

Ammatillisista perustutkinnoista työelämään – Arviointi työllistymisen tukemisesta sekä urasuunnittelu- ja työelämävalmiuksista

Abstract

From initial vocational qualifications to working life – Evaluation of employment support as well as career planning and workplace skills

The evaluation produced information on vocational education and training, the current state of employment and ways to support finding employment in education and training leading to an initial vocational qualification. The evaluation also identified national and international good practices. The evaluation was conducted in 2024–2026. In the first phase, the evaluation looked at the current state of employment by compiling a statistical report on the employment, unemployment and other placement of those who had completed a vocational qualification in different years. These results were reported in spring 2024 (Hievanen et al. 2024).

In the second phase, the focus was on initial vocational qualifications as well as factors and practices that can be used to support and promote students' transition to the labour market and their employment. For this phase, a national evaluation team and an international expert panel were convened. The evaluation team examined the anticipation of competence and labour needs in the working life, labour market relevance of education and training, and support provided for students' working life skills and employment opportunities. Evaluation data were obtained from vocational education and training providers, teaching and guidance staff, those who had completed an initial vocational qualification and employers. The international panel of experts examined Finnish education and training leading to an initial vocational qualification in an international framework and brought up examples of promoting employment from other countries. The results of the panel's work were published in a separate report (Jørgensen et al. 2026). This report presents evaluation findings, conclusions and development recommendations based on the national evaluation team's work.

The evaluation findings indicate that VET providers **anticipate** labour market **competence needs** based on different sources of information and engage in close cooperation with working life in many places. However, some providers lack an established operating method for obtaining information on local employers' skills needs. Development needs are also associated with systematising anticipation, compilation and analysis of information, division of labour and

responsibilities as well as the use of anticipation information in the planning of education provision, teaching and guidance.

While employers mainly found their cooperation with VET providers effective, there is room for improvement in the match between the education offered and employers' needs as well as the availability of employees who have completed vocational education and training. Based on the evaluation, anticipation should be strengthened and linked more closely to the planning of the education provision and decision-making. The education offered should be targeted better at sectors and occupations that provide employment. VET providers, employers, employment services and other regional actors should participate actively in regional dialogue and cooperation structures and assume joint responsibility for ensuring that the education offered and services are planned and targeted on the basis of regional needs. At the national level, an adequate, up-to-date and easy-to-use knowledge base for anticipation should be secured, and anticipation should be developed to support the coordination of national and regional education and competence needs.

The evaluation also looked at **support provided for students' working life skills and employment opportunities** as well as the effectiveness of guidance and support. The findings indicate that while most VET providers have a documented operating model for supporting students' career planning and employment, some do not. Whereas guidance and support that promote their employment are available for students, the content, timing and practices of guidance need to be developed. Career guidance should be methodical and provided throughout the studies, and various actors' responsibilities and division of labour should be defined more clearly. The continuum of guidance should be strengthened in the transition phase of graduation in cooperation with the employment services, Ohjaamo Guidance Centers and other similar actors. Sufficient support for job seeking and the transition to the labour market should be secured for each student.

Networking and contacts with employers during the studies promote employment. Many students completing an initial vocational qualification lack previous work experience and contacts with employers. VET providers should offer students more low-threshold opportunities to familiarise themselves with the working life in an early stage of their studies. While workplace education and training is a key stepping stone to the labour market for students, larger numbers of appropriate training and apprenticeship places are needed. Apprenticeship training models should additionally be developed to make them more suitable also for young people. A precondition for this is close dialogue and cooperation between VET providers, employers, labour market organisations and the educational authorities with the aim of resolving factors that limit the wider use of apprenticeship training among young people. Employers should also be encouraged to make more proactive use of apprenticeships without hesitation as part of recruiting and training workforce.

Regarding **skills relating to career planning and transitioning to the labour market**, those who had completed an initial vocational qualification found that what they had learned best during their studies was complying with workplace rules and requirements, identifying their personal strengths and development needs, and promoting their ability to study and work. However, there is room for improvement in skills related to obtaining information about the

labour market and occupations knowledge, weighing different options for jobs and employment, understanding changes in the working life, and networking. Some students need stronger and more goal-oriented support. Students' different needs relating to developing their skills in career planning and finding employment should be identified and addressed better. When improving these skills, it is important to also draw on cooperation with other actors, not only the institution's internal expertise. When developing the requirements of initial vocational qualifications, ways in which career planning and employment skills can be strengthened in the qualification requirements as well as the education and training should be assessed together with various actors.

Employers mainly assess the **basic vocational competence** of the young people they have recruited after completion of an initial vocational qualification as good or at a moderate level. Their **transferable skills** were assessed as somewhat poorer than their basic vocational skills. As young people's strengths were regarded their ability to learn new things, their social skills and their ability to receive feedback, among other things. Development needs were seen particularly in their time management, occupational safety, pressure tolerance, entrepreneurial skills, initiative and ability to work independently. Qualification holders themselves found that their time management skills, pressure tolerance and entrepreneurial skills had developed less well than other skills during the studies. The development of these skills should be strengthened in a goal-oriented and systematic manner throughout the studies, both in learning and guidance provided in VET institutions and in workplace education and training.

There is currently no **national qualitative career monitoring** in vocational education and training. While register data provide an overview of qualification holders' placement, they produce no information on the quality of employment, relevance of competence to the needs of working life or factors affecting transitions to the labour market and further studies. The evaluation findings indicate that systematic national career monitoring is needed in vocational education and training to complement the current knowledge base and to support the development of education, decision-making, and efforts to promote qualification holders' employment.