



# Apprenticeship as a flexible opportunity for continuous learning – how the system works in Finland for underrepresented groups and all adults

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**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training



# Reform of continuous learning

**Goals:** The level of education and competence among the population will rise at all levels of education, differences in learning outcomes will decrease, and educational equality will increase

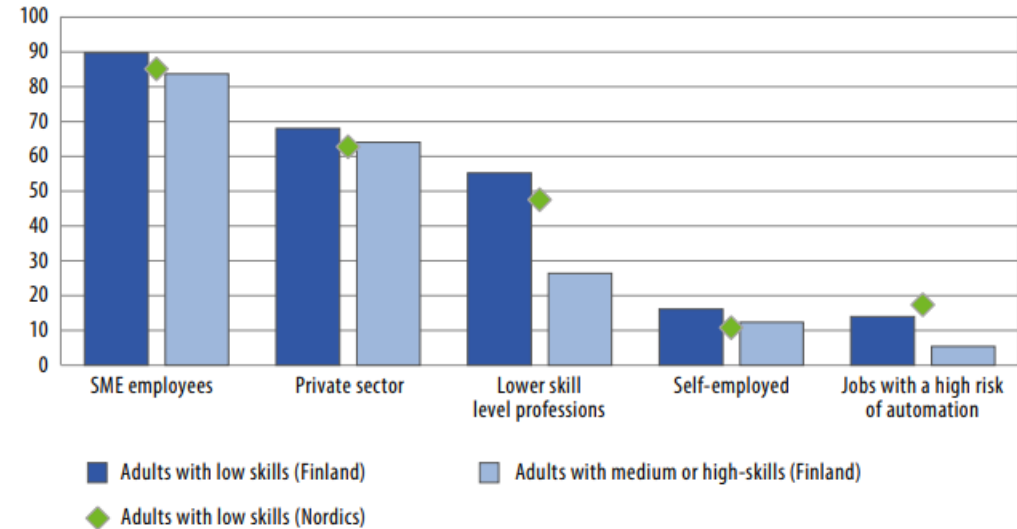
**Action:** The reform promotes learning in working life, creates a service system for continuous learning and increases equity of participation

**Phase:** From 2022 implementing the parliamentary reform of continuous learning

# A particular challenge is that those most in need education are least likely to access it

We want to improve the level of competence and increase participation, especially in the following **under-represented population groups in education**

- those with a low skill level
- unemployed and long-term unemployed, lay-offs
- those over 55 years old
- low-paid
- those working in SMEs and sole entrepreneurs
- those working in structural change fields/tasks
- immigrants



**Figure 3.** Adults with low basic skills work more often in small private sector companies: the labour market status of employed people with low basic skills (PIAAC), %. Source: PIAAC (2012, 2015)

In Finland, there is an increasing mismatch between the supply and demand of labor. The employment rate was 73,7 % and the unemployment rate 6,8 % in July 2022.

# A significant part of learning that occurs during a person's career takes place at the workplace and as part of work

In reform of continuous learning are developed e.g.

- guidance and funding for different levels of education in such a way that working life-oriented, versatile educational entities are created
- identification and recognition of competence
- lifelong guidance services
- **supporting the participation of underrepresented groups in adult education**
- conversion, supplementary and specialization trainings
- **apprenticeship is developed as a retraining and adult training route**
- the higher education system is developed as a platform for continuous learning
- improving the opportunities for the unemployed to study
- study leave system and adult education allowance
- anticipating of structural changes is developed

This requires a comprehensive and systemic approach, and many policy sectors cooperation.

The new Service Centre for Continuous Learning and Employment started in 2022

- analyses the competence and labor market needs of working life
- finances education and training intended for working-age people
- develops information, advisory and guidance services
- supports regional and other cooperation.

Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment are jointly responsible for directing the Centre

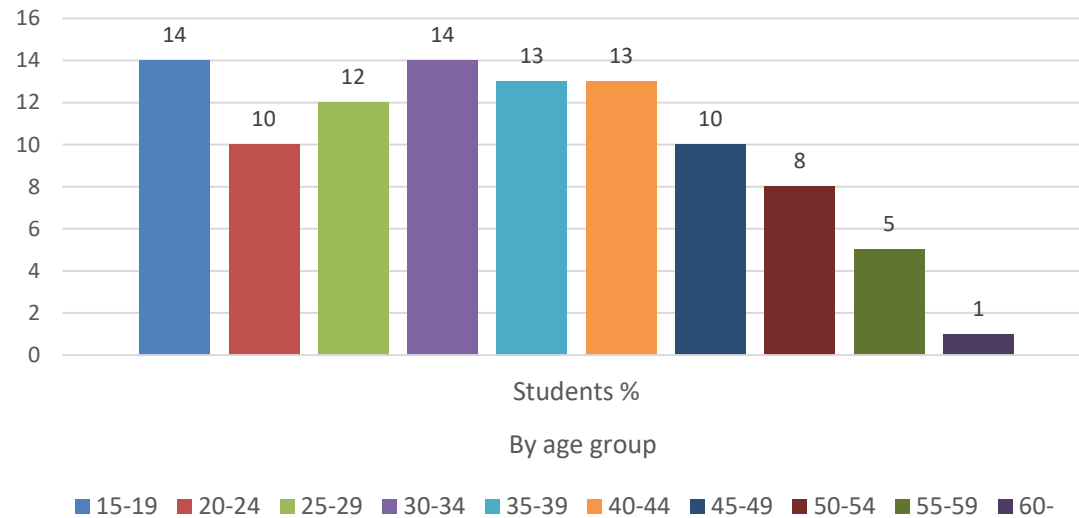


# Apprenticeship as a flexible opportunity for continuous learning

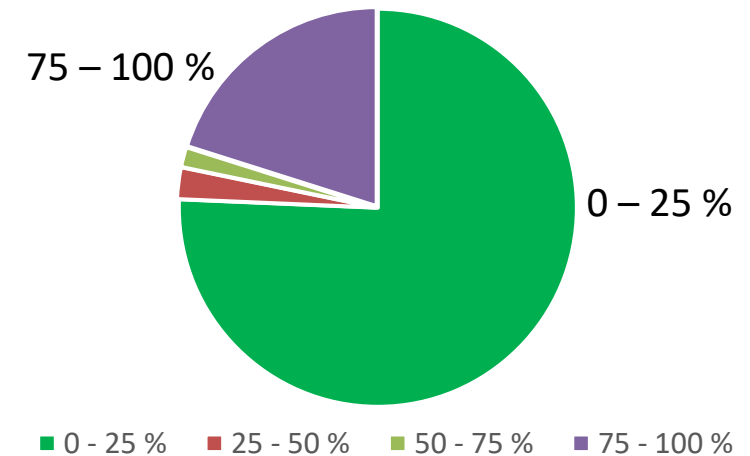
Apprenticeship is not a separate form of education in Finland, but it is one equal form of acquiring competence inside vocational education and training system.

# 76 % of apprentices are aged 25+

24 % of VET students included apprenticeship in their studies in 2021



Acquisition competence of education completers in 01-08/2022 (completion of education); share of apprenticeships in personal development plan of students



National feedback 07/2021-06/2022, General assesment, scale 1-5

### Apprenticeship students in final stage

*I'm satisfied with the education and training I have received*

4,4

### Workplace instructors and those responsible for cooperation with VET providers

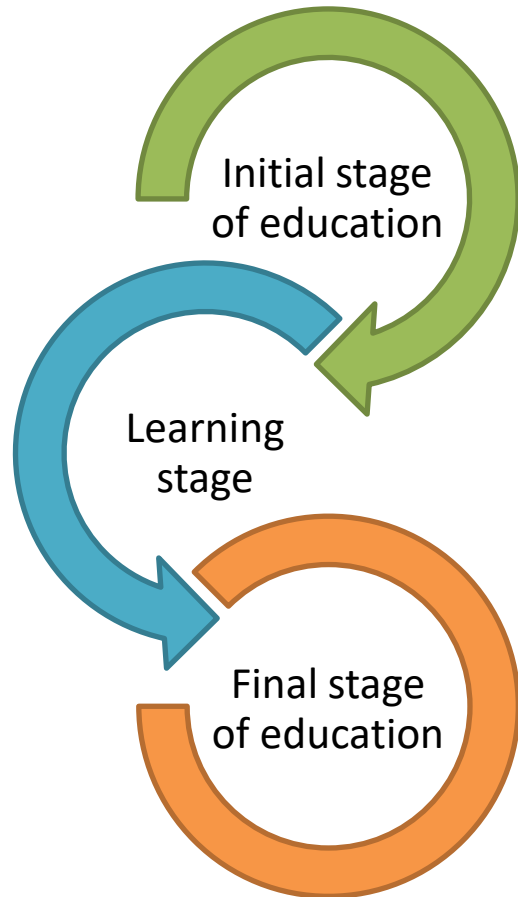
*I'm / we are satisfied with the institutions actions in organising work-based learning*

4,2

Those students and workplaces who have experience in apprenticeship are mainly satisfied. The use of apprenticeship should be expanded and more widely communicated about its possibilities.

Source: vipunen.fi

# The personalization makes the student's learning pathway individual and flexible in VET, including apprenticeship



## The initial stage of studies

- Personal goals and career plans are discussed between the institution and person applying, and when apprenticeship, the competence needs of the labor market is also discussed with the employer.
- The goal is decided together: full qualification, unit or units or smaller part. Student's goal can be broader than the needs of the workplace, or if the work tasks of the workplace do not enable learning everything, it is possible to study some of the units with an apprenticeship, and some of the units in other learning environments. These can be offered by the institution or other workplace.
- The VET provider ensures that the workplace is suitable for training the goal: work tasks, tools, competent personnel, competent workplace instructor.
- The apprenticeship is an option for the entrepreneurs too. Then the workplace instructor/mentor can be from other company.

### Key actors:

- Student
- Guidance counsellor or teacher of the VET provider
- Representative of workplace/workplace instructor
- Others participate in guidance and support, if needed

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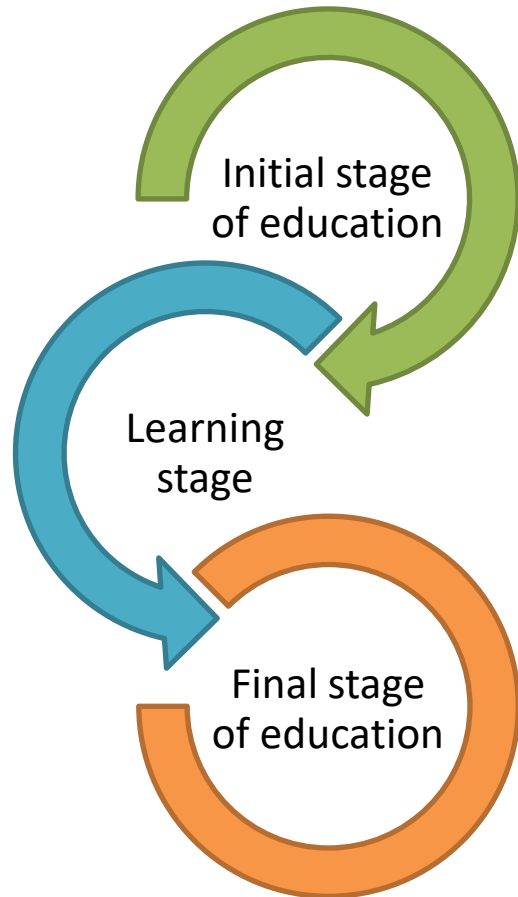
## The initial stage of studies

A personal competence development plan is drawn up for each student, including apprentice (IVET and CVET)

The VET provider identifies and recognize the prior learning and it will be documented in plan. Only competences that are missing are acquired.

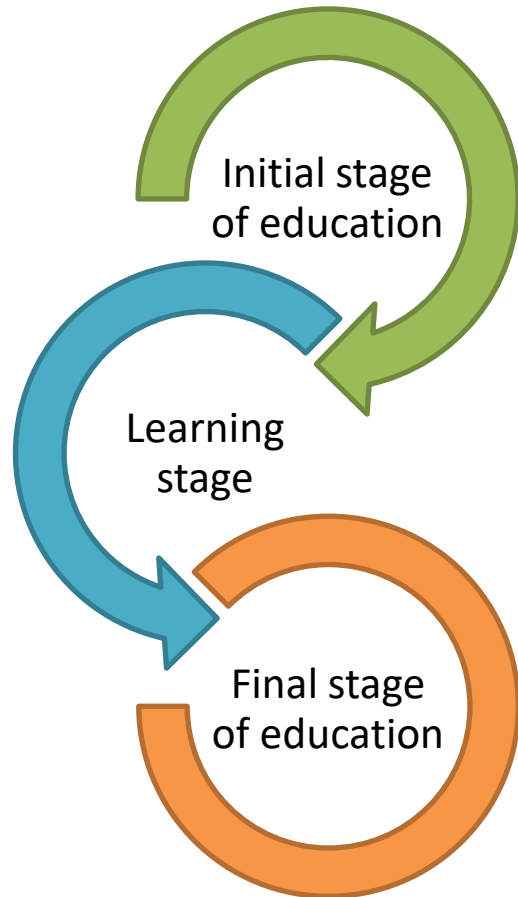
In plan is documented:

- ✓ *what*; vocational skills requirements and learning outcomes are based in national qualifications requirements; the optional parts of the qualifications can be used to direct competence
- ✓ *where and how*; a plan for learning environments; key tasks at workplace, other studies that support learning if needed; e.g., in institution, online and virtual learning environments, studying independently
- ✓ *when*; learning periods, competence demonstrations in real work tasks
- ✓ *guidance and support*; responsible workplace instructor, support and special need support from institution, and if needed, this is done in multiprofessional collaboration
- ✓ *what after the final stage*: students career plan related to work or postgraduate studies





# The personalization makes the student's learning pathway individual and flexible in VET, including apprenticeship



## The learning stage

- A personal competence development plan is a living document

The student and the teacher have guidance discussions during the studies, and **the plan can be updated if the situation changes**; e.g., due to the goal, phase of progress, the situation at the workplace, the student's life situation.

The plan is kept up-to-date. The changes are agreed together with all parties, in apprenticeship also with the representative of workplace.

Data protection must be taken into account. The student's entire plan is not a document open to everyone. The workplace only participates in the processing of the part related to it.

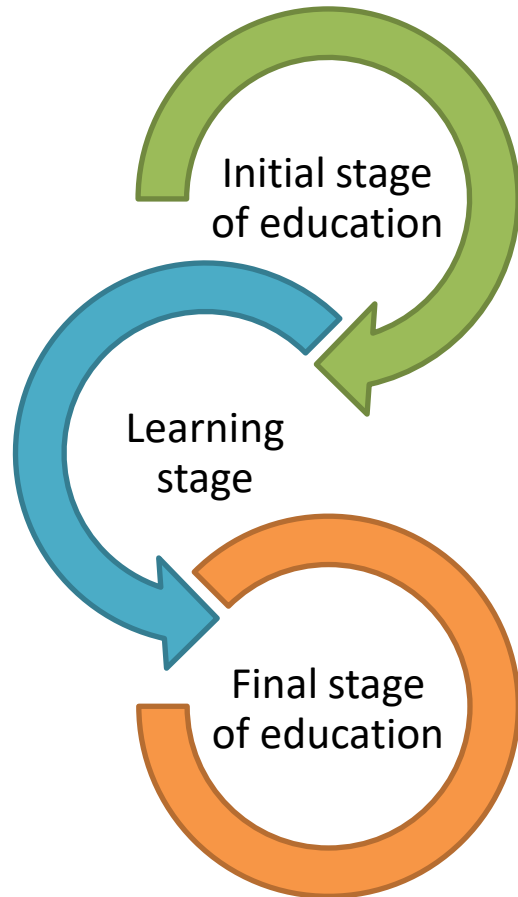
- The VET provider monitors and supports the student and the workplace in implementing the plan

## National database

The VET providers transfer daily the data from personal plans and completed studies defined in the act to the national database. The data is used e.g., personalization of studies, recognition of previous studies, monitoring general progress, statistics, evaluation of education. The data can also be used to build new national e-services, if the permission is defined in the act.

Students have access to their own data. **Coming:** the workplace is given access to the part of the plan that relates to them.

# The personalization makes the student's learning pathway individual and flexible in VET, including apprenticeship



## The final stage of education

- There is no nationally determined length of time to reach the goal/qualification. It is determined based on each student's personal plan.
- The aim is to plan an apprenticeship at least to the final stage of studies, because it promotes employment.
- The VET provider issues a certificate for initial vocational qualification, further vocational qualification and specialist vocational qualification or their units.
- The graduate can enter the working life or continue with postgraduate studies. Vocational qualifications give general eligibility for further studies at polytechnics and universities. There are no dead ends in individual study pathways.

In VET, general education and basic skills are strengthened without weakening the acquisition of professional expertise. In this way, students' actual opportunities for further studies and for updating their skills during their working career are ensured.

# Incentives to participate

## System level support for learning:

- **The amount of guidance is to be ensured.** From 1.8.2022: the amount of teaching and guidance needed by an initial vocational qualification student has been set at least 12 hours per competence point (\*. The VET provider can offer more depending on the individual need.
- From 1.8.2022 **reformed 'TUVA'- preparatory education and training** for upper secondary qualification. This is for young people and adults, who need capabilities and guidance support for transitioning to degree education, as well as completing these.
- The Finnish government has allocated **additional resources to hire teachers and counselors** to ensure students receive the instruction and guidance they need.

\*) Competence point is the scope unit of competence, which describes the extent and depth of the qualification or its units, not the time required for studying or the amount of teaching. The scope of the initial vocational qualification is 180 competence points, and 120-210 for further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications.

## Financial incentives:

- The employer pays at least **the minimum wage to the apprenticeship student.**
- New: **it's possible to study by unemployment benefit** (within limits). This subsidy is money intended to support the unemployed during their job search.
- For adults: **the adult education allowance** from the Employment Fund.
- **The employer may be entitled for training compensation.** It's agreed between the employer and the VET provider based on the students' personal guidance needs.
- **Service Centre for Continuous Learning and Employment finances training** and skills services especially for restructuring sectors and underrepresented groups, mainly for those who are employed and those outside the workforce. The training is implemented in such a way that participation is possible in addition to full-time or part-time work.

# Strengths of the Finnish approach

- Continuous applying system; in addition to joint application, you can apply at any time.
- No dead ends. Personalization increases the equality of education. Flexibility to match the needs of the individual and the workplace.
- Close cooperation between the national education system and local VET providers and labor market. The VET providers cooperate closely with the business and industry in their own region to anticipate local competence needs and labor demand, and to organize apprenticeships.
- Studies from the University of Applied Sciences can be combined into optional parts of a vocational qualification. The importance of upper secondary vocational education and higher education cooperation is highlighted in the changing labor market, where employees with skills that cross the boundaries of different qualifications are needed.
- Utilization of digitalization and national databases.
  - ✓ New: the digital solutions to be introduced by 2023 will form the framework and platform for the services in continuous learning. The digital services will make it easier to reach out to different target groups at work and outside work. Anticipation and its utilization will be improved.

# Challenges of the Finnish approach

- Digitalization enables a lot, but personalization and educational institution's support for the workplace requires human resources from the VET providers. Teaching is changing towards coaching.
- VET, and apprenticeship as its one form, is developing towards a partnership with the business and industry. We need to
  - clarify the expectations and roles of educational institutions and workplaces in education
  - make visible how non-formal and informal learning can be more efficiently exploited in competence development
  - strengthen and unify the cooperation between VET providers in the provision of labor market services and education
  - make the processes related to apprenticeships even more smooth for customers.
- We need services to facilitate lifelong guidance, which will focus on supporting groups that are currently underrepresented in adult education. We need to develop anticipation and targeting training especially to structural change sectors and to groups under-represented population groups in education.
- For immigrants, the language requirements of VET qualifications (finnish or swedish) can be a challenge. In underrepresented groups, additional support may be needed for learning common units: communication and interaction competence, mathematics and natural sciences, citizenship and working life competence.
- In continuous learning, the key question for adults is how to enable flexible study opportunities alongside everyday life and work.

# Thank you



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