

Kiesi, J. 2018. Vocational competence in Vocational Qualification in the Tourism Industry. Helsinki: Finnish Education Evaluation Centre.

**Background.** The evaluation focuses on vocational competence in the upper secondary level Vocational Qualification in the Tourism Industry. The evaluation data was obtained from vocational skills demonstrations and supplementary data describing the arrangement of such demonstrations. Evaluation of learning outcomes is development-oriented by its nature, and the implementation of the evaluation emphasises VET providers' active involvement and the interactive nature of evaluation.

The evaluation focused on all students who had started studying towards a Vocational Qualification in the Tourism Industry in vocational upper secondary education and training (VET) in autumn 2014 and on all units providing such VET programmes. The evaluation data covered 25 education providers, 501 students and 2,249 demonstrations. It also included students in need of special support and covered 140 demonstrations given by special needs students.

**Vocational competence.** About two thirds of the students (65%) studying for a Vocational Qualification in the Tourism Industry received the grade 'excellent', 31 per cent the grade 'good' and 4 per cent the grade 'satisfactory' for demonstrations related to a qualification unit. The greatest number of 'excellent' grades (72%) was awarded for key competences for lifelong learning. The largest share of 'satisfactory' grades (7%) was awarded for mastering the underpinning knowledge of the work. The averages of the evaluated VET providers varied from 2.4 to 2.7, on a scale of 1 to 3. The average of grades awarded for demonstrations related to qualification units was 2.6, indicating a very good level of skills. There were no major gender-based grade differences. On the other hand, differences in the grades awarded were observed between VET providers and regions.

Special needs students received fewer 'excellent' and more 'good' grades than other students. The most common grade awarded to special needs students for all competence areas was 'good', except in mastering key competences for lifelong learning, in which the most common grade was 'excellent'. All special needs students completed the demonstrations without individually adjusted objectives.

**Working life relevance of the programme.** The VET programmes leading to a Vocational Qualification in the Tourism Industry show a good level of working life relevance. The majority (76%) of the tourism industry skills demonstrations were performed in the workplace. Most of the demonstrations given by special needs students were also completed in the workplace. A workplace representative participated in assessing a large proportion of the

demonstrations. According to education providers, cooperation with tourism industry workplaces is well established, and the availability of workplaces matching the qualification objectives for acquiring and demonstrating skills is good.

**Assessment and quality of demonstrations.** Broad-based and criterion-referenced assessment is well implemented in tourism industry demonstrations. However, the grades awarded for the demonstrations differed depending on who assessed them: on average, students were awarded better grades when a workplace representative participated in the assessment than when the assessment was carried out by a teacher and the student. The place in which the demonstration was given also had a link to the grades. The evaluation thus highlighted needs to improve workplace instructors' assessment skills and teachers' working life competence as well as common interpretation of the assessment criteria. Attention should also be paid to the quality of the workplaces and demonstration tasks to ensure that they enable the students to demonstrate their competence in accordance to the qualification objectives.

Development needs were also observed in the integration of common qualification units in the demonstration, guidance and support provided for the students in the workplace, and the collection and use of monitoring and feedback data gathered by the education providers.