

How do vocational education and training systems respond to change

Initial findings from Cedefop “Changing nature and role of European VET-project

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The aim of the Changing nature and role of VET in Europe-project

An effort to “take one step back” and get a deeper understanding of

- the ‘VET system’ itself, its characteristics and dynamics
- the relationship of the ‘VET system’ to other education and training sectors
- the impact of external factors on the ‘VET system’, demography, occupational change, etc.
- To understand differences across Europe
- To improve our understanding of change over the last two decade – pointing to te future

Six work assignments

1. Systematically map the definition and conceptualisation of vocational education and training at national level
2. Analyse how external factors, notably demography and changes in occupational structures, influence VET
3. Analyse the developments of initial VET at upper secondary level (EQF 3-4)
4. Analyse VET from a lifelong learning perspective;
5. Analyse the role of VET at higher levels (EQF5 and above) and the issues of 'academic' versus 'vocational drift'.
6. Outline possible developments paths (scenarios) for European VET into the 21st century

Vocational education and training EU 28 (2015)

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| VET at EQF 1-2 | ? |
| VET at EQF levels 3-4 | 10,3 million (47,5% of total EQF 3-4) |
| VET at EQF level 5 | 1.6 million (93% of total EQF 5)) |
| VET at EQF 6-8 | ? |
| Continuing VET | ? |

Initial VET – under threat?

- While declining in a limited number of European countries,
 - ✓ There is no overall trend towards declining enrolment in VET
 - ✓ There is no general move away from VET towards general education
- Demographic changes has led to a drop in the total number of young people attending upper secondary education and training
 - ✓ VET has been able to retain its position relative to general education at this level

Changing VET – key trends

| | Early 1990s | Mid 2010s |
|---|---|---|
| VET as formal part of the education system | Emerging from the fragmented provision of largely industry led training | A more coherent system of VET fully integrated into national qualification systems (and made visible through national qualification frameworks) |
| Higher level VET / progression to higher education | Not much in evidence | Still patchy, but an active area of policy development |
| Standard setting | Often in the hands of specific industry who set their own standards | Centralised control of standard setting with some autonomy granted to vocational schools / regional authorities |
| Competence based approaches | Only just being established | Now an accepted part of the VET system |

Changing VET.....key trends

| | Early 1990s | Mid 2010s |
|---|--|---|
| The prioritisation of work placed and/or work-based learning | While recognised as advantageous in some countries and sectors, also contested by some. | The preferred means of delivering VET in many countries |
| Skills anticipation | Not much in evidence; piecemeal approaches | Increasingly integrated systems being put in place |
| Recognition and validation of learning acquired outside of formal education system | Not much in evidence | An integral part of the VET system in many countries |
| Attractiveness of VET | Strong labour market relevance and attractiveness in some sectors, but overall limited attractiveness due to limited progression opportunities (VET as dead-end) | Still lower attractiveness than general education but has turned into a main-stream choice at upper secondary level |

Key factors influencing the responsiveness of VET-systems (1)

The integration of VET systems into national education and training systems:

- In a number of countries this requires the VET sector to start interacting with (for example) important (and new) service sector occupations, going beyond the traditional focus on manufacturing/construction and crafts.
- The increased focus on transferability of qualifications and permeability of education and training systems contribute to reduce/abolish dead-ends.

Key factors influencing the responsiveness of VET-systems (2)

The balancing of centralised and decentralised governance:

- Overall we can observe efforts to increase the autonomy at the local and regional level, allowing institutions to react more rapidly to local labour market needs
- Overall we observe a tendency to centralise the setting of VET-qualifications standards, focussing on a more limited number of broad qualification profiles.
- The (national) definition of broad standards is often combined with increased autonomy to define teaching material and learning formats.

Key factors influencing the responsiveness of VET-systems (3)

The increased role of skills anticipation and the critical role of feed-back loops:

- Increased attention has been given to skills anticipation systems to counter skills mismatches
- Skills anticipation can not operate in isolation but need to be linked to and integrated into a systematic dialogue between education and training and labour market stakeholders (at different levels).
- The 'feed-back-loops' currently in operation across European Vet systems are of varying quality.
- We need to improve our 'future-assurance' capabilities; integrating more sophisticated skills information in 'feed-back-loops' allowing for continuous review and renewal.

Key factors influencing the responsiveness of VET-systems (4)

Balancing the content of VET programmes and qualifications:

- The rate of change in the world of work makes it difficult (impossible) to precisely state what is required by VET-candidate in 5 or (indeed) 10 years
- The shift to competence based approaches across Europe puts us in a better position to articulate and address this dilemma.
- A key challenge for all countries is to balance the requirements for (changing) occupational specific skills with (more stable) transversal skills and competences.
- Countries have chosen different strategies in this area

Key factors influencing the responsiveness of VET-systems (5)

Apprenticeships and work based learning:

- The increasing attention to apprenticeships and work based learning is increasingly seen as critical for developing the skills and competence required for problem solving, continuous learning and team work (etc.)
- No single model exists; to avoid negative and inefficient policy copying the need for tailoring these learning approaches to local need is of key importance.
- In many countries a challenge to introduce these models outside traditional areas in manufacturing, construction and crafts.

Key factors influencing the responsiveness of VET-systems (6)

Policy visibility :

- Invisibility of VET in policy discussions is dangerous. Treating VET as the poor and declining relative can seriously reduce its ability to address and respond to change.
- Simplistic narratives regarding the declining role of VET are dangerous; while robots may replace certain skills; an ageing service society will require others.

Key factors influencing the responsiveness of VET-systems (7)

Globalisation and the international dimension of VET

- International requirements to qualifications are becoming more visible and important and will increasingly start to influence national VET policies and practises
- EU policy has - in selected countries - acted as a catalyst for change especially in the development of qualification systems, the recognition of competences, and developing skills anticipation systems (c.f. use of ESF funding)
- Skills competitions - like World Skills – symbolise an increasing interest in what binds national VET systems together.

VET in the 21st century: Expansion and diversification?

| | Expansion & Diversification | Strengthening & Intensification |
|--|---|---|
| Epistemological / Pedagogical Perspective on VET | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increasing pluralism of forms of VET, Increased individualization (e.g. diverse pathways, heterogeneous groups) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increasing work-based elements (e.g. internships) in school-based VET – more practice-oriented curricula |
| Education System Perspective on VET | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – expanding apprenticeships to lower and higher levels – increase of higher VET – new VET providers – Modularisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – re-emphasis on apprenticeship – decrease in number of profiles, broadening profiles, – merging of IVET/CVET |
| Socio-Economic / Labour Market Perspective on VET | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – VET spreading to lower and higher skill levels – Various new/additional purposes of VET (e.g. equity, combat youth unemployment) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fostering employer engagement – strengthening role of social partners |

The Changing role of VET project moving into 2018

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<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/changing-nature-and-role-vocational-education-and-training-vet-europe>



The changing nature and role of vocational education and training in Europe

Volume 1: conceptions of vocational education and training: an analytical framework



The changing nature and role of vocational education and training in Europe

Volume 2: results of a survey among European VET experts

Research Team

