

Transversal skills and VET curriculum: Finnish perspective

Cedefop workshop on Future of VET, 27th November, 2020

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UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FINNISH INSTITUTE FOR
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

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Contribution to a special issue

EERJ European
Educational
Research Journal

Balancing ‘flexibility’ and ‘employability’: The changing role of general studies in the Finnish and Swedish VET curricula of the 1990s and 2010s

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European Educational Research Journal

1–21

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DOI: 10.1177/1474904119830508

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Definitions: Competence and transversal competence

- ✧ **Competence:** the ability that an individual has to complete a given task (Eraut 2003, Mulder, 2001, Rychen & Salganik, 2003, Jose Sa & Serpa, 2018)
- ✧ **Transversal competences:** a set of competences that can be applied in any professional situation or task, regardless of where they were attained, across contexts, e.g.
- ✧ **Critical and innovative thinking, Inter-personal skills, Intra-personal skills, Global citizenship, Physical and psychological health** (UNESCO, 2013)

General Skills in Finnish VET (Nylund & Virolainen, 2019)

✧ **Research questions:**

- ✧ How integrated or isolated, VET is in relation to higher education preparatory programmes (general upper secondary education) and working life, and
- ✧ How the general subjects are integrated in the VET curriculum in the 1990s and 2010
- ✧ Bernstein's (2000) concepts: pedagogic code, classification and framing, comparative curriculum analysis; analysis of VET curricula as expressions of different modalities of **a pedagogic code**.

Bernstein's (2000) concepts; comparison vehicle and transport qualification in Sweden and Finland 1990s, 2010s

- ✧ **Classification:** relational concept that concerns the “what” of education. If strong: clear boundaries between subjects and educational boundaries. If weak -> blurred boundaries.
- ✧ **Framing:** concerns the relationships set up within a given classification; “how” of education, in what order and tempo knowledge is to be learned, what kind of pedagogic practices and evaluation are to be used. If strong: clear and explicit rules and principles for classroom practices. **Here:** how control of content in VET was organized through steering by policy and curricular documents such as syllabuses and assessment criteria
- ✧ **Pedagogic code:** relationships between the classification and framing of vocational vis á vis general education

Comparison of dominating discursive principles SWE/FIN

| | 1990s reforms | 2010s reforms |
|---|---|--|
| SWEDEN Dominating discursive principles | (Lpf94) Flexibility, lifelong learning, along with other principles such as citizenship, environment and internationalisation. | (Lgy11) Workplace relevance, employability the dominating principle. |
| FINLAND Dominating discursive principles | (Reform 1995–1998) Flexibility, lifelong learning. | (Curriculum reform 2015) Individualised study programmes, adoption of competence-based approach, accreditation of (prior) learning. |

What principles underpinned the organisation of VET and general subjects in relation to enabling transition to higher education and labour market in these Nordic countries

- ✧ Relation of VET and general subjects was reorganised in all reforms both in FIN and SWE.
- ✧ The interpretation of 'market', and in how education should be organised to adequately meet the market's demands changed from 1990s to 2010s.-> Common to both SWE and FIN.
- ✧ In the 1990s a less strongly classified VET system vis á vis GEN
- ✧ In the 2010s, in contrast, the labour market came to be perceived as having more specific demands that have to be met, and, simultaneously, employability and entrepreneurship were promoted more and more (stronger framing and classification of VET)

What principles underpinned... continued.

- ✧ In 2010s: curriculum from multiple organizing principles toward more emphasis to employability, but more so in Sweden, whereas in Finland in particular the transversal skills and competences became layered as parts of the curriculum requirements
- ✧ In the modality of the 2010s, general subjects are given a more instrumental and narrow role in creating employable workers, while in 1990s they were more promoting active citizenship.

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