles.

Student admission to vocational upper secondary education and training will be revised as from 2013 to give priority to school-leavers and unqualified people. At the same time, separate admission quotas will be approved for students changing educational institutions, while people with qualifications will primarily be guided to study tracks intended for adults, such as competence-based qualifications. The local authorities are expected to monitor young people's transition to further studies and provide information, advice and guidance for those who are left without a study place.

Other measures include development of basic education and guidance counselling, promotion of flexible study paths and combination of education and work, as well as making full use of the capacity of liberal adult education (Government's Development Plan for Education and Research 2011–2016).

4.1.2 Guidance and counselling

Guidance and counselling is provided at all levels of education. The guidance and counselling provided within the education system is complemented by guidance services available from public employment offices.

Themes covered by guidance and counselling include different education and training options, occupations and the world of work. Guidance counsellors in Finnish schools are highly educated. They have Master's level teacher training, including or supplemented by studies in guidance and counselling.

In vocational upper secondary education and training, even if guidance counsellors play a key role in coordinating, planning and implementing of guidance and counselling, guidance is also an integral part of the work of all teachers. A teacher's task is to guide and motivate the students to complete their qualifications, to support them in the planning of their studies, to help them to find their strengths and to develop their learning skills. In the workplace, guidance is coordinated by a qualified workplace instructor.

4.1.3 Targeted measures during basic education that contribute to participation in VET

Periods of work experience

Work experience periods have been part of compulsory education since the creation of the comprehensive school in the mid-1970s. The purpose is to familiarise pupils with the world of work, thus supporting them in their choices concerning their future studies and careers. Another aim is to increase the appreciation for working life.

Additional basic education

Young people who have completed their nine-year basic education can opt to take one extra year. This voluntary additional education, the so-called 10th grade, is intended to help and encourage young people to continue their studies at upper secondary level.

Pupils enrolled in additional basic education may supplement their knowledge and improve their marks on their school-leaving certificates so as to improve their opportunities to apply for further studies. There is a strong emphasis on guidance and counselling. Students must have an opportunity to get an introduction to different occupations and working life in general. The curriculum may also include vocational studies.

Flexible basic education

Flexible Basic Education (JOPO) was originally a project launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2006. Its purpose was to reduce drop-out and school failure by developing new teaching methods and procedures. Flexibility and strong focus on individual needs were essential in selecting methods such as activity-based learning, small group teaching, on-the-job learning and different learning environments. Multidisciplinary co-operation, early intervention and intensified home/school co-operation also played a crucial role.

According to an impact analysis published in 2008, JOPO activities were effective: nearly 90 per cent of the pupils had experienced an improvement from the baseline situation. JOPO's greatest effects were in ensuring that pupils were awarded their school-leaving certificates, in reducing absenteeism and in improving study motivation. The most common reasons for enrolment in a JOPO group were problems with motivation, a need to study in a small group and low school achievement.

Flexible basic education became an established component of basic education in 2010. It is designed for pupils who need a more flexible curriculum but not necessarily special needs education. It has stronger connections with the world of work than regular basic education, including more work experience periods.

4.1.4 A national joint application system

In the last spring term of basic education, pupils are expected to apply for further studies through the national joint application system administered by the FNBE. They can apply to the institutions of their choice regardless of their domicile. The web-based joint application service provides comprehensive information on various education and training opportunities and makes it possible to apply online. Guidance counsellors are responsible for monitoring that all pupils find a study place or a work experience placement (generally a workshop). Approximately 95 per cent of school leavers find a place to study immediately after basic education. Joint applications to upper secondary level education and training take place twice a year.

School leavers who cannot find a place at upper secondary level can participate in additional basic education or preparatory training for VET (described in 4.1.3 and 4.1.5).

4.1.5 Preparatory instruction and guidance for VET

Preparatory instruction has been developed to lower the threshold to education and training and to reduce drop-out. The aim of this instruction is to improve students' capacities to obtain a place in vocational upper secondary education and training and to get acquainted with a wide range of various fields of education, occupations and jobs. Students can improve their capacities for studying and build the knowledge base needed in the studies. The instruction helps students with their career choices and plans.

Instruction takes place between basic education and upper secondary vocational education and training, lasting from six months to a year. The essential principles of instruction are individuality, flexibility, practical and activity-based studies and vocational orientation. This provision started as an experiment but was made a permanent part of the education system as from August 2010.

Other forms of preparatory instruction and guidance are home economics instruction, pre-vocational preparatory education for immigrants and rehabilitative instruction and guidance for the disabled.

Home economics instruction aims to improve students' practical skills in managing their everyday lives and personal well-being and improve their opportunities for further studies, particularly in the fields of tourism and catering, as well as social services and health care. Pre-vocational preparatory instruction for immigrants aims to improve their language and other skills needed for moving on to vocational upper secondary studies. Provision for disabled people aims to help them build up their capacities for vocational upper secondary education and training, working life and independent living and to help them clarify their future plans. It also supports re-training for adult students who have become ill or disabled and promotes their return to working life or education.

4.1.6. Youth workshops

Youth workshops offer training and work experience placements to unemployed young people under 29 years of age. They offer a place for young people to learn life skills, grow into adulthood and get hands-on work experience, encouraging and helping them to seek further training. Youth workshops are co-financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

Youth workshop activities are multidisciplinary in nature. They combine activities within four sectors of administration (youth, education, employment and social) into concurrent and complementary schemes in young people's social empowerment. Participation lasts six months on average. There are around 260 youth workshops, with around 21,000 participants every year.

4.1.7 Learner's web service

Electronic information, guidance and counselling services are developed as part of the learner's web services included in the SAdE programme (Programme expediting electronic transactions and democracy). The aim is to ensure that individuals find all adult education and training options available in Finland via the electronic education centre and that it is possible to apply for education through the online service. The service is being built during 2011–2014.

4.1.8 Study leave

Finland has a study leave system based on legislation. The aim is to improve employees' opportunities for training and study. Study leave is intended for those who have been working for the same employer for at least one year. It covers publicly funded education and training in Finland or abroad, or training organised by a trade union. Study leave may be taken for a maximum period of two years over a period of five years, and over one or more periods of time. Study leave is unpaid, unless otherwise specifically agreed with the employer.

4.2 Flexible study paths responding to the needs of individuals and the world of work

The threshold to participation in vocational education and training has been lowered by creating different pathways leading to a vocational qualification. The main form for completing a vocational qualification is school-based education and training, including at least 20 credits (about six months) of on-the-job learning. Vocational qualifications may also be completed as apprenticeship training, which also contains courses arranged at vocational institutions. Furthermore, upper secondary vocational qualifications may be obtained through competence tests independent of how the vocational skills have been acquired.

In order to respond to the changing requirements of the world of work, the flexibility of vocational qualifications has been further increased by, for example, diversifying opportunities to include modules from other vocational qualifications (incl. further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications) or polytechnic degrees. The goal is more flexibility – this will allow students to create individual learning paths and to increase students' motivation for completing their studies. Furthermore, it is meant to give education providers an opportunity to meet the demands of the regional and local world of work more effectively.

4.2.1 Apprenticeship training

Apprenticeship training is a work-based form of VET provision. It is based on a written fixed-term employment contract (apprenticeship contract) between an employer and an apprentice, who must be at least 15 years old.

Apprenticeship training is based on a National Core Curriculum or the requirements for the relevant competence-based qualification, according to which the student's individual learning programme is formed. It is drawn up so as to allow for the needs and prerequisites of the workplace and the student. The student's previous education and work experience must be taken into account and recognised as part of the learning programme.

Approximately 70–80 per cent of the time used for learning takes place in the training workplace, where the student's training is entrusted to the responsible on-the-job instructor(s). Theoretical education is mainly provided by a vocational institution or vocational adult education centre.

The employer pays the apprentice's wages according to the relevant collective agreement for the period of workplace training. For the period of theoretical studies, the student receives social benefits, such as a daily allowance and allowances for accommodation and travel expenses. The employer receives training compensation to cover the costs of training provided in the workplace.

4.2.2 Competence-based qualifications

In Finland, vocational adult education and training is very much based on the system of competence-based qualifications (see also 3.3). A specific benefit of this system is that it makes it possible to recognise an individual's vocational competencies regardless of whether they were

acquired through work experience, studies or other activities. Recognition of prior learning is a way to promote participation and completion of qualifications in vocational education and training.

The system is steered and developed in close co-operation between education authorities and representatives of the world of work. Competence-based qualifications provide adults with a flexible way to enhance and maintain their vocational skills. Vocational skills are demonstrated in competence tests, which focus on the skills and competencies required in the occupation concerned.

There are three levels of competence-based qualifications:

- Vocational qualifications indicate competence to enter employment in the field.
- Further vocational qualifications indicate the vocational skills required of skilled workers in the field.
- Specialist vocational qualifications indicate a command of the most demanding tasks in the field.

Competence-based qualifications provide eligibility for further study at polytechnics or universities.

4.2.3 Personal training accounts in adult education and training

Reviewers appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture will prepare proposals for adoption of personal training accounts by the end of 2012. The aim of the training accounts is to develop the system of adult education and training to be less supply-based and to respond to demand for education and training and to the individual needs of learners more effectively.

4.3 Financial support for VET students

Equality of opportunities is a long-standing fundamental principle of Finnish education policy. The background of the individual, including his or her financial circumstances should not be a barrier to participation in education. The practical implications of this principle are seen in the Finnish education system where most educational provision is publicly funded and free for students from pre-primary to higher education levels. Another concrete manifestation is the availability of different forms of financial support for learners of all ages.

4.3.1 Student financial aid is available for full-time studies

Financial aid is available for full-time studies at a vocational institution. The main forms of support are study grants, housing supplements and government guarantees for student loans. The first two of these are government-financed monthly benefits, while student loans are granted by banks.

Study grant is available as soon as eligibility for child benefit finishes at the age of 17. The monthly amount before tax varies between €38 and €246 depending on the student's age, marital status and type of accommodation. The housing supplement covers 80 per cent of the rent, but may not exceed €201.60 per month.

In addition, school transport subsidy is available when the distance between home and school exceeds 10 km and the monthly costs of travel are at least €54.

4.3.2 The Education Fund grants support for adult students

The Education Fund is a fund administered by the social partners of the Finnish labour market. Its purpose is to support employees' vocational studies by granting them financial assistance (Adult education allowance) and to support development of the vocational qualifications system by granting scholarships for competence-based qualifications (Scholarship for qualified employee). The Fund also provides information and advice on benefits and makes proposals for development of legislation within its field. In 2011, the Education Fund paid out a total of €78.7 million in benefits, of which adult education allowances and scholarships for qualified employees accounted for €70 million and €8.8 million, respectively.

1) Adult education allowance

In Finland, an adult education allowance is available to employees and self-employed people who wish to go on study leave for at least two months. The allowance can be granted to an applicant who has a working history of at least 8 years (or at least five years by 31st July 2010), and who has been working for the same employer for at least one year. To qualify for the allowance, the applicant must participate in studies leading to a qualification or in further vocational training organised by a Finnish educational institution under public supervision. The duration of the allowance is determined on the basis of the applicant's working history and ranges from 2 to 18 months. Since 1st August 2010, the amount of the allowance has been equal to the amount of the earnings-related unemployment allowance, without increments. For example, on the basis of a monthly salary of €1,600, a student will receive an education allowance of €1,062.

2) Scholarships for qualified employees

A scholarship is available for those who have passed the competence tests included in a competence-based qualification. The amount of the scholarship is €365 and it is tax-free. The scholarship must be applied for within a year after passing the tests.

4.3.3 Exempting adults without qualifications from fees relating to competence-based qualifications

The Government has decided to exempt adults without vocational qualifications from the fees charged for training leading to competence-based qualifications. The aim is to lower the threshold to participation in adult education and training.

4.4 The funding system and financial incentives for VET providers

Upper secondary vocational education and training is mainly co-financed by central and local governments. In addition, VET providers receive funding for vocational further and continuing training, which does not involve local governments. Providers receive funding for VET provision from the Ministry of Education and Culture based on certain calculation criteria. VET providers are free to decide on the use and allocation of funds granted for VET provision. Each VET provider is assigned a unit price calculated per student, the amount of which is based on the specific fields and, in some cases, on the qualifications included in its provision. The amounts of funding are influenced by each provider's student numbers in different fields and in different types of provision, such as school-based programmes, apprenticeship training and special needs VET.

A proportion of funding is based on the provider's operational performance. Performance-based funding is based on indicators such as reduction in drop-out rates and VET completion rate.

4.4.1 Training compensation for employing apprentices

An employer who takes on an apprentice receives training compensation to cover the costs of training provided at the workplace. The amount of compensation to be paid to the employer is agreed separately as part of each apprenticeship contract. The compensation is paid either by the local apprenticeship centre or the institution providing apprenticeship training.

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